
Paper Abstract

This paper analyzes the trajectory of two political parties of the new radical right in European party systems—the Vlaams Blok and the Lega Nord—during the past decade. First, under the label identity politics, the paper examines the type of nationalism and anti-migrant rhetoric of both political parties, the two most controversial aspects of their core ideology. The paper identifies the similarities and differences in the identity politics of both parties and shows an ideological convergence between the Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord during the 1990s. Second, the paper examines the role of party elites in the radicalization and moderation of party demands. It explains the elite strategic dilemmas of Lega Nord and the Vlaams Blok in light of internal (party organizations) and external (political space) considerations. Third, the paper shows how varieties of extremism within the new right emerged in European party systems upon the basis of different aspects of the identity politics of both parties. Different polarization processes pushed the two political parties into varieties of extremism and anti-system politics: in the Italian case, the question of Padanian nationalism, the secession and independence of Padania; in the Flemish case, the racism of the Vlaams Blok. The impact of these polarization processes for the ‘stigma’ of these parties and their normalisation in pluralist democracies is examined. The paper uses primary sources in the form of party documents and personal interviews with members of party elites. The questionnaire is available upon request. Transcripts from interviews in Italian and Dutch are also available after publication (for the complete list of interviewees and party documents see appendix). The paper uses press coverage of Lega Nord (from Il Corriere della Sera and L’Indipendente), and of the Vlaams Blok (from De Morgen and De Standaard). Secondary sources on public opinion and party voters are also used: for the Vlaams Blok, the research and publications of the ISPO, Departement Sociologie, K.U. Leuven; for Lega Nord, a variety of surveys published during the 1990s. All translations throughout the text are mine.

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Introduction

The rise of the alternatively labeled new radical right, right-wing populist or extreme right is one of the new factors shaping European party systems during the 1990s, yet after a decade of academic research, there is little consensus on a number of questions about the rise, success and politics of this new family of parties. The very definition of, and membership in, this family of parties was opened to debate during the 1990s. The question goes beyond the use of a particular label (whether, new radical right, new populist right or extreme right) to involve conceptual and analytical problems and the specification of the core ideology of this family (for a conceptual discussion see Mudde 1995, 2000; Fennema 1997). For Kitschelt, the European new radical right (NRR) is ‘commonly associated with two political issues that have become salient since the 1970s and 1980s: the revolt against higher taxes, and the rejection of immigrants from non-Occidental cultures, nationalities and ethnicities’ (Kitschelt and Me Gann, 1995, pp. 19-29). Fennema introduced a typology to distinguish between protest parties, racist parties and extreme-right parties (protest parties are anti-party and anti-establishment, racist parties are single-issue parties and extreme-right parties provide an ideological articulation of specific themes: ethnic nationalism, anti-materialism, anti-democratic and conspiration theory (Fennema, 1997). In his recent study of the ideology of the extreme-right family in Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium, Mudde found out a common ideological core formed by four elements: nationalism, xenophobia, welfare chauvinism, and ‘law and order’ (Mudde 2000: 177).

During the past decade, the rise of political parties denouncing the ‘dangers’ of migrants’ invasion into Europe was also accompanied by the spread of negative attitudes towards migrants and the electoral success of new right wing parties. However, neither all anti-migrant parties have been successful in European party systems, nor the relationship between the rise of anti-migrant

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parties and the increase in negative attitude towards migrants is a clear-cut one. In electoral terms the new right wing parties have not been successful in all countries, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Germany providing examples of the electoral difficulties experienced by the new right. In other countries, such as Austria and Belgium, the new right has recently experienced further electoral growth as the trajectories of the FPÖ and the Vlaams Blok in recent national and local elections clearly show. And yet others have recently suffered electoral defeats such as Le Pen’s Front National—after internal infighting that divided party elites (Laurent and Perrineau 1999)—and the modest results of the Italian Lega Nord in the 1999 European elections and the 2000 regional elections.

The new right wing political family holds an uneasy location within the boundaries of democratic politics in Europe. As Van Der Burg, Fennema and Tillie explain, anti-migrant parties have a ‘spoiled’ identity, as they are stigmatised by political elites as ‘fascist’, ‘racist’ and ‘protest’ parties (Van Der Brug, Fennema and Tillie 2000: 82). Parties are described as anti-democratic on three accounts. First, they are considered anti-democratic in reference to their internal structure and the selection of the party elite (they rely on a charismatic leadership and a restricted number of loyals). Second, they are anti-democratic because they are anti-system parties and potentially violate the boundaries and norms of democratic pluralism—some members have experienced legal prosecution. Third, they are considered as anti-democratic for the content of the party agendas since their efforts focus on the breaking up of the body politic and the exclusion of migrants from their societies. Arguments about the normalization of the new right wing political parties in pluralist democracies linked the latter with the incorporation of political parties to an institutional logic and the moderation of party demands.

In this paper we select two political parties within the family of the new radical right—Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord—and explain their trajectory during the 1990s. The Vlaams Blok is a typical example of an extreme-right party (Swyngedouw 1997; Mudde 2000). The case of Lega Nord is usually located under the vague populist label (Biorcio 1991; 1997). When addressing the rise of the new right in the Italian political system, some scholars include Lega Nord and others Alleanza Nazionale (ex Movimento Sociale Italiano) as the Italian representation in this family of parties (Ignazi 1992, Fennema 1998, Mudde 2000, Gomez-Reino 2001). Moreover, while scholars pay attention to the main features of the ideology of the Vlaams Blok, the ideology of Lega Nord is sometimes downplayed and even eliminated from academic analysis. For some scholars, Lega Nord is a typical example of a party without an ideology (Ricolfi 1995).

Mudde identifies both ethnic nationalism and the anti-migrant agenda as part of the core ideology of the new extreme right in European party systems. The examination of both aspects of the core ideology of these political parties is justified because they provide for the most
controversial aspects of party mobilization and they often carry the weight of party ‘stigma,’ a crucial element to understand the extremism of both parties and the impact of their political success in pluralist democracies. In this paper the ideology of Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord is compared and systematically analysed at two different levels. First, we compare the politics of identity in two aspects: nationalism and anti-migrant agenda. Second, the paper discusses elite strategic dilemmas in the moderation or radicalization of party demands during the 1990s.

Finally, the paper examines varieties of extremism with the accentuation or downplaying of aspects of the core ideologies of these parties in different polarisation processes. Here the question is not one of ideological convergence, but one of investigation of the impact of the strategic context in explaining varieties of extremism: in the case of the Vlaams Blok the identification of Vlaams Blok with the anti-migrant agenda in the Flemish political system, in the case of Lega Nord controversies linked to the issue of independence and secession from the Italian state. The last part of the paper considers the implications of the rise of these political parties for democratic governance.

We emphasize the importance of keeping analytically distinctive three different layers of political actors: party elites, party militants and party voters (Fennema 1997; Sywngedouw year, Gomez-Reino 2001). We distinguish between anti-migrant political parties, public attitudes towards migrants, and more strictly speaking ‘racist’ or anti-migrant voters. We focus on party leaders because as Fennema points out: “party leaders integrate the different elements of a political discourse into a logical coherent political ideology” (Fennema 1997: 486). We also distinguish the different levels in which discourse and representation take place (party documents, party programs and public speeches). The paper shows how ethnicity, nationhood and race are talked and written about by Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord party elites. The articulation of ethnicity and nationhood, their boundaries, content and markers are explained. What kind of evidence is relevant here? Party electoral programmes are commonly used. However, they do not say anything about the relative importance of nationalism and the question of migration both in party mobilization and party ideology (in the ordering of preferences). The material used in this paper combines the analysis of published party documents and propaganda, interviews with members of party elites and press coverage.

2 For instance, in the first electoral program of a united Lega Nord in 1992, migration appears only as point 11 in a 12-point program. Although the question of migration does not systematically occupy a relevant place in electoral programs, it figures prominently in the statements of party leaders and representatives, in the actions taken by party activists and in the elaboration of the party ideology.
The Rise of the New Radical Right in European Party Systems

Over the past decade scholars have studied the rise of a new family of parties in Europe: the alternatively labeled new radical right, populist or extreme right. Kitschelt’s list includes the National Front parties in Britain, France and Wallonia, the Progress parties in Denmark and Norway, or regional self-identifications in Flanders (Vlaams Blok) and Italy (Lega Nord). The list introduced by Cass Mudde includes 53 political parties that contested nation-wide elections at least once in the period between 1980 and 1999 (Mudde 2000: 185).

Economic crisis brings about a ‘climate of resentment and alienation’ permeating Western Europe during the last decade (Betz 1994: 4). In his influential and yet much contested analysis of the new radical right, Kitschelt and Mc Gann identified the sources of this new type of political mobilisation in the crisis produced by the transformation of European economies. As Kitschelt and Mc Gann put it:

The contemporary extreme Right develops in an era of socioeconomic dislocation due to a structural change in production systems, the internationalization of economic competition, and the crisis of the welfare state.... The crisis of the 1980s and 1990s has very uneven effects sectorally and geographically. While some occupational groups, sectors and regions continue to thrive, others within the same countries are caught up in a structural crisis (1995: 39).

Thus, the electoral success of the new right in Europe is fundamentally associated with losers’ constituencies in post-industrial societies. The demand for authoritarian and rightist parties is not evenly distributed across the population. Kitschelt claims that the demand for this right-wing politics appears in social groups characterised by “distinctive experiences and deprivations of life chances” (Kitschelt 1995: 5).

The new right represents a new spatial dimension for electoral competition in European party systems. This dimension has two aspects: economically leftist (redistributive) and politically culturally libertarian (participatory and individualist) positions at one extreme, and economically rightist, free-marketeering as well as political and culturally authoritarian positions at the other (Kitschelt, 1995). This new conflict involves four policy issues: gender conflict, multicultural conflict, environmental conflict and modes of political participation (Kitschelt 1995: 20). In contrast, other scholars situate the rise of these parties in the cleavage between materialist and postmaterialist values (Ignazi 1992; Swyngedouw 1993). The new dimension of electoral competition is represented by the divide between open-universalistic versus close-particularistic attitudes (Swyngedouw 1992; 1993).

The new party organizations have distinctive traits in the form of authoritarian and charismatic leadership. For Kitschelt, beyond the competing values advanced by the new left and the new right,
the type of political organizations and styles of mobilization involved in the New Right are the polar opposite of the democratic and participatory features that characterized the New Left. The new right-wing party is “a leader, a few of highly visible individuals and a staff of professional managers” (Kitschelt 1995: 22). Kitschelt and McGann highlight the vulnerability of these parties to collective action problems at the elite level. 3

Kitschelt has provided a typology to assess the differences within the new right parties in appeals, class composition and attitudes (see Table 1). Kitschelt considers that Lega Nord and Austria’s Freedom party belong to a distinctive category within the new radical right, that of the populist antistatist party. 4 These parties are characterised by their ‘appeals directed against big government and the political class’ (Kitschelt and McGann 1995: 21). Kitschelt classifies Lega Nord as a populist anti-statist party: party elites use sometimes racist sentiments but they concentrate more on anti-state and anti-party rhetoric (Kitschelt and McGann 1995). Thus, the subtype of populist anti-statist parties is characterized by the moderation of party elites and voters in their attitudes against migrants. Austrian and Italian populist parties can form broader ‘negative electoral coalitions’ characterized by the mixed composition of their electorates, the result of a political opportunity structure that favors rhetoric against the state and traditional parties. What accounts for the success of the populist antistatist party and makes this strategy an ‘electoral winning formula’ is the presence of a critical variable, partitocrazia or partocracy. 5 In Kitschelt’s model the Austrian FPÖ and Lega Nord should be considered moderate tickets because party elites are not characterized by the extreme right-wing agenda.

In contrast, the Vlaams Blok in Kitschelt’s model could be alternatively considered as an extreme right-wing party, welfare chauvinist party or should be considered a welfare chauvinist party or populist anti-statist party since the social basis for support do not characterize the Vlaams Blok voters (see evidence from Swyngedouw below). In addition, it is not the moderation of anti-migrant rhetoric what accounts for the increasing electoral success of the Vlaams Blok. Quite the

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3 For Kitschelt and McGann, “the New Radical Right (NRR) shares with the fascist party charismatic leadership and the relative absence of a formal-rational bureaucratic internal party structure; such organizational features are bound to fuel feuds among subleaders that can be exploited by the hegemon of the party to consolidate his power. In the contemporary extreme right, where the power of the charismatic leader is not backed up by absolute control of a paramilitary organization and where the main arena of politics is the electoral campaign, the absence of a clear bureaucratic chain of command generates often highly divisive and publicly visible internal factional battles that endanger the cohesiveness of the parties and sometimes damage their electoral fortunes (Kitschelt and McGann 1995: 33).

4 Kitschelt’s defines political populism as: “the effort to destroy established institutions of interest intermediation and elite control and to put in their place some kind of direct voice of the people, embodied in the leader of the populist party.” H. Kitchelt and A. McGann, The New Radical Right in Western Europe (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Chicago Press, 1995): 160.

5 Kitschelt defines partocracy as: “a term used to indicate the fusion of state, party and economic elites in politico-economic networks characterized by patronage, clientelism, and corruption.” H. Kitchelt and A. McGann, The New Radical Right in Western Europe, (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 161.
contrary, the party is characterized by the anti-migrant attitudes of both party elites and party voters.

Kitschelt attributes a *proportionality* to Lega Nord’s social basis of support. Biocció argues that the electoral constituencies of Lega Nord are the ‘typical constituencies of neopopulist parties’, that is, the petit bourgeoisie and blue-collar workers, yet he has also emphasised the inter-classist nature of Lega Nord (Biorcio 1997: 25). Biocció emphasises that the importance of blue-collar workers in the composition of Lega Nord’s electoral constituency has been increasing.6 Already in 1994, survey research showed both that workers are the largest component of Lega Nord’s electoral support.7 Thus, by Kitschelt’s own criteria, Lega Nord could also be considered as a new radical right-wing party or as a welfare chauvinist party (as Tarchi does in his chapter in the volume edited by De Winter and Tursan, see Tarchi 1998; see Table 2 for alternative explanations).

One can also argue against the ‘crisis’ view that considers economic crisis as the source of new political mobilization and the ‘losers’ constituencies of these parties. Notice that both the Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord are situated in the wealthiest part of their countries, in the wealthy peripheries of the main urban areas, and where economic and social dislocation is not visible. Diamanti characterizes the electoral support for Lega Nord in geographical terms. He defines a new area—the *Pedemontana*—encompassing the Friuli region (Pordenone and Udine), Veneto (Belluno, Treviso, Vicenza and some districts in Padova, Verona and Venice), Lombardia (Bergamo, Sondrio and Brescia, Varese and Como) and one province—Cuneo—in Piedmont. Diamanti argues that this area represents a competing socio-political model to the industrialized North. The Deep North (*profondo Nord*) exhibits distinctive socio-economic and political characteristics: the lowest rates of unemployment in the North of Italy, the highest percentage of employment in industry, and the highest number of firms per inhabitant, the lowest number of urban electoral districts.

In the Italian case, the explanation of the early electoral success of Lega Nord is *overdetermined* because of the presence of conjunctural factors and a critical juncture that marked the collapse of Italian traditional parties in the midst of corruption scandals. Political protest played a central role in the first phase of Lega Nord’s electoral expansion. The ability of create ‘negative electoral coalitions’ (in Kitschelt’s formulation) might be considered a short-term effect for new

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6 Survey evidence from 1991, 1994 and 1996 analyzed by Biocció shows that the percentage of artisans and shopkeepers supporting Lega Nord has been rather stable over time (24.%, 26.5%, and 23.9% in 1991, 1994, 1996). In contrast, the support of blue-collar workers has increased over time (16.6%, 21.4%, and 31.2% for the same years). Surveys from Eurisko, Cirm, Abacus, Roberto Biocció, La Padania Promessa (Milano: II Saggiatore, 1997), 252. The survey shows that employees (19%), blue collar workers (25.7%) and the self-employed (16.3%), are overrepresented within Lega Nord’s electorate compared to the electorate of the Italian parties (16.8%, 21.5%, and 14.8%). Survey Ispo 1996, Ilvo Diamanti, Il male del Nord. Lega, Localismo, Secessione (Roma: Donzelli Editore, 1995), 119.

7 The result of this survey showed that, out of 100 Lega Nord’s voters, 30.1% were blue workers, while the percentage of PDS voters was 25.8%. Gabriele Calvi and Andrea Vanucci, L’Elettor Sconosciuto. Analisi Socioculturale e Segmentazione degli orientamenti politici nel 1994 (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1995).
parties. A decade after the events that led to the disappearance of Italian traditional parties, Lega Nord has achieved a brandname among Northern Italian voters and despite common arguments about the disappearance of the party, they have retained an electoral base. The electoral winning formula—to use Kitschelt’s formulation—used by the party leadership was undermined by the disappearance of the political opportunities that favored the early electoral expansion of Lega Nord. Kitschelt’s hypothesis predicts major setbacks if protest parties pursue office-maximising strategies. After the 1994 governmental experience, Lega Nord’s setback was a major one: it lost voters, activists and representatives. To many analysts of Lega Nord, this period marked the decline of Lega Nord and its marginalization in the Italian party system. Instead, the party leadership found a new electoral winning formula in the 1996 Italian elections. The party leadership managed to reshape a political space by emphasising the non-negotiable nature of their claims for autonomy of the North. The strategy of radicalization of party demands that followed the experience in the Berlusconi government was a surprise in two senses. First, nobody predicted the radicalization of a party that was struggling to moderate its demands to normalize and consolidate its position in the Italian party system. Quite the contrary, expectations were against the radicalization of Lega Nord (see Trigilia 1994; Diamanti 1995). Second, this strategy of radicalization of party demands with claims of secession and independence from the Italian state gave the party the best electoral result in its short history (in terms of % vote although not in terms of seats).

A Framework for Analysis

During the 1990 a major redefinition of actors and boundaries took place across European states, in a large scale process that involved a new politics of inclusion and exclusion at different levels of the body politic. Categories of Belonging define boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in a collectivity (Balibar 1991;1990). We drop the study of nations and ethnic minorities as social units and substantial units, exploring instead the processes of political construction of collective differences as essential traits of collectivities (Bourdieu 1991; Brubaker 1996). According to Herzfeld, nationalist ideologies are “systems of classification, which define who is an insider and an outsider” (Herzfeld 1987:109). This system of classification provides “a simplication and remaking of an entire people as a unity” (Herzfeld 1992: 111). Culture has re-entered contemporary debates in European politics in two main forms: ‘multicultural’ citizenship and ‘cultural differentialism. The first debates focus on the possibility of a citizenship decoupled from a national identity but coupled with the recognition of multiculturalism in pluralist democracies (Kymlicka 1992; Taylor 1992).

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The relevance of human agency in these fundamentally political processes is obscured by the nature of essentialism. Nationalism as a discourse essentialize differences and redefine past-historical experience as nation-making. Discursive practices present as natural and self-evident the substantial nature of these units as homogeneous and pre-existing, denying the role of human agency in their construction (Herzfeld 1996:188).

The emergence of a world system that institutionalizes in international and national provisions the nation as the basic political unit with legitimacy in world politics explains the structuring power of this category (Brubaker 1996). Nationalism is defined as a theory of political legitimacy holding that the nation and the state should be congruent (Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990). Although nation and state are in social science distinctive analytical categories (Weber, Linz 1967), the principle of congruence is normative and not sociological (Brubaker 1996; Soysal 1996).

We analyze here the language that draw boundaries and locates oneself but also locate the other as insiders and outsiders. Categorical identities develop in the interaction that locates “us” and “them”. Thus, we problematize the question of identity as self-defined and as other-defined (Gomez-Reino 2001). In political processes, identity politics is about the existence or not of those cultural collective differences and their institutional recognition. This categorical clam—one belongs to a collectivity—is non-negotiable. Mobilizing on identity politics is about constructing differences, sameness and diversity within a bounded territory and a single space.

Peripheral nationalism deconstructs the category of nation-states to reproduce the principle of congruence at the sub-national level. The same principle of legitimacy sustains the alternative claims of congruence between the political and the cultural unit. The principle of congruence can be continuously used in politics to draw new boundaries of social and political exclusion/inclusion. Although a dual criteria of membership—space and group membership—can be found in academic writing, in European politics peripheral nationalism intrinsically link both (for dual membership see Urwin 1983; Smith 1986).

Scholars drawing sharp distinctions between the ethno-territorial movements and parties in the 1970s and the current wave of territorial mobilisation built their arguments on the distinction between ethnic movements and populist movements. Thus, typologies are created under the assumption that the differences reflect substantial differences in the nature of identity. The distinction between ethnonationalism and populism is—as Balibar points out—more factual than

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9 Scholars identified a new ideal type in Lega Nord to mark the distinction between ethnic and populist identities. Thus, for Diani:

ethno-nationalism and populism exhibited three main differences. First, while populism is characterized by its anti-elitism, ethno-nationalism is based on the resources of local elites. Second, while populism is indifferent to democratic procedures and one of its main feature is the importance of charismatic leadership, ethno-nationalism is not in its main principles, anti-democratic... populism emphasizes external threats (foreigners, immigrants) while the emphasis of ethno-nationalism is on the ethnic group ‘positive diversity’ (1993, p. 183).
analytical (for an opposite view see Melucci and Diani 1992; Diani 1993; Biorcio 1997). The use of the label populism has three main conceptual problems. First, in the 1970s, populism is associated with peripheral nationalism with a very different meaning, in that uneven development and mass politics define a new space for nationalism (see Nairn 1977). Second, scholars using this distinction during the 1990s use the term populism indistinctively to refer to populism as a type of nationalism, and populism as a style of mobilisation (Biorcio 1991; 1997; Kitschelt and McGann 1995). But they are not the same thing. Third, in Italy the label populist has been used to describe not only Lega Nord, but also Berlusconi’s Forza Italia.

Peripheral Nationalism and the Ethno-Territorial Cleavage in European party systems

Peripheral nationalist parties are characterized by the nature of their claims. As Urwin remarks: “what separates these parties out from the mass of European parties is the nature of their claim upon the state. They identify with, and make claims upon the central government on behalf of, territories and groups that are not coincident with state boundaries and national populations (Urwin 1983:232). For Lipset and Rokkan, the ethno-territorial, regional or center-periphery cleavage represents political conflict about national and alternative territorial cultures. It is the first cleavage in the developmental sequence of European party systems The formation and consolidation of the ethno-territorial cleavage is path-dependent: the product of historical developments in the process of nation and state formation. Labeled by some scholars as ethnoregionalist parties, this family of political parties is defined as those political parties who “endorse a nationalism whose core is based on ethnic distinctiveness as opposed to other kinds of regionalisms” (De Winter and Türsan 1998: 5). De Winter and Türsan single out two common denominators for ethnoregionalist parties: a subnational territorial border and an exclusive group identity (Türsan 1998:5).

According to the traditional literature, these parties are characterized by the specialization of voters’ appeals. The ethno-territorial or regional cleavage represents a distinctive axis of electoral competition cutting across the main ideological axis in European party systems. As Urwin put it, their significance in party systems lied less in their electoral strength and more in their “potential disaggregative impact” in the polity (Urwin 1983: 232). Their ‘opportunism’ and blackmailing power derives from their special position within a polity. These parties “free ride” in national

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10 Regional parties are located on a vertical dimension cutting the main dimensions of conflict in a polity. Lipset and Rokkan’s adaptation of the Parsonian AGIL scheme represented a two dimensional space with two axes. The vertical axis represent the cleavage formed by the process of nation-formation. This is defined as a cultural cleavage. The horizontal axis is the functional dimension of interests and represents distributional conflict. Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan, Cleavage Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments: an Introduction (Chicago: The Free Press, a Division of Macmillan Company.)
political systems because their agenda is limited to the interests of the population they claim to represent. Collective goods, if any, will accrue to them. They can cooperate with other actors as long as they are offered selective incentives (for public goods and collective action, see Olson 1971). The traditional literature on these political parties has assumed that what explains the electoral base of these parties is the presence of “encapsulated” constituencies and the specialization of voters’ appeals along cultural demands (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Bartolini and Mair 1990).

The trajectory of the family of sub-state nationalist political parties in European party systems is marked by three waves of political mobilization. Rokkan and Urwin identify two different cycles or waves of mobilization of the ethno-territorial cleavage (Rokkan and Urwin, 1982). The first wave of political mobilisation represents the process of cleavage formation and took place with the democratization of European party systems. Modernisation theorists assumed that the development of the modern nation-state and the process of industrialization would drive European societies towards cultural homogeneity and incorporated the peripheries in national cultures. According to Lipset and Rokkan, ‘purely territorial oppositions rarely survive extensions of the suffrage’ (Lipset and Rokkan 1967: 12). Instead, the second wave of political mobilization, the ethnic wave of the 1970s in Europe, corresponded to the first signs of erosion of the main cleavages in European party systems (Esman 1977). In the 1960s and 1970s, European nation-states were challenged by a wave of political mobilization that brought about new claims for autonomy and self-government in France, U.K. Belgium, Italy and Spain. From the rediscovery of ethnic minorities in the 1970s, scholars drew a new analytical map in which Europe was no longer a set of nation-states but was ‘multi-ethnic and multi-ethnic structures remain the rule’ (Esman 1977: 26). Thus, the second cycle of mobilization was about cleavage displacement with the re-awakening of ethnic identities in the 1970s. The third, and contemporary wave of political mobilization would reflect, according to Müller-Rommel, a ‘collective identity mood’ mobilized by ethnoregionalist parties (Müller-Rommel 1998: 24).

The last two ways of ethno-territorial mobilization in European party systems correspond to the erosion of traditional cleavages (Müller-Rommel 1998). In the 1970s, the weakening of the old ideological basis of European politics provided a new political space for territorial political mobilization (Berger 1977). However, change in European party systems occurred at the margins (Urwin 1983). Müller-Rommel also highlights the contemporary potential of these parties as reservoirs of protest votes against the state and governmental parties. In addition, recent scholarship has added resource mobilization theory and political opportunity structures to explain the determinants of new political mobilization (Schmidtke 1996). The presence of external political opportunity structures in European party systems is crucial to explain the rise of new political
parties in the last two waves of *ethnic* political mobilisation in the 1970s and in the 1990s. ‘Entry costs’ in the political system are difficult to overcome but critical junctures offer the opportunity to redefine the main dimensions of political conflict. The claim here is that the mapping of political opportunity structures across party systems and longitudinally needs to be specified.

The *floating* position of these parties with regard to major ideological divisions in European states is a well-known phenomenon in the study of the rise of ethnic claims (Berger 1977; Urwin 1983; De Winter and Türsan 1998). Over time and across space, parties adapt territorial claims to the main ideological currents in European politics. The de-colonization experience during the 1960s provided a new set of ideas about the position of territorial minorities vis-à-vis central governments. *Thirdworldism* provided to new political mobilization an interpretation of political and economic events that explained ethnic oppression as a product of internal colonialism. In contrast, the last wave of political mobilization has incorporated questions about welfare arrangements, redistributive issues and taking the state out that reinforces a neoliberal shift of these parties. The prospective winners and losers of the process of European integration shape new demands and programs of these parties (Gomez-Reino 2001).

**New Identity Politics: Mobilizing on Collective Markers**

In comparative research we can assess the form or articulation of racism in the concrete local, national or historical circumstances and the relative importance of distinctions within an abstract category: the construction of *otherness* (TerWal and Verkuyten 2000). Conceptually, as TerWal and Verkuyten stress, “a distinction between racism, prejudice, xenophobia and anti-Semitism is based upon comparisons within a more abstract category such as the construction, portrayal, and treatment of a negative ‘racial’ or ethnic out-group” (TerWal and Verkuyten 2000: 9). The category of *racism* is also used as a political tool given its negative connotations. As Fennema points out, ‘the concept of racism is highly loaded. To be called racist has serious political, if not legal consequences’ (Fennema 1997: 474).

During the past decade two main novelties in the relationship between politics and prejudice emerged: the politicization of the question of migration in European countries, and the development of new ideologies about collective differences, the by now well-known *cultural differentialism*. One of the basic features of the alternatively labeled new radical right, new populist right or new extreme right family of political parties is the presence of a common element: anti-migrant rhetoric.

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However, beyond the recognition of an anti-migrant agenda, scholars provide different answers to two main questions. First, there are contrasting views about the relative importance of anti-migrant rhetoric in the ideologies and programs of these political parties and the extent to which these parties can be considered ‘racist’ parties (Fennema 1995, 1997; Mudde 1995, 2000; Swyngedouw 1995, 1997). The label racist is maintained for those stressing the evolution of traditional biological racism into a new racism that appears without the label race (Fennema 1997). Second, there are also alternative views on the relationship between elites and voters, and visible changes in public opinion with regard to attitudes against migrants (Swyngedouw 1995; Van Der Burg, Fennema and Tillie 2000).

In studying the relationship between political mobilization and prejudice, a main distinction is introduced between those scholars that consider the rise of prejudice as an elite-driven process—a function of political manipulation--, and those that consider the rise of prejudice as a social process in which political parties only express socially-shared attitudes about migrants. For Van Dijk, “Bias, stereotyping, and outright ethnic polarization in the media is the product of journalists, or of the politicians they use as reliable sources, and hence, also an elite phenomenon. The same is true for biased text books and scholarly research” (Van Dijk 1998: 176). If Van Dijk is a clear example of an approach that emphasises the role of political elites, other scholars have broadened the scope of actors and actions involved in racism. Racism has a multi-faceted nature in contemporary Europe (TerWal and Verkuyten 2000).

Despite the pervasiveness of racism in a variety of social and political contexts, here we narrow the focus to the role of political parties in the expression, active production and reproduction of prejudices. The extent to which the process is elite-driven or social prejudices are given is a research question on its own. Public opinion, as Iversen points out, “is itself an object of, and not merely a constraint, on political contestation”(Iversen 1994: 160). Political parties -- as key institutions in liberal democracies--are actively engaged in influencing the public and do not merely respond to mass attitudes. Political parties are active participants in the definition, construction and reproduction of otherness in the political arena. The new radical right wing parties provides an avenue to express—but also to shape in new ways—attitudes against migrants (see the methodologically innovative, but otherwise inconclusive, Sniderman et al. 2000).

As Fennema points out, there have been major problems in the conceptualization of anti-immigrant parties (Fennema 1997). Anti-migrant parties are sometimes wrongly characterized as

4. As Balibar states: racism, -- a true ‘total social phenomenon’ – inscribes itself in practices (forms of violence, contempt, intolerance, humiliation and exploitation), in discourses and representations which are so many intellectual elaborations of the phantasm of prophylaxis or segregation (the need to purify the social body, to preserve ‘one’s own’ or ‘our’ identity from all forms of mixing, interbreeding or invasion in which are articulated around stigmata of otherness (name, skin colour, religious practices) (Balibar, 1991, pp. 17-18).
single-issue parties (DerBrug, Fennema and Tillie 2000). Mudde has recently rejected racism as a distinctive feature of this family of parties, yet he included xenophobia and anti-migrant rhetoric in their core ideology. The parties included in his study did not formally use the word race. Mudde shows the absence of an openly expressed belief in hierarchy of races and anti-semitism is clearly visible in the case of German parties but not in Flemish or Dutch parties (Mudde 2000: 172).

Scholars introduce a distinction between ideological racism and everyday or common racism. As Balibar points out, “racist thinking does not always assume a systematic form” (Balibar 1991: 54). The expression of prejudices against other groups does not per se constitute an ideology: only the articulation of a coherent set of political principles and axioms permits the identification of an ideological system. Although we can observe the emergence of a set of recurrent statements and themes in political mobilization against migrants, their elaboration into an systematic ideology about collective differences cannot be taken for granted.

The main features of the new racism in the construction of the other replicate old models without the explicit recognition of race as a collective marker. Scholars identify in the theory of cultural incompatibility the modern version of racism (Balibar 1991; Fenema 1997). The distinguishing features and what marks this theory as explicitly racist derives from the use of culture as a quasi-biological attribute. As Etienne Balibar puts it:

The New racism is a racism of the era of ‘decolonization,’ of the reversal of population movements between the old colonies and the old metropolises, and the division of humanity within a single political space… It is a racism whose dominant theme is not a biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences, a racism, which at first sight, does not postulate the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others but ‘only’ the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of life-styles and traditions; in short, it is what P.A. Taguieff has rightly called a differentialist racism (Balibar 1991: 21).

The other central element in racist thinking is the establishment of hierarchies with the attribution of negative features to other groups. Balibar finds a reworking of old hierarchies: the presentation of a main division of humanity in two groups: “one assumed to be universalistic and progressive, the other irremediably particularistic and primitive” (Balibar 1991: 25). Thus, the reworking of categories of belonging involves different layers of collective boundaries that include

13 Mudde finds out that:

most attention in the xenophobic party literature is paid to the threat of (mass immigration and the creation of a multi-cultural society. All parties portray an image of a flow of immigrants which is out of control and which is kept hidden by the ‘Establishment’. Immigrants are seen as competitors, since they take away jobs, money and houses from the ‘own people’. They are also linked to every other threat or problem in the country … such as rising crime and moral decay (Mudde 2000: 173).

14 However, it should also be stressed that the representation of ‘others’ with commonsensical statements is instrumental: a strategy to define those expressions as part of a common language diffused and shared in society. See for example, Vlaams Blok: We Zeggen Wat U Denkt!
sub-national identities, national identities, European identities and “Western” identities (for an excellent analysis that includes also the colonial legacies, see Jacobs 1998; 2000)

**The New Identity Politics: Implications for Pluralist Democracies**

The problems that these political parties bring about in pluralist democracies can be analyzed at two different levels. First, the well-known question of democracy and its boundaries. Democratic theory does not offer a key to the problem of territorial boundaries (for an excellent discussion see Streek 1992). I think in some contemporary literature there is a very problematic assumption about the fact that modern liberal democracies are held capable of *negotiating* identities in the political system. Benhabib introduces a radical distinction. In her words:

> ... But the politics of identity/difference, emerging out of the experience of new social movements in liberal capitalist democracies, and the politics of racial, ethnic, linguistic and religious difference developing in former communist countries, North Africa and the Middle East are radically different. Whereas the former kind of identity/difference politics focuses on the negotiation, contestation, and representation of difference within the public sphere of liberal democracies, the politics of ethnonationalisms seek to redefine the constituents of the body politic, and aim at creating new politically sovereign bodies... The essays in this volume shared the assumption that the institutions and culture of liberal democracies are sufficiently complex, supple and decentered so as to allow the expression of difference without fracturing the identity of the body politic or subverting existing forms of political sovereignty. (Benhabib 1996: 4-5)

The public space of liberal democracies can be broken by the rise of new claims of distinctiveness. The question of the negotiation of identity/difference as a yardstick for democratization has to be considered in specific contexts. *Ethnic* violence is not the terrain of weak states and unstable democracies, but as we all know, a very contemporary feature in some countries of Europe, Spain and Ireland providing the most outstanding examples of the non-negotiable nature of collective identities. I believe it is in *specific* political processes that we can assess on normative grounds the positive or negative effects of the politics of difference in contemporary democracies. This is an unhappy solution, but as Etienne Balibar and Edward Said write, we have to face the uncomfortable vicinity of progressive nationalism as a form of resistance and liberation, and nationalism in its extreme forms as a form of exclusion (Balibar 1991; Said 1993). Second, the anti-system nature of the new radical right is compounded by the alleged refusal of pluralism and democratic processes. Thus, the rise of Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord not only raises some fundamental questions about the possibility of *negotiating* identities in liberal democracies, but also about the quality of democracy and the governability of pluralist democracies. In the trade-offs between mobilization and representation and institutional politics, the specialization in mobilization can undermine the actual
advancement of their own agendas and the logic of institutional politics. This peculiarity creates collective action problems as soon as party representatives entered political institutions and they are confronted with choices that go beyond the party agenda (coalition potential).

New Challengers in European party systems: Collective Action, Exit and Voice

Identity and Strategy support two competing paradigms in the study of political action. The identity-paradigm argues that people mobilize because they share a common identity. Collective action, needs at the very least, a common definition of “who we are” (Pizzorno 1966). As Pizzorno puts it: “the term identity could be substituted for preferences. How can I know, or how can the others know which values will be my values in the future? Thanks to the relevant last name with which I introduce myself” (Pizzorno 1993:141). The rationality paradigm argues that individual preferences are given and that instrumental rationality accounts for collective action. The identity paradigm forces that study of identity politics as “expressive” action. However, as Cohen argues, “the category of expressive action cannot give adequate account of the problem of identity for two reasons: first, because it misses the normative components of a shared social identity, and second, because it excludes the strategic dimension of conflicts concerning the latters’ interpretation” (Cohen 1985: ). The second paradigm explains a collective identity by aggregating individual preferences and cannot explain how a collective identity can define and constrain individual behavior. Thus, we also depart from rational choice approaches. 15 My work is an inquiry on why and how nationhood as a collective representation linked territory, identity and interests in a single space and becomes a principle of political action (see also Laitin 1987). As Cohen put it: “there is no reason why the analysis of the various logics of collective action should be seen as incompatible, as long as they are not construed as the sole rationality of collective action to the exclusion of others” (Cohen 1985: 707-708). In this paper political entrepreneurs are assumed to behave to maximize power and in opportunistic ways, but political entrepreneurship is situated within the context of the ideas and values that support collective action. I seek to show the strategic uses of identity politics, but also the constraints on strategic behavior that claims to a collective identity create.

New parties do not simply adapt to changing divisions in the electorate, but actively participate in the forming of these divisions by politicising issues and molding public opinion (Iversen 1994: 183). As Przeworski and Sprague, quoting Gramsci, we count votes at the end of the process:

15 Identities as coalition of groups glued by material interests assumed the ‘ethnic’ element. They are not only reductionist, but also unable to provide an explanation of why and which material coalitions are formed, and why identity as opposed to any other principle of political organization becomes the basis of political action.
... this is a process of creating images of society, of forging collective identities, of mobilizing commitments to particular projects for the future. Class, religion, ethnicity, race, or nation, do not happen spontaneously as reflections of objective conditions in the psyches of individuals. Collective identity, group solidarity, and political commitment are continually transformed—shaped, destroyed, and molded anew—as a result of conflicts in the course of which political parties, schools, unions, churches, newspapers, armies, and corporations strive to impose a particular form of organization upon the life of society (1990: 8).

1) Party Elites: Between Identity and Strategy

Charismatic parties are defined by the presence of a single leader. The party is, in fact, “the creature and vehicle for the assertion of a charismatic leadership” (Panebianco 1982: 108). Analysts of Lega Nord rightly emphasise Bossi’s leadership as a key feature in the party organisation (Biorcio 1991, 1997; Diamanti 1993).

Two distinctive levels have been put forward to assess the radicalization or moderation of party elites. First, an electoral dimension refers to the moderation or radicalization of parties linked to their electoral potential (Kitschelt and McGann 1995). Strategic openings and political opportunity structures shape the conditions under which party elites are able to attract voters. In carving out an electoral space, new political entrepreneurs face distinctive dilemmas (Przeworski and Sprague 1990, Kitschelt 1989, 1995, Iversen 1994). Second, an institutional dimension refers to the moderation or radicalization of party elites linked to their coalition-potential. In an evolutionary perspective of political parties, moderation leads to government and institutional politics and radicalization leads to the exclusion of these parties from institutional politics. In both dimensions party elites play a crucial role in downplaying the most controversial aspects of party ideology in light of the electoral and institutional gains to be afforded by moderation.

Disparities between elite and voters’ attitudes are explained in the political science by the “law of curvilinear disparity”. This law holds that elite radicalization is the result of the effects of intra-party democracy, as middle-range party elites pressure the party leadership towards radicalization. The theory has been empirically disproved (see Iversen 1996). An important qualification to a quick dismissal of internal party dynamics in explaining elite radicalization is that activation of the ‘exit’ option. Exit, rather than voice, might be more important in explaining elite radicalization.

The very definition of the Northern question was rather malleable. During the 1990s, the Italian North evolved from a macroregion, to the Nord-Nazione to Padania. During the early 1990s, the official party platform of the party was no to secession, yes to federalism (Lega Nord, 20 January 1993). The situation was reversed in 1996: the party seeking the secession of Padania from the Italian state. In 1998, the party leader announced yet another shift by proclaiming the willingness of Lega Nord to support devolution, no longer claiming independence from the Italian
state. As one senior member of Lega Nord explained these shifts: “In 1991-1992 we talked about macroregions while the other parties talked about regional autonomy. Otherwise there was confusion. Now, they all talk about federalism...we talk about independence”. One of the leaders of the party put it shorty: “We did politics as we moved along.”

2) Party Activist: Collective Identity and Political Participation

Rather than a party run by a few professional managers, Lega Nord’s organization relied on voluntary participation. Solidarity and normative incentives explain participation in Lega Nord’s organisation. Unlike views on the limitless power of new populist leaders, Bossi’s leadership is constrained by party organizational dynamics. The need to secure party activism and participation constrained the strategies of the leadership. Bossi has justified the adoption of many decisions on the grounds of the feelings of the party members. This is not a rhetorical device, but a very pressing concern for the party leader. It is not in the size of membership but in the type of political participation and organization that we find today the old features of political parties.

Lega Nord is defined as a revolutionary movement for radical change. The revolutionary nature of Lega Nord and its radical opposition to the current Italian political system is best illustrated by the self-definitions of Lega members. As one member put it: ‘We live like an army: the base are those pure and tough who do not go with negotiations and compromises.’ The nature of Lega as a movement, and not a political party is a key to explain party dynamics. The self-definition of Lega Nord as a movement marks the politics of radical transformation and revolutionary commitment that, according to the members of Lega Nord, distinguishes their political project from the rest of Italian parties. As one regional councilor of Lega Nord in Veneto put it: “Sono intrato in Lega per farla morire” (I entered Lega to make it die).

Pizzorno states that political participation and subcultural participation can be categorized as a distinctive type of political participation, “they are outside the structure of convergence channels that finished with the state as the regulator of the main system of interests, both reflect different and autonomous values” (Pizzorno 1966:273). Normative and solidaristic incentives are crucial to encourage people to participate in politics (Olson 1971; Tarrow 1990). The paradox of these type

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17 According to the first statute of the party, Lega Nord was: ‘a federalist movement for the transformation of the Italian state through democratic means’. The current statute, approved in the Third Federal Congress of the party, 14-16 February 1997, changed the content of article 1. Now article 1 reads: ‘the political Movement named Lega Nord for the Independence of Padania has as its goal the independence of Padania through democratic means and the recognition of the latter as an independent and sovereign republic’ (Lega Nord party statutes 1997).
Incentives for political participation are collective. Participation creates collective identities and “areas” of equality that shape individual preferences (Pizzorno 1993). Challenging the political establishment reinforce collective boundaries between “us” and “them” (Pizzorno 1966; 1993; Melucci 1992). The creation of tensions with the environment and the activation of a friend-and-foe relationship with outside elements reinforce organizational and symbolic boundaries. This type of mobilization dynamics prevented the emergence of procedural mechanisms for the solution of conflicts. Internal conflict over courses of action and strategies fundamentally evolved around issues of loyalty. The external enemy has an internal dimension (traitors) and voice within the movement is constrained by claims of loyalty.

The tasks performed by party activists in local party sections are both celebratory and proselytizing (Lange 1975; Kertzer). Party members are engaged in ‘face to face’ politics, from bars to public markets. Voluntary participation in local party sections evolves around the diffusion of party programs, the distribution of party propaganda and the organization of public feasts.

3) Party Voters: Self-Identification and Voting Behavior

One of the most striking features of these political parties is the non-congruence between party elites and voters’ attitudes. As Shepsle puts it: “parties choose locations in an ideological or policy space over which potential voters have preferences”. Keneth Shpesle, Models of Multiparty Electoral Competition (Harwood Academic Publishers 1991) I think mixed models of voting behavior are better equipped to understand the way party elites can influence new electoral alignments. This work leaves open the question of the individual motives of voters, but strongly suggests that neither traditional theories of party identification, organizational encapsulation nor rational choice emphasis on maximizing utility functions, adequately answer the question of the formation of political preferences and voting behavior.

As many electoral studies during the 1990s show, a label for a party leadership or a party program might or might not correspond to the proper label for the party voters. Typical examples

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18 Some attempts to reconcile rationality and identity in social movement theory have analysed a collective identity from the theory of individual incentives. See D. Friedman, and D. McAdam, “Collective Identity and Activism. Networks, Choices and the Life of a Social Movement” in Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller eds. Frontiers in Social Movement Theory (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992). The problem lies, however, in explaining what constitutes selective incentives. Identity cannot be a selective incentive, since it can be freely consumed by individuals by simply identifying with symbols. Moreover, a theory of individual selective incentives that does not rely on material incentives needs to explain collective mobilization on the grounds of individual normative and solidaristic incentives, which are, as I explained above, collective by definition.

19 The importance of ‘face to face’ politics in Lega Nord’s style of political mobilization has also been highlighted by Ruzza and Schmidtke. See Carlo Ruzza and O. Schmitke, ‘Roots of Success of the Lega Lombarda: Mobilisation Dynamics and the Media,’ West European Politics Vol. 16 (No.2 April 1993): 1-23.
are the Flemish Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord, where party elites defined themselves as radical nationalist and party voters are clearly distinguished by their attitudes against migrants and not by their nationalist feelings (Swyngedouw 1998). During the 1990s several studies have address the question of protest vote, providing a wealth of evidence to show that voters are ‘rational’ in their choices and party programs play a larger role in explaining why voters behave as they do.

Background: Comparing the Trajectories of Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord

In this paper, Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord are brought together to examine the identity politics of both political parties. The Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord share the claim to represent a peripheral nationalism, both are considered anti-migrant or racist parties, and both parties present themselves as challengers, outsiders to the political system and in fundamental opposition to traditional political parties in Belgium and Italy. The Vlaams Blok is one of the clear-cut examples of the extreme right in European party systems. The nationalism of the Vlaams Blok is analyzed as an ethnic nationalism and there is also agreement on the xenophobic nature of the anti-migrant agenda (Swyngedouw 1992; 2000; Mudde 2000). In contrast, beyond establishing that migration is one of the issues politicized by Lega Nord, there was little agreement on the relevance and main characteristics of these elements in party ideology. First, scholars have contrasting views about the relative importance of anti-migration rhetoric in the party identity. Some authors stress the importance of mobilization against migrants in the very formation of Lega Nord (Biorcio 1991; 1997). Others, in contrast, consider the question of migration as one among several in party mobilization and focus in the representation of local interests and the center-periphery cleavage (Diamanti 1993; 1995). There are also contrasting views about the relative importance of anti-migrant rhetoric in the case of new migrants vis-à-vis the expression of prejudices and the negative portrait of Southerners. Biorcio finds out a ‘substitution effect’ by which the rhetoric against new migrants replaced an earlier focus on anti-Southerner mobilization (Biorcio 1991, 1997, for the opposite view see Gomez-Reino 2001).

Party formation in both the Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord was the product of institutional factors. Both parties found the structure of incentives in institutional grievances. In the case of the Vlaams Blok the refusal of the Egmont Pact that initiated the reforms of the Belgian state structure from a centralized into a federal state (Gysels 1992; Sywngedouw 1992). In the case of the first parties created in the “ordinary” regions of Northern Italy and that later merged into a single Lega Nord, the distinction between “special” and “ordinary” regions in the Italian state structure

20 Balbo and Manconi write that: ‘the hostility against extracomunitari migrants (and until 1989 also anti-Southern migrants), is the fundamental mark of Lega Nord’s identity and its public discourse; the refusal of alternative identities is a central element of the party subculture’ (Balbo and Manconi 1992:85).
In their first decade of existence, both parties—in the Italian case, the variety of parties in the ordinary regions that later merged into Lega Nord—were minor and marginal players in Flemish and Italian politics. The first ten years of party mobilization were an electoral failure (Swyngedouw 1992, Biorcio 1997). Both political platforms found in second order elections—the European elections of 1989 a new political space and public visibility.

If the Vlaams Blok is defined as an extreme-right wing party, “culturally racist, separatist and authoritarian”, Vlaams Blok voters are defined as “protesters, populist and ethnocentrist” (Swyngedouw 1998: 202). By the 1999 elections and the 2000 local elections, the Vlaams Blok was continuing to grow in electoral terms. Vlaams Blok has benefited from political scandals in Belgium—several corruption affaires, the Augusta affaire, the Dioxine scandals (Swyngedouw, Beerten and Kampen 1999:1). The party has also benefited from the erosion of traditional parties (gaining voters from VLD, SP and CVP) (Swyngedouw and Beerten 1999:24). Vlaams Blok voters’ are clearly distinguished by their attitudes against migrants. In 1995, 32.9% of the party voters voted on the basis of the position of the party on migration (Swyngedouw, Beerten, Carton and Billiet 1996, deel 1: 24). Vlaams Blok support from workers is remarkable (18.3%), but still the CVP has a higher percentage of workers’ electoral support (Swyngedouw, Beerten and Kampen 1999:24). Vlaams Blok has also remarkable electoral support from ziefstandigen and pensioners (14.5% and 13% respectively by the 1999 general elections Swyngedouw, Beerten and Kampen 1999:25). 61% of Vlaams Blok voters’ are men and they are slightly overrepresented in the group of the population with only secondary education (37%) (Swyngedouw, Beerten and Kampen 1999:31).

Lega Nord’s electoral record in Italian politics has decreased over the entire decade, becoming even more marginal in political terms over the past two years. The political trajectory of Lega Nord during the 1990s shows substantial changes in its short history. In 1994 Lega Nord became part of a awkward electoral coalition with a new party, Forza Italia and the ex fascist Alleanza Nazionale. The electoral coalition won the general elections and formed a government under the leadership of Berlusconi. Lega Nord’s decision to withdraw within a few months from the Berlusconi government unraveled the Italian political scenario once more. After 1994 Lega Nord became a political failure and marginalised player with the normalization of the Italian party system, only to obtain, in the 1996 general elections, the best electoral results in its short history. Then the results of the 1999 European elections and the 2000 regional elections—in coalition with Berlusconi—fixed the position of Lega Nords as a secondary player in Italian politics.

Research during the past decade provides sufficient evidence of the anti-migrant attitudes of Lega Nord’s voters (Biorcio 1991, 1997; Van Der Brug, Fenemma and Tillie 2000). A survey
conducted in 1996 confirmed earlier analyses on the anti-migrant attitudes of Lega Nord’s voters. 58% of Lega Nord voters agreed with the assertion: ‘too many migrants disturb’, compared to a population average of 40% in the Northern Italian regions. 52% of Lega Nord’s voters agreed with the assertion ‘it would be better to return migrants to their countries of origin’, compared with a population average of 38.7% in these regions. 14.6% of Lega Nord’s voters agreed with the assertion: ‘migration was one of the three more important problems in Italy’, compared to a population average of 10.3% in the Italian North (Biorcio 1997: 258).

According to Diamanti:

Voting for Lega does not reflect an ethnic identity, but rather, a local identity that finds the source of integration and economic regulation in the local environment, in its social milieu, in its system of relationship and traditions. Therefore, it is in localism, where one should dig to find the sources of the leghista phenomenon: to find the reasons of its persistence and strengths but also the limits to which it is constrained (Diamanti 1997:27).

In his view, the replacement of the Christian Democratic Party by Lega Nord in the area defined as Pedemontana, seems to be an inevitable and predictable process driven by local economies. Local identities in these areas provide Lega Nord with an “encapsulated” constituency. However, the electoral marekt is much more in flux than this interpretation seems to suggest. In Diamanti’s analysis, 54% of the electoral districts in the North belong to what Diamanti defines as the ‘competitive’ North. Diamanti focuses on the deep North, but in this competitive North Lega Nord is also the first party in terms of votes. In these areas, there was increasing electoral competitiveness and electoral change since 1996 (see Riccamboni 1997; Messina 1997, Natale 1997). The analyses conducted by Zucchini indicate that political uncertainty was widespread in the 1996 elections. Zucchini’s data shows that Lega Nord’s voters were much more uncertain about their choices than voters for the left and right-wing coalitions were. 61.1% of Lega Nord’s voters made their choice during the electoral campaign of 1996, while 64.7% of voters for the right-wing coalition decided much earlier. Only 20% of voters for the left coalition and 16% for the right coalition declared that they made their decision between a few weeks and a week before the elections, compared to 30% of Lega voters (Zucchini 1997: 7).

It is in a political environment of uncertainty, complexity and political change that we have to situate the electoral success of Lega Nord. The rapid changes taking place in Italian politics shaped the struggle of party elites to adapt to the transformation of the system. The ability of Lega Nord’s to cater to uncertain voters is concentrated in the areas of the North where the erosion of the

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21 The same survey shows the overlap between the attitudes of both Lega Nord’s and Alleanza Nazionale’s voters. The percentages of voters agreeing with the assertions that “too many migrants disturb” (58% Lega Nord, 58.1% AN), “it would be better to return migrants to their countries of origin” (52.6% LN, 54.7%) and “migration is one of the three most important problems in Italy” (14.6% LN, 15.7% AN) are almost identical (Biorcio 1997:158).
Christian Democrats was widespread. These areas determined a scenario under which the party leadership gained an peculiar *market niche* in the Italian party system. In local contexts dominated by the DC in the past—where traditionally the distinction between identities and interests was of little relevance to explain politics—the party found its electoral stronghold.

Lega Nord and Vlaams Blok are ‘most different cases’ when it comes to the specification of the institutional and political context. If we locate all new radical right wing parties in European party systems along a continuum that ranges from exclusion to inclusion in institutional politics—in local, regional and national governments—Vlaams Blok is situated in one of the extremes (no participation) and Lega Nord on the other extreme (participation at all levels). Lega Nord has participated in government at the local, regional and national level (at the local level already in 1992, at the regional level in 1995, and at the national level already in 1994), whereas the Vlaams Blok has been excluded from government at all levels by the well-known *cordon sanitaire*. The institutional dimension must be stressed when comparing both cases. In the Italian case, Lega Nord entered a national government with Forza Italia and the Alleanza Nazionale already in 1994—coalitions replicated with Forza Italia as well at the regional and local level. The Vlaams Blok, in contrast, has been excluded from government at the local, regional and national level by an agreement of all parties, the *cordon sanitaire*.

**Comparing the Identity Politics of Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord**

The main features of the ideological elaboration of the Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord as a fully-fledged system of thought about *us* and against the *other* are explained. Party denunciations of the presence and effects of migrants could be easily matched not only in the representation of the *other* as a *criminal* element disrupting the social order in European societies, but also in the adoption of *cultural differentialism* as the explicit party ideology. Some scholars noticed already in the early 1990s a cultural differentialism in Lega Nord (Biorcio 1991). Yet although some recurrent themes appeared in the statements and documents from Lega Nord since the early 1990s, it is only during the 1990s that we can explicitly refer to the articulation of party ideology as a systematic view of group differences. The increasing sofistication of party ideological production is not unique to Lega Nord. Evidence from Vlaams Blok also shows their increasing ideological sophistication over time (Swyngedouw 1997).

However, there are significant differences between the two parties. My interviews with members of party elites from Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord shows that the former politicians are more prepared and ideologically sophisticated than Lega Nord politicians. The propaganda from the Vlaams Blok is also much more sophisticated and consistent over the decade. Just compare references to Gramsci, meta-politics and the *nouvelle droite* from Filip Dewinter and Frank van Hecke with the confusing rhetoric of Bossi or the statements of Lega Nord party elites (with very few exceptions, see Fassa 1996).
1) **Peripheral Nationalism and Migration in Belgium and Italy: The Sociological Basis of Political Mobilization**

Nationalism in Flanders has more than a century of existence. The *communaute kwestie* involved over time the passage of several linguistic laws, the formation of political parties claiming Flemish political autonomy, the success of the Volksunie in the 1970s, the transformation of the state structure and the breaking up of the party system along linguistic lines since the 1960s. The linguistic divide operate as a physical border between the two main communities—we do not address the issue of the Brussels region here. Both communities are mostly monolingual and the stability of the linguistic divide is remarkable (Hooghe 1993; see table). While the linguistic divide remained stable since the post-war period, the regional economic divide experienced a reversal, the traditionally poor and peasant Flemish region has experienced increasing rates of economic growth and regional development, while the south was hardly hit by economic restructuring and lagged behind the north since the 1970s (Hooghe 1993). A wealth of evidence since the 1970s has shown the strength of territorial identities—both regional and local—in Belgium, the importance of dual identities, and the weaknss of the national identity (see table).

In contrast, Northern Italy had no experience political mobilization on the ethno-territorial cleavage—with the exception of the ‘special’ regions of the North (Trentino Alto-Adige, Val d’Aosta and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Political mobilization in the ‘ordinary’ regions of Northern Italy was a new phenomenon that started in the 1970s (Gomez-Reino 2000). The ‘ordinary’ regions in Northern Italy were not characterized by clear-cut linguistic differences—although the case must be discussed region by region (see table). The Northern regions are characterized by their industrialization rates (both the old industrial triangle in Piedmont and Lombardy and the *Terza Italia*, as well as the recent miracle of the *Nordest*. The north-south economic divide has remained stable over the post-war period (Trigilia 1992). Arguments about a growing gap between north and south (Putnam 1993) are misleading since there is no empirical evidence to support this view (Piattoni 1996; Gomez-Reino 2001). (see tables). National identity in Italy is also weak, but unlike Belgium, local—but not regional—identities are very resilient—a phenomenon well-captured by research on the territorial political subcultures in the post-war period (Trigilia 1987). Unfortunately and compare to the Belgium case, evidence on territorial self-identification is scarce (see Segatti 1995; Diamanti 1996).

As other Northern European countries, Belgium has traditionally received migrants from Southern Europe and her ex-colonies in the post-war period. The percentage of migrants relative to the population is 8.9% (compared to Germany (8.9%), France (6.35%), Belgium (8.9%) or the Netherlands (4.3%) (Ismu 1999; Jaarverslag 1999). A first wave of migrants mostly from Italy, Spain and Portugal was followed by migrants from the ex-colonies—mostly Congo after...
independence—and later migrants from Moroccan and Turkish origin (see tables). The long-term migration to Belgium involves the socio-economic, cultural and political integration of the second-generation, as well as new issues related to the presence of new migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees. We do not discussed the situation of the Brussels region here (for migrants in this region see Swyngedouw, Phalet and Deschouwer 1999).

The Italian situation is very different. Migration traditionally involved flows from south to north within Italy. The flow of migrants into Italy during the 1990s was a new social phenomenon. In less than a decade the absolute number of migrants (legal residents) in Italy went from 573,258 in 1993 to 1,126,628 in 1999 (Istat 1999: 364). In 1999, migrants represented 2% of the population in Italy. In contrast to other European countries, the pattern of migration into Italy—described by the ISTAT as diffused migration—is further characterized two main factors. First, the fragmentation of the migrant population from the point of view of ethnic groupings is typical from Italy and differs from other patterns in European states (Istat 1999: 354). The biggest migrant community is formed by migrants from Moroccan origin, followed by Ex-Yugoslavia and Albania. Migrants from Eastern Europe represent 25% of the total migrant population. The presence of migrants from China and The Philippines, Sri Lanka, India, Brasil and Peru is also significant (Istat 1999: 354-355). In the 1990s Italian political and institutional actors and the media adopted during the 1990s the label extracomunitario to refer to new migrants (Balbo and Manconi 1992; Maneri 1997). The term—unique to the Italian context and with no parallels in other European countries--refers both to new migrants as a general category, and to migrants from countries other than those belonging to the current European Union (Balbo and Manconi 1992: 59).

Despite the different scenarios in Flanders and Northern Italy both in the sociological basis of cultural differences in terms of the populations of these territorial areas and the new migrants, next section shows the similarities in the identity politics of both parties and an ideological convergence during the 1990s.

2) Dual Identities and Europeanness: Volknationalisme and the Padanian markers

While the nationalism of the Vlaams Blok is usually classified under the label of an ethnic nationalism (Sywngedouw 1997; Mudde 2000), emphasis on the nationalism of Lega Nord as an invention has downplayed this aspect under a vaguely defined populist label. The question of identity in the rise of political mobilisation in Northern Italy is treated as epiphenomenal to political conflict. In contrast to parties that advanced ethnic identities, this is a “nationalism without a nation” (Melucci and Diani 1992). Moreover, Padanian nationalism is commonly defined as an
economic nationalism—to stop transfers to the south, whereas Vlaams Blok nationalism is mostly defined along the cultural question—the taalgrens in Belgium. Next section shows that this distinctions are irrelevant and that the nationalism of both parties shares the main features (although there are also differences). In this section, however, we introduce the sociological basis of both nationalism by characterizing cultural differences in Flanders and Northern Italy, both in terms of the populations of the territorial areas and of the presence of new migrants.

Vlaams Blok claims the legacy of more than century of traditional Flemish nationalism with its emphasis on linguistic and cultural differences between the communities in Belgium (Wie and Wat Zijn Wij? Lowie 1999). Language is still used in party propaganda and perceived by party elites as the main collective marker (see interviews). The differences between the two communities are largely defined along traditional markers: history, language, regional and territory—although the language is the main and first marker used by party elites. Members of the party elite commonly reject the label ethnic to refer to the Flemish community:

Het woord etnic is minder gebruik om de vlamingen te omschrijven omdat het minder in de traditie ligt bij ones. Het is de traditie om te spreken van het Vlaamse vollk (interview no. 5 1999).

Upon this basis, Vlaams Blok claims the independence of Flanders from the Belgian state (Zonder België omdat het moet; Zonder Belgie omdat het kan, see Vlaamse Onafhankelijkheid, vzw; see also Project Vlaams Staat, Annemans, Van Overmeire, Van Nieuwenhuysen vzw). Economic nationalism is based on the rejection of transfers to Wallonia. The language of both Lega Nord and Vlaams Blok on economic resources is basically the same (see Stop Waalse Diefstal; Contro l’Assitenzzialismo, Roma Ladroma).

Vlaams Blok defines the Flemish nation within the context of the Europeanness of the Flemish community. This is a common statement in the self-definitions of party elites (for Europeanness see also Swyngedouw 1998: 201). As one member of the party elite put it: “Nederlandse cultuur is vanzelfsprekend een deel van de Europese cultuur” (interview no 9. 1999).

“European” values within the context of Western civilization is a common reference to distinguish Flemish cultural legacies in the answers of party elites: the main categorical distinction introduces a divide between Europeans and non-Europeans (and within Europe, the Flemish nation is a Northern nation, the grote Neederland, enlarged to include the Netherlands and the Flemish communities in France).

This is a typical response to the question of self-identification from Vlaams Blok party elites:

Although I do not address the question in this paper, these legacies are a contested issue since Vlaams Blok has to share the public space of nationalism with the Volksunie, see for example the Ijzervedebart polemics. We must always distinguished between symbolic and institutional pro-Europeans, since both Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord party elites defined themselves as Europeans, yet are much more resistance to the institutional implications of European integration, see for Vlaams Blok, Wim Verreycken, Europa Barst? (Uitgeverij TYR vzw 1994).
Ik voel mij niet enkel Vlaming. Ik voel mij toch ook, ik zou zeggen Europeaan, maar dat is dan toch net te ver, Ik voel mij westerling. Ik voel mij in de eerste plaats Vlaming, in de tweede westerling (interview n.3 1999).

The propaganda of Lega Nord and the statements of party elites share many similarities with those from the Vlaams Blok. The transformation of the political parties claiming nationhood for the ‘ordinary’ regions of Northern Italy into a united Lega Nord under the leadership of Bossi led some scholars to the consideration that nationalism was not any longer the founding principle for the new party. However, a territorial identity remained for the party leadership the fundamental and legitimizing basis of their politics. The basic claim--we are different, we want to be treated differently--did not changed with the creation of a single party. Neither changed the coupling of identity with the economic rights of the North. As the claim to a territorial identity moved from regional nations to a united North, the categories of belonging and nationhood, its geographical boundaries and the markers of cultural distinctiveness were reshaped anew—the principle of congruence is normative, thus, the need to redefine the community along cultural lines.

In the fabrication of the North as a homogenous economic, cultural and political unity, Lega Nord combined two main elements that informed the discursive practices of Lega Nord’s leaders and the party ideological production: an attempt to define cultural differences in new ways and their Europeanness. Lega Nord grounded the claim of institutional recognition of the distinctiveness of Northern Italy as Padania, a nation, a multi-national reality, a ‘civic’ culture, a macro-European region. in search of its rights of self-government in a new European Union without nation-states. The party leadership have made the categories of belonging malleable and in the making. Asserting a distinctive territorial identity of the North for party leaders, organisers and supporters encompasses a variety of views on the content of cultural distinctiveness and the fundamental socio-economic nature of their homogeneity. As one of my interviewees described this malleability: ‘We still need to define where Padania reaches but different socio-economic processes and different identities do exist in the North.’ The first statute of the party did not specify the territorial boundaries of the North, the subsequent ones limited Padania.25

The rise of Lega Nord introduced a new language of differences, a new way of defining political conflict upon territorial basis. The basic categorical claim is the existence of a North as an homogeneous people: ‘we are a people with the same socio-economic fabric’. The creation of Lega Nord shaped a new territorial identity that encoded a set of new ideas about distinctiveness and territorial boundaries. Lega Nord’s leadership fabricated the the North as an homogeneous unit with

25If we take the national secretaries of the party as the regions included in the North, they are the following: Alto-Adige-Südtirol, Emilia, Friuli, Liguria, Lombardia, Marche, piemonte, Romagna, Toscana, Trentino, Trieste, umbria, Valle d’Aosta and Veneto. On the name of North or Padania.
common attributes and interests. The sameness of Northerners is represented as natural and self-evident. Languages, cultures and *ethnies* are part of the content of identity -- the legacy of the origins of the party -- and they are invoked to legitimize differences.

The party leader rejected *ethnicity* as the single criteria for distinctiveness. In the early 1990s, Bossi rejected the exclusiveness of the *ethnic* identities of the Northerners to define the peoples of the North: ‘Not for us. Not in the developed West. The cement can’t be only *ethnic*, it must be also economic’ (Lega Nord, February 3, 1993). The collective markers of culture distinctiveness shifted from *ethnic* and linguistic traits to *civic* and economic ones. In the views of the party leaders, the productivity and wealth of the North are a manifestation of pre-existing cultural differences: a culture of hard work, entrepreneurship and autonomy. Bossi defined the new cultural distinctiveness for the North:

> the isolation of every single region is not feasible because we face a powerful opponent, the national state (lo stato nazionale). The European culture, bring forward by Lega, has entered into collision with a centralist and anti-democratic culture of a great part of the country... In order to make our culture the winner, we absolutely need to avoid falling into the traps of micronationalism, into the battle for the local language. These are the things which will come about by themselves in a second stage, they are the natural consequence of the changed balance of political power (Lega Nord, May 28, 1993).

Lega Nord goes beyond the definition of culture as *ethnic* to modernize the definition of cultural distinctiveness. The new claim of distinctiveness involves the essentialization of civicness: the idea of a civic North, essentialized as a ‘democratic, participatory and well-governed’ and in its productive hard-working people:

> Padania is the North of Italy which has a civic tradition in the communes. Our project is based on our territory and civic traditions. Our inheritance are the comunes with their elected powers. This is our political gene, the sense of autonomy and freedom. This sense remains in our cities and in our spirit (my emphasis).

In this set of views, current economic processes simply accentuate and manifest the resilience of cultural differences. Lega Nord claims the Northern economic rights on the basis of cultural distinctiveness and nationhood. As an article in the journal linked to Lega Nord, *Quaderni Padani* put it,

> Economical and social factors, especially in relation to European integration and the processes of internationalization of the economy, play today a determinant role in the process of taking national conciousness by the padanian-alpinian people...a hundred and thirty years of centralized hood and nationalist rhetoric did not yet serve to construct an identity and a unity for which there were no basis: at most they were able to hide part of the

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26 Some Lega members mentioned Putnam’s Lega work *Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* as a prove of the ‘cultural’ differences and division between North and South. On the interpenetration of nationalist discourse with social-scientific discourse see Handler, *The politics of Culture.*
cultural diversity under a veil of conformistic levelling. Today the veil is being torn precisely by the socio-economic differences. 27

The modernity on the fabrication of the North incorporates also a diverse and *multicultural* North. Sameness within the North also encompasses diversity. Lega politicians from Lombardy, Veneto and Piedmont assert the differences within the North but downplay their political relevance. Lega Nord is, from this point of view, a plural reality composed by the differences among the regions, recognized and institutionalized in the party organization. A representative of Lega summarised the elements to understand unity and diversity: ‘the North is homogeneous and dishomogeneous from the rest of Italy. For example, the are differences between Piedmont, Lombardy and Veneto but they are small. The differences between us and the rest of the country are, however, *fundamental* differences’ (my emphasis). The claim of distinctiveness is based on their commonalities as Northerners and Europeans. As one of the early founders of the Lega in Lombardy introduced himself: ‘I am a European who lives in Padania’.

What characterizes new political mobilization in Northern Italy is *not* the invention or construction of a national distinctiveness. What is characteristic is the extent to which invention is built upon new collective markers yet the old markers are also used to legitimize the “cultural distance” between north and south. Initially identities in party mobilization were *ethnic* and language provided for collective distinctiveness. The content of identity changed (from ethnic essentialism to economic and *civic* essentialism), as well as the territory bounding the collectivity (from the existing ordinary regions to a new North with fuzzy territorial boundaries). Next section looks at the political construction of *otherness* in party ideology and propaganda. Again, despite the differences in the sociological basis for political mobilization against migrants and the different starting points, over the decade of the 1990s there is an ideological convergence of themes and arguments in both political parties.

1) The Political Construction of Otherness: *Baas in Eigen Land* and *Padroni a Casa Propria*

The anti-migrant mobilization of the Vlaams Blok has been extensively analyzed and explained in historical perspective (see the excellent Swyngedouw 1995). The ideological construction of the other in party propaganda has been also analyzed (Mudde 2000; Swyngedouw and Ivaldi 1999). Lega Nord’s mobilization against migrants has also been studied (see Balbo and Manconi 1992; Biorcio 1997; for a distinction between party mobilization and party ideology in the anti-migrant politics of Lega Nord see Gomez-Reino 2001). In studying the political construction of otherness

27 (Michele Corti, Padania’Italia, Quale “Questione Nazionale?” Quaderni Padani, Anno 1, n.2, Autunno 1995. p.15)
we focus on the similarities between the identity politics of both parties. 28 The discourse of purity and pollution—the HIV virus—the cultural and economic threat that portrays migration and the polemic against multiculturalism are both present in party ideology.

There are innovations in the political discourses against migrants in the case of both political parties. Vlaams Blok propaganda reference to the traditional term Gastarbaiders was substituted by the use of the term Vreemdelingen and the criminalization of migrants as illegal. Lega Nord experienced a similar trend in that the common label extracomunitari evolved into the use of clandestini and ilegali to refer to new migrants. Migrants for the Vlaams Blok face the issue of Aanpassing of Terugkeer at the same time that the party propaganda explains why new migrants—from Turkish and Morroccan origin cannot be integrated in Western societies (see Dewinter, *Immigratie: De Tijdbom tikt!* 1996; *Baas in Eigen Land* 2000). The ideological construction of cultural incompatibility is developed during the 1990s largely along the influence of the French nouvelle droite and Le Pen’s Front National platform. The 70-punten plan of the Vlaams Blok extensively develops a set of policy measures to return migrants to their lands of origins (Vlaams Blok, 70-punten plan (compared to the policies recommended by Lega Nord below).

As we saw above, the Italian situation has specific characteristics both in the social conditions of migration—the novelty of the process and the difficulties in characterizing systematically migrant groups given the multiplicity of origins—and in the political scenario—a large political consensus about the problems and solutions of migration and the enlargement of the discourse of social order to most political parties. Lega Nord’s mobilization during the 1990s focused on campaigning against migrants—gypsies, Albanians or North-Africans—reflecting the social characteristics of migration flows into Italy. In contrast, party ideology introduced and developed a main distinction between Europeans and non-Europeans. The categories of race and ethnicity had scarce relevance in Italian debates about new migration (Manneri 1997, Sniderman et al 2000). However, ethnicity and race were used explicitly by Lega Nord in the definition and characterization of groups. Our interest here is the use of the labels. Since the early 1980s there is a search for the ideological legitimation of prejudice that involved a new definition of the Southern problem. In the 1980s the result is a definition of North-South differences in Italy on ethnic grounds. In contrast, in the 1990s the ethnic label applied to new migrants, whereas the North-South question became one of a reversed internal colonialism within Italy. Although the label ethnic is no longer used in party production and public statements about the South, collective markers remained cultural and pressed similarities into Southerners and new migrants, always

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28 However, there are differences that must be mentioned. Vlaams Blok has been accused of revisionism and anti-semitism. Although Mudde has not found anti-semitism in the party ideology, this is a recurrent theme that Vlaams Blok politicians have to face (see the problems in Antwerpen, in Van den Brink, (Filip Dewinter), De Jonge Turken
defined as non-European.

In a 1988 propaganda issued by Bossi’s Lega Lombarda, for example, the *ethnic* problem in Italy was defined as follows:

A centralized state is not in fact the state of all citizens but it is a state which is controlled by the *ethnic* majority of a country, which for us is that of the Southerners. In the present situation in Italy it is sufficient for a party represented in the whole of the territory of the state to become automatically a party with a Southerner hegemony and thus, a party driven to favor unilateral privileges that discriminate unfairly against the Cisalpine populations. A completely different question is the problem of black migrants because they are not an ethnic majority and therefore, they cannot become hegemonic. If ever they will provoke serious problems of social dissgregation, but certainly not fundamental problems of hegemony and freedom (Lega Lombarda 1988).

In 1989 Lega Lombarda/Alleanza Nord propaganda equated *apartheid* with centralism in Italy, the presence of a state racism in Italy generating *ethnic* and *racial* oppression (according to Lega Nord, the ethnic or racial majority was the one in charge of the state, that is the Southerners). The comparison between black migrants and Southerners was shaped by the idea that the *real problem* was the presence of Southerners in the North, and not the new arrival of black migrants.

The use of these labels, however, changed in the early 1990s. The label *ethnicity* became the new label to talk about new migration. In contrast, *cultural* differences between Northerners and Southerners remained in party statements and speeches, without the *ethnic* label to distinguish the ‘two Italies.’ As Bossi put it:

there is no doubt that in Italy two different cultures are confronted, they are diffused in the country without precise geographical boundaries but with primacy of one over the other. A European culture, entrepreneurial, open and risk-oriented, fundamentally liberal and a Southern culture—levantina e assistenzialista—entrenched in the bureaucracy and the *ceti parassitari*, depending on the state and its guarantees, close to the Mafia logic …out and against the rules of tolerance, democracy and efficiency, this is not a conflict between macroregions or etnies, it is the conflict between two cultures (Bossi 1993: 206-207).

In 1998 the language of *ethnicity* has re-entered Lega Nord’s political discussion about new migration flows. Migration from outside European countries is identified as a problem for its potential in creating *ethnic* conflict:

Those who oppose immigration from outside the European community are people who do not despise their own ancestors, their own language, they are proud of their own *ethnic* community without, however, considering themselves superior to others, they accept differences, prefer their own people to members of their ethnic groups without rejecting cooperation between them (Enti Locali 1998).

The language of ethnicity paradoxically came back to describe not only the *other* but *us*. As the

van het Vlaams Blok (Scoop, Gent 1999): 170; for the last recent scandal see the polemic about Roeland Raes
same document of the party stated: ‘by dint of the will to uproot systematically and unilaterally every feeling of ethnic belonging, aren’t we risking the accumulation of a latent aggressiveness?’ (Enti Locali 1998). At the end of the 1990s, and in the name of the defense of ‘our own people,’ the ethnic element is reintroduced by Lega Nord in the distinction between us and the other:

facing the ridicule accusations of racism that are thrown against the patriots who fight against the destruction of their own people, we need to confirm the sacred right of our people to maintain and defend their own ethno-cultural and religious identity’ (Enti Locali 1998).

In the party propaganda, the coming of a multiracial society is the contemporary threat in European societies:

the multiracial model is the essence of American society. In contrast, Europe is never being multiracial. Although in her millenaria history there have been internal migration and letting in of racially different components, nevertheless the European ethnies have maintained a basic homogeneity and a reciprocal affinity that derives from their common indo-European origin (Enti Locali 1998: 22)

The meaning of ethnicity and race shifted with the transformation of political debates during the decade. The instrumental uses of the label ethnicity and its changing political meaning should be explained for two main reasons. First, the use of the label ethnicity in the 1990s in political debates about migrants in a process that involves a reversal of representations. In the 1980s the characterisation of the other is a function of the ethnic hegemony of the Southerns in party leadership’s statements and propaganda. In contrast, the ethnic label appears in the 1990s increasingly linked to the presence of new migrants, to portrait both new migrant’s groups in Italian society and the ethnic Padanian culture. Second, although the labels were reversed over the two decades, their essentializing role remains the same and thus, cultural distance—whether ethnic or civic in the changing language of Lega Nord—naturalizes collective differences, represented as intrinsic and natural markers to define individuals. The affinity between the use of cultural or racial markers as natural is the defining element. Precisely the exchange of labels between the two groups illustrates the contemporary malleability and applicability of cultural differentialism.

In search of a legitmizing framework, cultural differentialism provides Lega Nord with a theoretical justification. Instead of social prejudices, cultural distance is brought to the discussion to legitimise the portrait of Southerners. The rejection of a prospective multiracial society was already present in Lega Nord since the early 1990s, but their integration into a coherent whole was a process completed over the decade. This representation of cultural differences has become familiar in Europe: one of a clash of civilizations between a tolerant Europe and the threat represented by

the Arab world. For Bossi:

Lega defends marginal cultures, the small peoples with their traditional patrimony that must not be frozen, but kept alive respecting the roots that are the essence of humanity. This tolerant vision is essentially European, and as such must be asserted today more than ever, vis-à-vis the diffusion of the cultures of intolerance and integralism sustained by an imperialist and macronationalistic logic. The Islam, on the one hand, and American colonization on the other, threatened the great European culture that has in Padania a stronghold and in the South an advance post (Bossi 1993: 205).

These common themes are the following: demographic arguments about the extinction of the European society; the anti-globalisation view that refuses the transformation of societies in multicultural states, the explicit adoption of a differentialist view that characterises migrants’ integration in host societies as impossible because of cultural incompatibility, and the identification of migrants as competitors for scarce resources. In party literature, pseudo-scientific arguments about demographic change are a starting point to assess the dangers of migration as part of a larger process that involves the extinction of European societies. Lega Nord’s propaganda holds that Europe has a problem in the Mediterranean as all the area—from the Magreb to Turkey—represents a threat on two grounds: religion and the lack of pluralistic systems. It is on the evolution of birth rates that Lega’s propaganda places the extinction of the European civilisation and warns about: ‘an unstoppable process and march towards extinction, is hidden by the migration wave that our country is suffering’ (Enti Locali 1998: 9). The propaganda of Lega Nord emphasizes the importance of the protection of the family unit and the promotion of the traditional role of women and as a tool to increase birth rates. The problem is explained as one of values and mentality because ‘selfish material considerations’ create an environment that does not encourage the family as the ‘basic unity’ in Western society.

Lega Nord is against the development of multiracial societies as the prospective outcome of globalisation and contemporary imperialism. The United States and France are considered examples of inter-racial conflicts and violence. The multiracial society envisioned by Lega Nord ‘eliminates cultural references and collective identities and represents ‘another step in individuals’ alienation’ (Enti Locali, 1998). Lega Nord’s propaganda asserts that public opinion is instinctively against ‘mass and other than European’ migration. In Lega Nord’s perspective, the racist threat is not in Western societies but in the destructive processes involved in the coming of multiracial societies. For Lega Nord, advocates of multiculturalism are the ‘true racists’ because they refused the diversity of peoples and cultures. In short, for Lega Nord: ‘Patriotism represents the last obstacle to avoid the progress of two imperial powers: the American and the Islam’ (Enti Locali 1998:14). Those who defend their own ethnic community are not racist, but patriots who are involved in a reactive defense against threats to their identity and their community. For the
propaganda of Lega Nord, ‘the ideology of the multiracial society is based on two principles, the melting pot that promotes hybrid cultures and the lack of cultural and social roots. In contrast, Lega Nord’s stresses the importance of emotional ties, of cultural and ethnic continuity’ (Enti Locali 1998: 16). For Lega Nord ‘migrants have the right to come and stay,’ while ‘Padanians are invited to forget their history, their culture and their identity’ (Enti Locali 1998: 16).

The party document established a set of five measures for the defense of Padanians against migrants. First, Lega Nord is against the establishment of voting rights for migrants and asks for a restrictive definition of citizenship linked to the principle of ius sanguinis. Second, Lega Nord seeks the preservation of ‘the specificities of our people, history and traditions in schools, and the need to ‘stop multicultural indoctrination in the schools.’ Third, Lega Nord asks for ‘the priority of Padanians and Europeans in the job market and social services’. Lega Nord has introduced the Italian version of ‘Le Francais d’Abord’ (FN in France) or Eigen Volk Eerst (VB in Belgium), Padroni a casa propria. Fourth, Lega Nord envisages the return of foreigners to their lands of origin, creating a special fund to finance it. In addition, the party program proposes the introduction of a special tax for entrepreneurs that employ new migrants instead of Padanians to cover the social costs of unemployment. Fifth, and last point, the party program asks for the development of a policy of balanced international cooperation with Third World countries. For Lega Nord, those countries that refuse the return of migrants must be punished with special sanctions and with their exclusion from international cooperation (Enti Locali 1998: 30).

Comparing Party Elites Strategic Dilemmas: Between Moderation and Radicalization

Both political parties are characterized by party leadership: Karel Dillen formerly and currently Frank Van Hecke in the Vlaams Blok, Umberto Bossi in Lega Nord. Both political parties are centralized hierarchies (Gomez-Reino 2001). Vlaams Blok elites define themselves as radical nationalists and they are comfortable with the definition (self) of the party as a new right. In contrast, Lega Nord party elites refuse the label right: We are neither left nor right”. Both party elites consider their role as purely political. Lega Nord party elites understand their role as a party vanguard in the transformation of people’s attitudes about the political autonomy of the Italian North. Lega Nord party elite agree that their role is purely ‘political’: to change the system and to mobilize and make people ‘aware’ of the situation of the North.

Lega Nord’s leadership introduced a new dimension defining electoral space in the Italian party system: the territorial identity of the North. As one member of the party elite put it: “we are neither left or right. We are for verticality. We represent a new axis centralism-federalism”. The party leadership has always claimed a political space of its own. As Bossi put it:
For a federalist, the true alternative is not left or right. One who is convinced that only a true federalist reform of the state can transform Italy into a modern European country knows that the true alternative is another one: federalism or centralism (Bossi 1995: 57).

In the case of Vlaams Blok, regional and local party organizations do not have the right to appoint their candidates (they can put forward nominations) (Mudde 2000: 92-93). In the case of Lega Nord, there are two main mechanisms for the selection of the party elite (Gomez-Reino 2001). First, Bossi’s direct appointment recruits the top leadership. The leadership of the party over the last decade shows a group of politicians loyal to the leader, *i fedelissimi*. Second, Lega Nord runs party primaries in which the party ‘ordinary’ members have the right to vote. While some party organizers claim the primaries are an example of real internal democracy, the *national* secretaries in the regions control the outcomes of these elections. They make sure the right candidates are included and the wrong ones excluded. Two issues should be highlighted. First, the 1996 primaries were precisely used by the hierarchy of the party to give party members more *voice* in the selection of the candidates. In fact, the new parliamentary group of Lega Nord, elected in 1996, had a high rate of party experience at the local level. The party primaries allowed Bossi to retain his power over the party elite—at the mercy of both Bossi’s willingness to support their candidacies—, and on the other hand, the strengthening of local party sections where the performance of party representatives was *evaluated* by party members. Second, the party primaries are, for the leader, a political mechanism to encourage people to participate in the life of the party. Lega Nord party elite was entirely new to politics. The year with the highest percentage of representatives with no party experience in office was 1994 (37% of party representatives did not have experience in the party organisation). Over time, the trend is towards recruitment in the lower ranks of the party officials. In 1996, 36% of Lega Nord’s representatives had experience in the lower ranks of the party organisation (as opposed to the 24.2% average for the entire Chamber).

Specifying party elite strategic dilemmas of the Flemish Vlaams Blok and the Italian Lega Nord during the 1990s, the focus is on the type of leadership and the presence or absence of distinctive wings within party elites. In the Vlaams Blok there is a ‘division of labor’ between the anti-migrant agenda (Filip Dewinter) and the Flemish nationalism (Gerolf Annemans). In the Lega Nord case, the distinction between moderates and radicals, and its articulation in the independestist faction of Lega Nord (Mario Borghezio and Erminio Boso) and the moderates (such as Gnutti or in the past Irene Pivetti). This division of labor sometimes work, and sometimes not, in political terms. In the next two sections, we outline the internal and external political opportunities and constraints opened to party elites in light of the importance of party activism and new political space. Rather than defining one single road from radicalization to moderation, from mobilization to institutionalization, we specify the scenario open to party elites as a set of opportunities and constraints that have to be assessed in light of internal and external considerations.
**Internal Opportunities and Constraints: Party Organizations and militants**

Party organizations are commonly treated as a secondary development in the rise of the new radical right (Kitschelt and McGann 1995). Scholars do not explore what the party did—since grievances were conceptualized as the product of public dissatisfaction with political parties, the impact of the crisis of the welfare state on disadvantaged groups and widespread anti-migrant attitudes. Both Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord are conceived as a minimal party in terms of size, membership and mobilization capacities (see Gomez-Reino 2001). However some scholars have also paid attention to party organizations (Swyngedouw 1999). In the case of Lega Nord, there are different views on the role of the party organization and some scholars have even classified Lega Nord as a mass party (Ricolfi 1995). It is generally assumed that both Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord party elites are largely unconstrained by internal organizational dynamics, although the factionalism of party elites is widely known. Unlike views on the limitless power of new populist leaders, Dillen—and currently Frank Van Hecke—and Bossi’s leadership are constrained by party organizational dynamics. The *cordon sanitaire* in Belgium has favored the relatively unproblematic relationship between Vlaams Blok representatives and party activists, while Lega Nord organization has been in turmoil over the entire decade. Bossi has justified the adoption of many decisions on the grounds of the feelings of the party members. This is not a rhetorical device, but a very pressing concern for the party leader.

Rather than parties ran by a few professional managers, both Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord’s organizations rely on voluntary participation. Solidarity and normative incentives explain participation in both organizations. The party organizations consolidated themselves as machines for symbolic production during the 1990s (Gomez-Reino 2001).

The Vlaams Blok organization has over 180 local branches and thirteen secretariats through

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30 The presence of Bossi and the emphasis on crisis conditions made the question of the limited following of the party and political participation and allegiance to Lega Nord a matter of social pathology (Biorcio 1991, 1997; Diani 1994). Journalistic and scholarly writing has incorporated the term *la base*—also used within the party—to describe party activists. Like the characterizations of Communist membership in the cold-war period, Lega Nord’s activists are portrayed as fanatic and irrational creatures. Lega Nord borrows from traditional models of mass party organizations—the Italian Communist party as a source of inspiration—as well as radically departing from them. Lega Nord is closer to a social movement in that direct mobilisation is essential for the party. Bossi was supported by local party sections that made Lega Nord’s views on the North-South divide a common presence not only in the national media, but also in the Northern regions through the distribution of party propaganda, posters and graffiti at the local level.

Flanders (Mudde 2000; Spruyt 1996: 39). The province of Antwerp has always been the stronghold in terms of party membership (see Swyngedouw 2000: 121). The local party branches are highly active in political education, propaganda and demonstrations. The VB has a strict hierarchical structure, rather similar to that of a Communist party (Gysels 1992; Spruyt 1995; Mudde 2000). Vlaams Blok cadres receive political training the central organization, the Nationalistisch vormingsinstituut, founded in 1987. It publishes the fortnightly cadre bulletin and numerous brochures on various topics (Spruyt 1995; Mudde 2000).

Bossi was supported by local party sections that made Lega Nord’s views on the North-South divide a common presence not only in the national media, but also in the Northern regions through the distribution of party propaganda, posters and graffiti at the local level. For the leader of Lega Nord: ‘in order to do politics we need to produce culture’. Lega Nord symbols are displayed in the cities of Northern Italy, its highways, its secondary roads. Lega Nord specialized in political communication, in the creation of a competing frame with propaganda, slogans and volantini and the creation of their own means of political communication. The organizational identity, as well as the party line – and its changes — are publicised through the party journal, posters, graffiti and pamphlets. Party members are in charge of distributing them. The propaganda resources of the party are concentrated in Via Bellerio. The radio station, the office of the party journal and the production of manifestos are also located there (see Gomez-Reino 2001).

Party membership is small in absolute numbers in both parties. Lega Nord’s leader uses the rhetoric of the masses but Lega Nord’s capabilities to encourage direct mobilisation are scarce. Lega Nord has claimed a certain following but the party’s estimates have been widely questioned (Diani 1994). In 1992 Lega Nord was advertising the party as a consolidated organization. For example: ‘To do politics, a big organisation is required. Lega Nord, 400 sedi, 700 sections, 200,000 members’, Lombardia Autonomista No. 6 (Anno X, March 5, 1992). In June of the same year, the journal of the party included the same advertisement, changing the number of members from 200,000 to 40,000. Later in November of the same year, the party journal claimed again 200,000 members. (Per fare politica occorre una grande organizzazione. Lega Nord, 600 sedi, 1000 sezioni,

32 The VB has also the propaganda service, the study service, the Vereniging van Vlaams Blok mandatarissen and the Nationalistische Omroepstichting (radio and tv programs) see Mudde 2000.

33 Lega Nord. Organo Ufficiale della Lega Nord No 41, Anno X. November 12, 1992.

34 Any traveller in Northern Italy – either by car or train — can have the opportunity to see all the manifests and slogans of Lega Nord displayed over the walls and highways of the North.


200,000 members. Lega Nord No. 42 (Anno X, November 20, 1992). In absolute numbers, Lega Nord is a small party. The table shows the comparison of party membership and the evolution of membership (in absolute numbers) during the 1990s. VB membership has grown from 1,231 members in 1980, 3,698 in 1985 and 6,500 in 1990 (Deschouwer in Spruyt 1995: 53; Mudde 2000; Gomez-Reino 2001). Vanhecke stated that in April 1992 that the VB had 7,639 members. Dewinter spoke at the time of 8,000 to 9,000 members. In January 1995 deputy chairman Raes spoke of some 9,000 members, which will probably have given up to 10,000 by 1999 (Spruyt 1996: 39). In 2000 the party voorzitter Frank Van Hecke and the Vlaams Blok Studiedienst declared that party membership was 16,000 (Gomez-Reino 2001). If party membership in Vlaams Blok has increased over the 1990s, Lega Nord’s membership has experienced substantial changes (in terms of regional distribution of membership and in the type of membership in the organization—over the decade and a decreasing term (Gomez-Reino 2001).

In short, and in terms of the type of party activism, they resembled more new social movement organizations. However, unlike social movements, political parties recruit political elites to represent their constituencies in political institutions. Unlike social movements, moreover, parties need to consolidate their position as stable players in the political system. Thus, the relationship between party elites and party activists is crucial to explain the opportunities opened to party elites.

External Opportunities and Constraints: Refashioning Political Space

Whereas the political space in the Italian party system was refashioned during the 1990s with new parties and new rules of the game, the Belgian party system retained its main features. The Belgian party system is characterized by its extreme fragmentation (Ackaert, De Winter Sywngedouw 1996). In the 1960s the number of parties rose with the breakthrough of the linguistic-regional parties, VU, RW and FDF. The growing importance of the linguistic cleavage divided the christian democrat, liberal and socialist parties in two Flemish and Francophone branches (Hoohge 1993). Thus, in Belgium since the 1980s there are no longer national parties—since they are all homogenously Flemish or Francophone. After the break-up along the linguistic line, governmental coalitions have always included the linguistic counterpart, the same kind of parties in the north and the south (Ackaert, De Winter and Sywngedouw 1996).

In addition to its fragmentation, the Belgian party system is also characterized by the salience of ecological issues and post-modern politics (Swyngedouw 1992; Swyngedouw 1993:85). Since the 1989, the fluidity of the Belgian electorate, specially in Flanders, has been extensively analyzed (Swyngdouw and Beerten 1999). As Ackaert, De Winter and Sywngedouw put it: during the 1990s “abundant opportunities exist for ideological ‘reprofiling’ and realignment (Ackaert, De Winter and Swyngedouw 1996: 77). Over the entire decade, Swyngedouw finds out a polarization of the
Flemish electorate on a new dimension of electoral competition that involves the cleavage between open-universalistic values against close-particularistic ones (Swyngedouw and Beerten 1999:5).

Between 1992 and 1994 the Italian party system fell apart. The transformation of the Italian Communist party had taken place in 1991 with the consolidation of its two heirs, the moderate PDS (Partito Democratico della Sinistra) and Rifondazione Comunista. While the refounding of the Italian left was relatively smooth, the collapse of the governmental parties in 1993 opened a political vacuum. The DC elected on October 12, 1992 Martinazzoli as general secretary, who declared “I am a secretary elected by despair. The party is a cemetery.” Martinazzoli was elected, de facto, the last general secretary of the DC. In the 1993 local elections, the Christian Democratic party disappeared as an electoral force everywhere. The most active Christian Democrat politician in introducing institutional reforms, Mario Segni, also left the party after Giulio Andreotti was prosecuted for his alleged relationship with the Mafia. Segni founded Popolari per la Riforma in March 1993. In 1993, the party reemerged as the Popular Party. The Centro Cristiano Democratico (CCD) became another splinter of the DC. The PSI dissolved in the middle of corruption scandals and its leader Bettino Craxi fled to Tunisia. In January 1994, the fascist MSI changed its name to become Alleanza Nazionale. Excluded from consociational practices and multi-party governments in the post-war period, Alleanza Nazionale underwent the transition from fascism to the new right (Ignazi, 1994?). Finally, the media entrepreneur Silvio Berlusconi launched the party-firm, Forza Italia. The first convention of Forza Italia presented officially the party on February 6, 1994. To some, Berlusconi’s Forza Italia became the new populist in Italian politics (see Paolo Flores d’Arcais 1996; Revelli 1996).

The coupling of the disappearance of the old Italian political class in 1993 with the passage of the new electoral laws created an environment of profound political uncertainty in the Italian party system. Three clear indicators of the political uncertainty facing Italian voters in the 1990s are: ‘voter turnout’, ‘wasted votes’ and ‘electoral volatility’. The first clear indicator of political uncertainty is the decreasing trend in voter turnout during the 1990s. Table shows the percentage of voter turnout in Italian general elections since the late 1970s. Participation rates in the 1994 and 1996 general elections were the lowest in the entire history of Italian elections in the post-war period. This is not surprising, given public dissatisfaction and the fact that Italian voters had three general elections every two years (1992, 1994, 1996), local elections in 1992, 1993, 1995; 1998, regional elections in 1995 and 2000, European elections in 1994 and 1999, and a variety of referenda. The complexity of the new electoral system can be measured by the significant rate of ‘wasted votes.’ In 1994, the number of invalid votes was 3,173,423 (51.4% empty ballot and 48.5% invalid ones). In 1996, 45% were empty ballots and 54.8% were invalid ones (data for single-member districts), see Caramani, “La Competizione
their votes. Third, electoral volatility in Italian elections during the 1990s achieved unique proportions in comparative perspective. In the 1994 general elections, aggregate volatility was the highest in the entire Italian electoral history (Cartocci 1996). Bartolini and D’Alimonte only found four similar cases in the entire electoral history of European party systems.

The introduction of new electoral rules did not bring political stability in party alternatives and Italian political elites. First, the mixed effects of the new electoral laws shaped the fragility of the new electoral coalitions—that were completely rearranged from 1994 to 1996 (Di Virgilio 1996). Second, the loopholes for small parties provided by the electoral law increased their political leverage and maintained political fragmentation in multiparty competition (de Virgilio 1996). Third, Italians continued to have fragile multi-party governments. Italians had caretaker governments with the end of the first Republic but they also had caretaker governments with the new Italian party system. The technical government of Lamberto Dini replaced the disastrous experience of the Berlusconi government supported by Alleanza Nazionale and Lega Nord. The uncertainty of the political scenario and the multiple coalition games in which parties were involved opened up again a new agenda for institutional reform.

Institutional reform became the top item on the agenda for political change. A consensus among Italian elites emerged about the need for electoral reform. The system of proportional representation—the pillar of Sartori’s model of polarised pluralism, consociational practices and multiparty governments—was blamed for the scale of corruption and clientelism in Italian politics. In 1991 a referendum already eliminated the possibility of expressing individual preferences for candidates on the party lists. Another referendum allowed the use of single-member districts and plurality voting for the Senate in 1993. The Italian Parliament passed the new electoral laws (leggi 276 and 277) in August 1993.

The result was that the introduction of new electoral laws in Italy that are unique in comparative terms (D’Alimonte and Chiaramonte, 1995). The introduction of the new electoral laws eliminated the system of proportional representation with a ‘hybrid’ system that combines plurality and proportional features. The mixed system was the product of the compromises and negotiations between the parties in Parliament and accommodated the demands of small parties threatened by the possibility of eliminating proportional representation in the new Italian party system (Sani, 1994).

Under the new hybrid electoral system, seventy-five percent of the seats are assigned in single member districts. The remaining twenty-five percent is distributed to party lists under proportional representation. The Italian state is divided in 26 electoral districts (circoscrizione). The number of
single member seats is distributed according to the size of the population in each district. Single-
member districts are distributed first-past-the-post. The distribution of seats for candidate’s lists
under proportional representation takes place at the national level. The electoral threshold is
established at 4% of the vote at the national level. Both systems—plurality and proportional—are
interdependent. The elections take place in turno unico. As Chariamonte and D’Alimonte point out,
plurality and proportional representation are not different formulae to be applied in different
contexts. In each single member district there are district candidates and list candidates and the
former must be linked to at least one district list. There are two votes cast—one for the plurality and
one for the proportional part—yet there is not differentiation of competitive arenas.

In addition to the new electoral rules for the election of the Parliament and the Senate, the
Italian Parliament also passed new legislation to change the electoral rules for local, provincial and
regional governments. In March 1993, new laws introduced a plurality system in local and
provincial elections. The local system of governance was fundamentally transformed. Mayors are
now directly elected under majority voting (Di Virgilio, 1994). Changes in the regional electoral
systems introduced a proportional system with a majoritarian premium to achieve political stability
in regional governments (D’Alimonte, 1995). Thus, all systems, national, regional and local are
‘mixed’ systems, although they are different among them.

The new electoral systems had a mixed effect. On one hand, and despite the contrasting views
on the impact of the electoral laws in the Italian party system (Bartolini and D’Alimonte, 1995), the
most clear-cut result of the electoral reform has been the introduction of very strong incentives for
aggregation and coalition-building. On the other hand, political parties also have strong incentives
to run by themselves. Parties can rely on gaining representation through the proportional system—
25% of the Italian parliament is elected on this basis—yet they run the risk of remaining marginal
players. Thus, if the new electoral system has removed the old patterns of coalition-government in
Italy by introducing incentives to form coalitions before elections, the new electoral laws have also
allowed the consolidation of a new fragmented multi-party system in Italy. Although some scholars
argue that the new single-member districts and plurality voting always favors parties with
concentrated territorial support (see Riccamboni 1997), the viability of this strategy was not self-
evident to party elites. There are also visible different effects by type of election. In the 1995
regional elections—the first ones to be held with the new electoral law—Lega Nord was the most
punished party with the introduction of the new regional electoral rules with majoritarian premium.
The so-called Lega Nord’s Third Pole—la Lega da sola—did not break the bipolar comopetition
between left and right in the Northern regions (D’Alimonte 1995: 535).

Not only Lega Nord obtained its best electoral results with an strategy of radicalization
claiming secession from the Italian state, but also the party gained in the 1996 elections more votes
under the plurality part than under the proportional system. This result has puzzled Italian scholars (Chariamonte and Bartolini 1997).

Interviews with Lega’s representatives on the question of the new electoral laws, revealed that the party elites were divided over the best electoral system to adopt at the time of the reform. For those who participated in the drafting of the new electoral laws, the outcome of these institutional changes and its impact on Lega Nord was not clear. Some favored a pure plurality system with single-member districts. Others prefer to maintain proportional representation. Although some worried about the potential risks of introducing a plurality system, their expectation was that the new rules would not change their prospects for replacing the Christian Democrats in the North. The choice to vote for the new electoral laws was made on the basis of Lega’s anti-system platform – to put it simply, they could not vote for the maintenance of an electoral system which was blamed for consociativismo.

Party system changed shaped a new strategic scenario for Lega Nord along three lines. First, the reconfiguration of the Italian party system structured a new political space for reshaping the left-right dimension of electoral competition. Second, institutional change provided strong incentives for electoral coalition-building. The introduction of the mixed electoral system with a strong bias towards plurality voting, hindered the electoral prospects for a party that was poorly equipped for coalition building. Although some scholars have argued that single-member districts and plurality voting always favor parties with concentrated territorial support (Riccamboni, 1997), the viability of this strategy was not self-evident to party elites. Third, a broader project of reform of the Italian political system became a priority. While its position as the challenger to the political system was Lega Nord’s main resource in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the new task was how to introduce the necessary reforms to meet these challenges. On this question, Lega was poorly equipped to propose concrete institutional reforms.

In light of empirical evidence on the Italian Northern Question, we can question not only the tight connection between the voters’ expression of party preference and party elites’ actual behavior, but also the very notion of political representation in light of what new political entrepreneurs do. For example, Lega Nord the anti-system, challenger nature of Lega Nord sometimes prevails over the advancement of the party agenda. The last Italian law on migration—the position of Lega Nord largely overlapped with Forza Italia and Alleanza Nazionale—was passed without Lega Nord’s presence in the Camera. Lega Nord’s representatives did not vote for or against the law (Zucchini 1998).
Varieties of Extremism: Comparing the Politics of Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord

The alleged anti-democratic nature of Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord is obviously contested by party propaganda. Rather than following a trajectory from mobilization to representation, the persistence of both political parties relied on its ability to continue creating controversies. The key strategic dilemma for Lega Nord’s leadership was how to adapt to the new institutional environment: either moderating or radicalizing the party demands. New challenges in European politics, in light of Lega Nord’s trajectory, can be thought of as potential ‘free riders’ in party systems, since they have less incentives to moderate their claims. Pushing the boundaries of the established political sphere, they also bring fundamental problems of governability in liberal democracies.

Both political parties emphasize their nature as challengers to the political establishment and their nature as movements and not parties in the traditional sense. Vlaams Blok defines the Belgian political systems as the Belgische Bananen Republiek, Lega Nord defines Roman “centralism” in similar terms. Although the party elites of the Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord shared a peripheral nationalism against the state and the anti-migrant agenda, polarization processes in Belgium and Italy accentuated some features of party ideology and downplay others. Here we seek to outline varieties of extremism within the family of the new right. Extremism and moderation are articulated across political systems around different aspects of party ideology: the extremism of the Vlaams Blok is commonly portrayed on the party’s position on migrants in Belgian society; whereas the radicalism of Lega Nord’s party elites came to be mostly defined around the question of independence and secession from the Italian state. Arguments about the implications of the rise of this family of political parties for democratic systems focus on the need to incorporate these political parties into an institutional logic. In the case of the Vlaams Blok, its incorporation is prevented by a political pact between the rest of Belgian political parties in the cordon sanitaire. In the case of Lega Nord, the incorporation into an institutional logic in 1994 with electoral and governmental coalitions with FI and AN, led to more extremism from the party leadership.

Vlaams Blok has attempted several times to break the cordon sanitaire and normalize its position in the Belgian party system. Not all the members of the party elite are worried about the cordon sanitaire (see clearly Verreycken 1999), but some focused their efforts in governing at the local and regional level (see De Winter 1999). A priority for the party elite is to attract the VLD and the CVP in future coalitions on the basis of the agenda of ‘law and order’ (for the city of Antwerp see the 2000 local elections, De Morgen October 2000). Efforts to present the Vlaams Blok as a

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‘normal’ political party were renewed since the incorporation of Haider FPÖ in the Austrian government and the favorable report of the Committee of Wise Men appointed by the European Commission to investigate racism, xenophobia and the anti-democratic nature of the Austrian party. However, the ‘stigma’ of the Vlaams Blok continues to define political space in Flanders along the basis of a main political divide between democratic and undemocratic parties. There are strains in the cordon sanitaire—especially at the local level—although the political pact is still in place.

In contrast, Lega Nord’s efforts were focused on reinventing the anti-system nature of the party during the 1990s. Lega Nord launched the Parliament of the North in June 1995. Lega Nord’s of political autonomy and a legitimate self-government of the North were given renewed attention with the writing of the Constitution of the North in the fall 1995 and the official birth of Padania in 1996. Although the parliament launched in 1995 was the most systematic attempt to create a symbolic institutional framework to legitimise the claims of the party, this were old ideas within the party. The first time Lega Nord launched the independent Republic of the North with an alternative government—il governo sole—was in 1991. In his inauguration speech Bossi explained the creation of the Parliament of Mantova—Legà’s symbolic representation of a Northern parliament—as follows:

Dear colleagues, Lega Nord is not a party, that is, it does not represent a political faction, but a broader political movement for the freedom of the North and Italian federalism, today creates the Parliament of Mantova, that is, the Parliament of the peoples of the North.... Today here at Mantova we are not only a people, but also we have been elected by the people.... Therefore our meeting at Mantova is absolutely legitimate, because nobody can debate the right of this parliament: its purposive, critical and indicative function for the achievement of essential objectives among, which federalism is the first one...

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The sessions of the Parliament of the North took place in a villa—often used for wedding banquets—that Lega Nord’s organisers rented on Saturdays or Sundays. The villa was located in a small village, Bagnolo San Vito, near the city of Mantova—chosen for its geopolitical position in the middle of the North. The building, an old construction with high ceilings and very poor heating also had a nice garden. In the ground floor, there was a bar—with coffee and panini to fight the cold in the winter—and a pressroom with phones and TV cameras to follow the sessions. In the upper floor they used a big chamber for the sessions of the Parliament decorated with the flag of Lega Nord.

Thus, the Parliament became an alternative symbolic institution that represented the North, to Italian and foreign observers, as an oppressed nation. For Bossi: ‘Since the creation of the Parliament of Mantova, the conflict between centralism and federalism has become institutional. It
is no longer an abstraction but a very concrete thing’. Members of the Parliament of the North were all party representatives in political institutions: deputies, senators, European Members of Parliament, majors, regional councilors and presidents of the provinces.

On May 1996, the parliament of Mantova was renamed the Parliament of Padania: ‘to discuss the political mechanisms to achieve the independence of Padania from Rome’. After the 1996 general elections, the Parliament itself became the locus for launching a new set of political institutions for the representation of Padania. The party leadership decided to form the Padanian government and also organised a Committee for National Liberation on the grounds of the principle of self-determination and the right to resistance. The organisation of the ‘Green shirts’ in the spring of 1996 transformed the open nature of these events. In the last session of the Parliament I attended, access to Bossi and the main party representatives was blocked by this new group and the sessions were closed to the public, although microphones outside the building permitted one to follow the discussions taking place inside.

At the parliament of the North, Bossi addressed his followers while at the same time he sent his message to the Italian parties and the Roman state. The parliament of the North was the most systematic attempt by the party to use symbolic action to manipulate the media and public opinion. Mantova became an obliged stop for Italian journalists. Threats of secession and independence, a language of insult and provocation attracted the attention of the media. As Gamson points out, the media rewards political controversy, novelty and extra-institutional means of action. The use of medieval myths, the dramatic enactment of loyalty, the flags and the self-representations of the party as a solidarity unit have attracted the Italian media and the international press. Thus, these are the resources the party can activate in mobilising and sustaining political controversy.

Bossi made the Parliament a platform to address his colleagues in the Italian parliament. The creation of a symbolic and alternative Parliament served to relaunch the non-negotiable nature of Northern claims and distance the position of Lega from the other parties. The political distance was staged by placing the party leadership in a different geographical setting, the Northern city of Mantova. The Parliament had a fundamental ambiguity. On the one hand, the symbolic parliament passed as a party gathering whose declared objective was the development and coordination of the

40 Interview with Bossi, L’Indipendente (February 11-12, 1996): 4.

41 As Speroni put it: ‘the self-determination of the people does not mean to introduce a border, a free Padania will not have borders because it will be an integral part of Europe’. Il Corriere della Sera (May 19, 1996)


43 In these attempts to open the party to society, the Parliament of the North also launched a campaign of meetings with citizens to explain the new policy of the party (incontri del Parlamento del Nord con I cittadini). Lega Nord No. 39 (Anno XIII, November 7, 1995).
party program. On the other hand, the Parliament became the symbolic nucleus to assert new legitimacy and blackmail Italian parties. Bossi turned the official party line from federalism and institutional reform to independence. The policy of compromise was transformed into a non-negotiable territorial conflict.

The Parliament of Mantova was very effective in building up conflict in two related ways. First, the uses of an alternative legitimacy and the creation of a paralleled institutional framework generated a new wave of controversies in Italian politics. The other Italian leaders were forced to take sides on the issue of independence. The territorial dimension of conflict in Italy evolved not only from Lega’s claims of secession for Padania but also from the common position taken by the parties with regard to independence: asserting the fundamental unity of the Italian state. Lega’s claims to verticality in the Italian political space and representation of a territorial dimension of political conflict became self-fulfilling prophecies. The negative responses of the leaders of the main Italian parties—from Berlusconi, Dini, Prodi, Buttiglione, to the president of the Republic, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and Italian journalists—helped to define the boundaries between us and them. The common response to Bossi’s provocations with his parliament reinforced Bossi’s claims that the conflict was all against Lega Nord.

The second success of the party leadership was that the media rewarded the extra-institutional means of action and Lega Nord’s succeeded again in manipulating attention cycles. At Mantova, Italian journalists mixed with foreign correspondents to follow the evolution of the Northern question. The staging of the Parliament attracted the attention of the Italian and international media that reported Bossi’s declarations from Mantova and kept the Parliament alive. Both political controversy and political visibility gave momentum to Lega Nord during the spring of 1996. While some laughed at the prospects of independence for the Padanian nation, others worried that the escalation of conflict would lead into a serious conflict. The party leadership played with this ambiguity, using a language of violence while claiming that Lega Nord supported a peaceful solution to a political conflict Lega Nord had ultimately created itself. In the midst of all this speculation, Bossi kept public opinion talking politics and discussing the Northern question.

The party leadership claimed that the “people of the North want secession”. As one put it:

This is a diffused idea in people’s consciousness… The situation of the North is clear for the citizens, they all have understood that our project is the best, clearest and most comprehensible of all.

The results of the 1996 elections led to a public debate on the causes of the renewed electoral success of Lega Nord and the motivations of Lega Nord voters’. The journalist Giorgio Boocca published an article in la Repubblica entitled “Bossi il Tribuno del Popolo”. Bocca explained voting for Lega as a mystery, an irrational and unexpected outcome in Italian politics. The national secretary of Lega Nord in Lombardy, Roberto Calderoli, published an open letter to repond to
Bocca. He outlined the position of the party elite on electoral success. According to Calderoli:

... If you think that the independence of Padania is an example of a deteriorated localism, you are making a conceptual mistake: Padania is not a geographical area drawn with the rule of a geometrist of politics, Padania defines instead the identity of a nation because it is a nation.... Padania is part of Europe and in a united Europe imagines its future... Lega is the force of liberation of the North and Lega expresses, the number of votes speaks for itself, the will of an entire society (Roberto Calderoli, Lettera aperta a Giorgio Bocca (Milano, Lega Nord-Lega Lombarda Ufficio Stampa, April 24, 1996).

Lega Nord voters, 10% agree with the assertion that the “current state structure in Italy is suitable” (average respondents 35.9%); 7.9% of Lega Nord voters agree with the statement ‘more power to local governments” (average respondents 14.1%); 16% of Lega Nord voters agree with the idea of “giving more power to the existing regions” (average respondents 23.1%); 33% of Lega Nord voters’ agree with a “federal system with the current regions” (19.8%); 18.3% of Lega Nord voters’ agree with a “federal structure with macro-regions” (average respondents 4.0%); and 13% of Lega Nord voters’ agree with “a confederation of macro regions with power of self-determination and the possibility of declaring, if necessary, independence” (average respondents 3.1%) (Mannheimer, ISPO survey 15-9-96).

The result of this type of mobilization and the need to create political controversy was the accentuation of the fringe character of Lega Nord between 1996 and 1998. The party stretched the boundaries of the Italian legal framework by playing with the idea of a para-military organisation (le camicie verdi), using a language of insults, violence and threats. Lega Nord has continued to secure access to the media by bringing renewed political controversies into Italian politics. The ways in which Lega Nord attracts media attention has forced the party leadership to push further the political and democratic boundaries of the Italian state. The prosecution of Bossi and other party leaders in recent times—illustrates the extent to which Bossi is ‘playing with fire.’ Lega Nord acts at the boundaries of what is legitimate, legal and democratic. 44

The leader is forced to innovate in his symbolic production and to create new controversies to gain attention. The ‘birth’ of Padania appeared to mark a turning point in the history of Lega Nord. The symbolic production of Lega Nord continued after the summer of 1996. The party launched in September 1996 a demonstration along the Po river to signal the birth of the Padanian nation and elections for the parliament of the Padania in the spring of 1997. Today, the symbol of Padania is la stella delle Alpi, the star of the Alps. However, Lega Nord has continued to organise new events, new celebrations (referendum for the self-determination of Padania, celebration of elections for the Parliament of Padania) in the party efforts to recreate the novelties of Lega Nord’s symbolic

44Lega Nord’s leaders have been accused and legally prosecuted for their threats against the unity of the Italian state.
action...a very time and energy-consuming exercise. Not surprisingly, the last two years of Lega Nord have been characterized by poor electoral performance—see the electoral results of the 1999 European elections—and the moderation of party demands around devolution, a reentering into an institutional but problematic logic for the party.

Conclusions

The malleability of the idea of national distinctiveness in contemporary politics suggests that, as the nation as a principle of legitimacy has gained recognition as an institutionalized form, the multiplication of new claims of nationhood are, paradoxically, de-legitimizing the very idea of national self-determination. Both Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord are good examples. Both identity politics, moreover, show that the politics of exclusion is not based on one exclusive identity but on dual identities. This paper brought together the discussion of multicultural citizenship and cultural differentialism. In many contemporary debates, the way the concepts of ‘culture’ and ‘groups’ are introduced is often unproblematized: they take cultural differences as given and understand the political process as recognizing them, not about producing and reifying culture by human agency. Debates on multicultural citizenship focus on inclusion of groups and leave largely unexplored the other side of the coin: cultural differences as the tool to assert political exclusion. It is on the name of respecting cultural differences that the new right in Europe uses cultural differentialism to argue against the compatibility of groups and the need to terminate with migration towards European countries. The key question we need to address relates not only to the right to have one own’s culture, but on how cultural differences entered the politics of European states. It is worth reminding that both Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord are the only two cases of peripheral nationalism in the new radical or extreme right. The other peripheral nationalist parties are together in the European Free Alliance who links them with the Greens in the European parliament and who are the advocates of multiculturalism and the integration of migrants in the European Union. Peripheral Nationalism in European party systems in breaking around the issue of new migrants. Moreover, this is a trend that can be seen for example in the evolution of Lega Lombarda-Lega Nord in the European parliament, from membership in the European alliance to the expulsion of Lega Nord in 1994, and the current belonging to the “technical group of the European right” with precisely the Vlaams Blok (Gomez-Reino 2001, in progress). Unfortunately, the issue of xenophobia, racism and attitudes against migrants goes beyond the success of the new radical right in Europe. European governments and the traditional right have in many cases adopted discourses and policies from these parties—sometimes explicitly, sometimes de facto. Moreover, other political parties from the left and in opposition, have also adopted these discourses and policies. For example, the Danish Social Democratic party is well-known for their xenophobic statements and
their refusal of migrants in Denmark.

Political stability and conventional politics heavily influence the literature on political parties in Western Europe. Scholars have analyzed the impact of modernization in undermining the functions of parties in the management of political conflict, political integration and socialization. Evolutionary approaches to the study of parties highlight the shift from mass to catch-all and finally, today the cartel party (Kircheimer 1967, Bartolini and Mair 1991, Mair and Katz 1995). These views link the organizational and political transformation of traditional parties to the effective ‘oligopoly’ they exercise over the electoral market. Parties follow a trajectory that erode their societal links and reinforce their ties to the state apparatus. In these views, protest parties can be understood as the logical byproduct of trends towards partocracies in European polities. In the conclusions to his study on Green parties in Germany and Belgium, Kitschelt writes, ‘postindustrial political entrepreneurs rely on persuasion’ (Kitschelt 1989). This is also a hope that political persuasion plays a role and that attitudes can change.

The comparison of elite’s strategic dilemmas and institutional responses in both cases lead us to two conclusions. First, political isolation allow party elites to reproduce internal cohesion within their party organizations and their militants—in the Italian case, all other parties defending Italian unity; in the Flemish case, all other parties defining Vlaams Blok as an extreme right, non-democratic party. Second, the normalization of the new radical right into an institutional logic is always problematic, even in cases where political space is open and redefined, as the example of the coalitions including Lega Nord show. Thus, coalition potential and participation in government are not necessarily a road to political moderation and normalization. Moderation or radicalization of party elites has to be confronted with internal dynamics within the parties—and not only with external conditions in the political system.
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McAdam, D., McCarthy, J. and Zald, M. eds (1996), *Comparative Perspective on Social Movements*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.


Nairn, Tom (1977). The Break-Up of Britain. Crisis and Neo-Nationalism. NLB.


Swyngedouw, Marc and Ivaldi, Gilles (1999), The Extreme-right Utopia in Belgium and France. ISPO, K.U.Leuven, Bulletin nr. 1999/31 van het ISPO.


Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.


*West European Politics*, vol. 20, no 1 (Frank Cass, London 1997),


Appendix

A. Party Literature: Publications and Documents

I) Vlaams Blok


Vlaams Blok, Stop Immigratie. Het Vormingsinstituut Frank Goovaerts vzw.


2) Lega Nord


Bossi, Umberto and Vimercati, Daniele. La Rivoluzione. La Lega: storia e Idee (Milano: Sperling &Kupfer Editori, 1993.


Lega Nord. Italia Federale. Organo Ufficiale della Lega Nord


Quaderni Padani, n.1,2,3,4.


3) Alleanza Nazionale


B. List of Interviewees

1) Vlaams Blok

Frank VanHecke: Vlaams Blok Voorzitter, Partijbestuur, member of the European parliament

Gerolf Annemans: Vlaams Blok, partijbestuur, Kamer, voorzitter Studiedienst

Marieke Dillen, Vlaamse parlement

Joris van Hauthem, partijbestuur, Vlaamse parlement

Roeland Raes, partijbestuur, Senaat

Karim Van Overmeire, partijbestuur, Vlaamse parlement

Jurgen Ceder, partijbestuur, Senaat

Filip Dewinter, partijbestuur, Vlaamse parlement

Francis van den Eynde, partijbestuur, Kamer

Luk van Nieuwenhuysen, partijbestuur, Vlaamse parlement

Wim Verreycken, partijbestuur, Senaat

Philip Claeys, partijbestuur, Vlaams Blok Jongeren, medewerker Vlaamse parlement

Jurgen Branckaert, partijbestuur, Vlaams Blok Jongeren, medewerker, Vlaamse parlement

2) Lega Nord

Mario Borghezio, Member of Parliament (1992-1996); founder of the independentist faction of Lega Nord and the Ronde Padane.

Vitto Gnutti, Member of Parliament, ex-minister in the Berlusconi government.

Roberto Maroni, Member of Parliament, head of the ufficio Affari Esteri, ex-minister of the Berlusconi government.

Irene Pivetti, member of Parliament, presidente della Camera dei Deputati, member of the Consulta Cattolica within Lega Nord.

Francesco Speroni, member of the parliament, member of the European parliament, ex-minister in the Berlusconi government, Padanian appointments,

Stefano Stefani, president of Lega Nord, member of Parliament

Roberto Calderoli, national secretary of Lega Nord-Lega Lombarda, member of parliament

Gianpaolo Gobbo, president of Lega Nord-Liga Veneta, regional councillor in the Veneto regional council.

Giuseppe Leoni, member of Parliament, head of the Consulta Cattolica Lega Nord.

Antonio Marano, member of Lega Nord, sub-secretary in the Berlusconi government.

Alessandro Patelli, member of the Lombard regional council, ex-organizational secretary of Lega Nord-Lega Lombarda.

Gianfranco Miglio, Independent. Member of the Italian Senate. Advisor to Umberto Bossi.


Aldo Moltifiori, Responsabile Enti Locali, ex-mayor of Monza.

Fabrizio Comencini, ex national secretary of Lega Nord-Liga Veneto, ex member of Veneto regional council.
C. Tables

Table 1. Kistchelt and McGann. Old and New Extreme Right: The Electoral Coalitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Type</th>
<th>Electoral Constituencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small Business and Agriculturalists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fascist parties</td>
<td>Overproportional support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare Chauvinist Parties</td>
<td>Underproportional support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Radical-right</td>
<td>Overproportional support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populist anti-statist parties</td>
<td>Proportional support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source. Kitschelt and McGann 1995: 35

Table 2. New Right, NeoPopulism or Populist Anti-Statist?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Label</th>
<th>Kitschelt</th>
<th>Biorcio</th>
<th>Betz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Explanatory Variable</td>
<td>Partocracy</td>
<td>Crisis of welfare state</td>
<td>Crisis of welfare state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand</td>
<td>A white-collar middle class revolt</td>
<td>Losers’ constituencies: Petit bourgeoisie and blue-collar workers</td>
<td>Losers’ constituencies: petit bourgeoisie and blue-collar workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply</td>
<td>Clean government on occasion cater to racist and xenophobic sentiments</td>
<td>Migrants and Taxes</td>
<td>Migrants and Taxes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. The Strategic Dilemmas of New Political Entrepreneurs?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tactic</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Politics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pay-offs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trade-offs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. Belgium: Linguistic Composition By Region (1947)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Flandes</th>
<th>Wallonia</th>
<th>Brussels</th>
<th>Belgium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>000s %</td>
<td>000s %</td>
<td>000s %</td>
<td>000s %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>4.148.0</td>
<td>90.4 59.5</td>
<td>2.0 231.7</td>
<td>24.2 4.475.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>225.4</td>
<td>4.9 2.671.0</td>
<td>90.8 675.0</td>
<td>70.6 3.571.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>0.2 67.0</td>
<td>2.3 3.4</td>
<td>0.4 78.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>198.6</td>
<td>4.3 145.4</td>
<td>4.9 45.9</td>
<td>4.8 389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.616.0</td>
<td>100.0 2.943.0</td>
<td>100.0 956.0</td>
<td>100.0 8.515.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source, Hooghe 1993, Nationaal Instituut voor de Statistiek, 1954

Table 5. Italy. The Use of Italian Regional Dialects (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Strangers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calabria</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sicilia</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basilicata</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molise</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campania</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abruzzo</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marche</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friuli V.G.</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puglia</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liguria</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lazio</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italia</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ISTAT (1995)
Table 6. Italy. The Italian Northern Regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>Population, 1999</th>
<th>GDP per capita, 1989</th>
<th>NO Deputies in Chamber (a.a.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Piemont</td>
<td>4,287,465</td>
<td>118.2</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liguria</td>
<td>1,625,870</td>
<td>114.9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lombardia</td>
<td>9,065,440</td>
<td>133.4</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trentino A.A.</td>
<td>936,254</td>
<td>117.1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>4,511,714</td>
<td>114.2</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friuli V. G</td>
<td>1,185,172</td>
<td>115.7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emilia-R.</td>
<td>3,981,146</td>
<td>125.0</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuscany</td>
<td>3,536,452</td>
<td>108.2</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val d’Aosta</td>
<td>120,343</td>
<td>127.2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>57,679,955</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Istat 1999 (Bilancio Demografico Nazionale); Istituto Tagliacarne 1993; Camera dei Deputati, Cicoscrizioni e Collegi 1991.
Table 7. Belgium. Etnoterritoriale identiteiten in 1996: eerste and tweede keuze

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identiteit</th>
<th>Eerste Keuze (%)</th>
<th>Tweede Keuze (%)</th>
<th>Samen (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>België</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>75.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franstalige Gemeenschap</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vlaamse Gemeenschap/Gewest</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duitese Gemeenschap</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waalse Gewest</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels Gewest</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincie</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gemeente/stad</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andere</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>2.094</td>
<td>2.021</td>
<td>2.060</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: De Winter 1998: 161

Table 8. Italy. Territorial Identities by Territorial Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>Solo Mondo</th>
<th>Italia e Mondo</th>
<th>Localismo e Mondo</th>
<th>Regione e Italia</th>
<th>Comune e Italia</th>
<th>Solo Locali</th>
<th>Totale</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totale</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>(1.486)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zona industriale</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>(370)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zona bianca</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>(218)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zona rossa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>(296)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zona meridionale</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>(593)</td>
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</table>

Source: Segatti 1995:113
<table>
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<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>26.551</td>
<td>28.707</td>
<td>27.583</td>
<td>27.362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>33.415</td>
<td>32.129</td>
<td>31.301</td>
<td>31.328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>6.632</td>
<td>6.723</td>
<td>5.440</td>
<td>6.555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afrika</td>
<td>7.435</td>
<td>7.673</td>
<td>7.127</td>
<td>7.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>4.852</td>
<td>4.855</td>
<td>4.964</td>
<td>4.671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62.950</td>
<td>61.522</td>
<td>58.849</td>
<td>61.266</td>
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</table>

Table 10. Belgium. Asielaanvragen in 1998 en 1999 naar land van herkomst

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land van herkomst</th>
<th>1998 Aantal aanvragen</th>
<th>1999 Land van herkomst</th>
<th>1999 Aantal aanvragen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joegoslavië</td>
<td>6.057</td>
<td>Joegaslavië</td>
<td>13.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>1714</td>
<td>Roemenië</td>
<td>1703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roemenië</td>
<td>1572</td>
<td>Armenië</td>
<td>1472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albanië</td>
<td>1147</td>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>1402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenië</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>Rusland</td>
<td>1376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalïë</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>Oekraïne</td>
<td>1343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgië</td>
<td>490</td>
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<td>Rwanda</td>
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<td>Georgië</td>
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<td>Russische Federatie</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>Bulgarije</td>
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<td>Sri Lanka</td>
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<td>Moldavië</td>
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<td>Bosnië-H</td>
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<td>Irak</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
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<td>India</td>
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<td>Turkije</td>
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<td>Afganistan</td>
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<td>Oezbekistan</td>
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<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>445</td>
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<td>Iran</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>Wit Rusland</td>
<td>405</td>
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<td>China</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>401</td>
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<td>Andere</td>
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Source: Jaarverslag 1999 (UNHCR 1999): 109
Table 11. Italy. Resident permits granted by Continent and Country of Origin

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<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>100,404</td>
<td>128,123</td>
<td>135,207</td>
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<td>Central Europe</td>
<td>86,471</td>
<td>220,691</td>
<td>226,387</td>
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<td>Albania</td>
<td>24,886</td>
<td>66,608</td>
<td>72,551</td>
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<tr>
<td>ex-Yugoslavia</td>
<td>26,727</td>
<td>74,761</td>
<td>73,492</td>
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<td>Poland</td>
<td>12,139</td>
<td>23,163</td>
<td>22,938</td>
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<td>Romania</td>
<td>8,250</td>
<td>26,894</td>
<td>28,796</td>
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<td>Africa</td>
<td>227,531</td>
<td>301,305</td>
<td>310,748</td>
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<td>Northern Africa</td>
<td>147,954</td>
<td>191,005</td>
<td>200,007</td>
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<td>Morocco</td>
<td>83,292</td>
<td>115,026</td>
<td>122,230</td>
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<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>41,547</td>
<td>40,002</td>
<td>41,439</td>
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<td>West Africa</td>
<td>50,265</td>
<td>76,285</td>
<td>76,934</td>
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<td>Senegal</td>
<td>24,194</td>
<td>31,543</td>
<td>32,037</td>
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<td>Asia</td>
<td>116,941</td>
<td>182,475</td>
<td>192,864</td>
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<td>Central-South Asia</td>
<td>34,702</td>
<td>64,117</td>
<td>69,108</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>9,918</td>
<td>10,058</td>
<td>20,494</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>12,114</td>
<td>23,652</td>
<td>24,841</td>
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<td>East Asia</td>
<td>63,793</td>
<td>102,658</td>
<td>107,796</td>
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<td>China</td>
<td>15,505</td>
<td>31,615</td>
<td>35,310</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>36,316</td>
<td>56,209</td>
<td>57,312</td>
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<td>America</td>
<td>94,298</td>
<td>129,625</td>
<td>133,461</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>50,073</td>
<td>82,349</td>
<td>86,456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brasil</td>
<td>10,953</td>
<td>15,505</td>
<td>16,193</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>4,379</td>
<td>7,023</td>
<td>7,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican R.</td>
<td>3,681</td>
<td>9,012</td>
<td>9,588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>5,022</td>
<td>21,934</td>
<td>22,996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>648,935</td>
<td>986,020</td>
<td>1,022,896</td>
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</table>

Source: Istat. Rapporto Annuale (Ministero dell’Interno), 1998
### Table 12. Italy 1976-1996 Voter Turnout (General Elections)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Years</th>
<th>Participation (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>93.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>91.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>89.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>90.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>87.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>86.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>82.9</td>
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</table>

Source: Caramani 1996: 587


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Vote</th>
<th>Belgium</th>
<th>Flandes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Source: Swyngedouw and Beerten 1999:5 (zonder Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest)


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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Piedmonte</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liguria</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lombardia</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>24.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veneto</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emilia-Romagna</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toscana</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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</table>

Source: Tarchi 1998: 153
Table 15. Italy 1994, Distribution of Seats Chamber of Deputies by Electoral Coalitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electoral Coalitions</th>
<th>Total Seats</th>
<th>Total Seats (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Progressisti</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>33.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patto per l’Italia</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polo della libertà</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>58.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polo del buon governo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>100</td>
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</table>

Source: Bartolini and D’Alimonte 1996: 112

Table 16. Italy. 1996, Distribution of Seats Chamber of Deputies (Electoral Coalitions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electoral Cartels</th>
<th>total Seats</th>
<th>total seats (%)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ulivo+RC</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>50.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lega Nord</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polo della Libertà</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</table>

Source: Bartolini and D’Alimonte 1997

Table 17. Belgium. Distribution of Seats in the Chamber (1991-1999)

Table 18. Party Membership in Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord (A.V.)

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<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lega Nord</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16912</td>
<td>19951</td>
<td>43308</td>
<td>44186</td>
<td>19501</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6093</td>
<td>9090</td>
<td>9986</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporter</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>35096</td>
<td>9515</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Vlaams Blok</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,500</td>
<td>7,639</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>16,000</td>
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</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role in party Organization</th>
<th>Loyalists</th>
<th>Defectors</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Yes 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>No 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary experience</td>
<td>Yes 49</td>
<td>Yes 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>No 46</td>
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</table>

Source: Diamanti 1995: 159-160

Table 20. Lega Nord: Representatives with Experience in Party Office (%)

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<td>Lega Nord</td>
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<td>37.6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low appointments</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>13.7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>28.2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Chamber</td>
<td>No experience</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low appointment</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>9.1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Middle</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>20.4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>26.5</td>
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</table>

Source: Verzichelli 1996


<table>
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<td>Chamber</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>180</td>
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Source: Camera dei Deputati, my own calculations
