

Explaining the Emergence and the Durability of the Right Wing Parties: The Case of the Italian Second Republic

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Abstract

Makalah ini membahas gejala partai kanan ekstrem yang muncul sejak awal dekade 1990an di Itali, yakni Lega Nord, Forza Italia, Cristiano Democratico, dan Alleanza Nazionale. Tesis utama yang dikembangkan dalam makalah ini: bahwa kemunculan, keunggulan, dan kemampuan bertahan dari partai-partai tersebut bersumber dari kemampuan mereka dalam menghidupkan cleavage sosial Utara-Selatan yang sebelumnya dormant atau laten. Dengan memanfaatkan isu dominasi Selatan (yang secara ekonomi inferior) dalam pemerintahan atas Utara (superior), partai-partai kanan di Itali mengubah struktur sistem kepartaian stabil yang muncul sejak Perang Dunia II sampai dekade 1980an. Kemunculan partai-partai ini dengan demikian bukan sekadar mewakili gejala protest voting, namun lebih jauh, mereka mencerminkan pergeseran struktur konflik kepartaian yang berbasis cleavage sosial.

Kata-kata kunci:

Italy, Right-wing party, Party system, Lega Nord, Forza Italia, Alleanza Nazionale, dan Social cleavage

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Introduction

The profound transformation of the Italian party system in the early 1990s has posed an interestingly new puzzle in regard to the emergence of new and the rejuvenated right wing parties in the contemporary Italian political landscape. It is interesting and puzzling for several reasons. First, not only have they gained an electoral success but they also have become major parties and have endured over time. Second, as said by Pappas, most political scientists have felt that politics in Southern Europe is more about the left than the right. And there had been a "norm" that democrats on the right abandoned "far-right positions and move toward the center-left of the continuum." (2001: 225). The emergence of the right wing parties in Italy therefore seems to challenge the norm. Third, there has been a widespread movement of the "new left parties" across the European continent (Dalton and Kuechler, 1991; Kitschelt, 1991); and it only puts the strengthening Italian right wing parties at odds.

The Italian right wing parties consist of four major parties that represent two new parties (Lega Nord and Forza Italia) and two rejuvenated old parties (Centro Cristiano Democratico and Alleanza Nazionale). Lega Nord was established in the mid 1980s and has remained visible in the Italian electoral politics ever since. It initially only gained a very small fraction of the vote in the 1987 national election but then substantially increased its electoral achievements in the next two elections (8.9 and 8.4 %) before it stumbled in the 2001 election at nearly 3.9 % share of the vote. Forza Italia began to participate in the 1994 election and since then has become the dominant party of the right. In the last election of 2001, Forza Italia recorded an impressive win by securing 29.5 % of the total vote. The other right wing parties (the rejuvenated MSI or Alleanza Nazionale and the smaller parties altogether) have also made a better electoral performance as shown by their increasing shares of the vote. The only exception is CCD, the party that has replaced the ideological position of the defunct Democrazia Cristiana. It secured only an electorally modest record: 5.8 % in 1996 and 3.2 % in 2001. More importantly, with Forza Italia as the central player in the electoral and governmental coalitions, the Italian politics has now moved to the right direction.

How do we explain the right wing parties' electoral success? Is the success merely a reflection of "protest voting"? If this is the case, what

explains the endurance of the right wing parties? Why are the right wing parties, not the left?

To answer these questions, I will develop a structural argument that explores the social base(s) of the right wing parties. This is my contention that the emergence and, in particular, the durability of the right wing parties in Italy can better be explained by looking at the social base of the parties of the right. Their social base is rooted in the north-south social cleavage that has formed through a long period of time in the Italian history. Yet this cleavage remained dormant during the period of the First Republic. Since the late 1980s, however, Italian politicians have begun to activate this cleavage and skillfully exploited the issue of north-south division. It is worth noting here that my argument is not intended to prove that other types of explanations are wrong. Other explanations that rely on a cultural or institutional approach could be true. But, in my opinion, they are incomplete. In brief, the argument developed in this paper serves a purpose as a complement to the existing explanations.

Literature Review

For the last decade, many scholars have discussed the transformation of the Italian party system and the phenomenon of the new Italian right on various aspects. Some of them are well documented in *Parties, Politics, and Democracy in the Southern Europe* (Diamandorous and Gunther [eds.], 2001).

Gunther & Montero and Sani & Segatti, among others, write articles that primarily deal with the stability and the collapse of the Italian First Republic's party system. On the stability of the party system Gunther and Montero show how the party system was well-anchored in the society where stable partisanship underpinned the existence of major parties such as Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI), Partito Socialista Italiano (PSI), and Democrazia Cristiana (DC). They argue that the extent of cleavage encapsulation served as a source of partisan competition. This is to say that cleavages and the party system that were built on it correspondingly helped to determine partisan preferences of citizens. At the same time, existence of secondary organizations would also affect translation of objective mass-level cleavages into actual supports for political parties (p. 96).

Furthermore, Gunther and Montero identify the process of how religion and class cleavages were translated into political oppositions (i.e. political parties) during the period of the First Republic. On the left, the working class – politically alienated for a considerable of time in the late of the 19th century – organized themselves against the Catholics on the right. With the help of the labor and trade unions, the left organized and channeled their political support for PSI. On the opposite side, the Catholics mobilized themselves in order to dominate the Italian political scene and channeled their supports behind DC. The point is that the cleavage encapsulation could capture the dynamics of political supports during the First Republic. They had produced a stable political alignment or stable partisanship as demonstrated, among others, by the persistent domination of DC for nearly 50 years – with an interlude when PSI joined a coalitional government. In 1994, however, this party system collapsed. Since then the new party system has replaced the old one where new wing parties have emerged and the old parties have changed themselves to new images. What explains the collapse?

Gunther and Montero have their answer, but we will see Sani and Segatti's argument first. Sani and Segatti look at a cultural factor that they believe was responsible to the collapse of party system. They find that Italian political culture is unique. They in general have maintained a mixed feeling toward political parties. They complained about the situation of fragmented party system but continued to support political parties. While accusing political parties of creating artificial political conflicts, they wanted protection from the parties for their groups (2001: 157). This mixed feeling led to a growing political dissatisfaction among the Italians. And this eventually led to the build-up of antiparty sentiment.

What was unique to Italy in comparison to other European democratic countries is that political dissatisfaction among citizens came earlier and grew faster. Citing one survey by Eurobarometer, Sani and Segatti show that in 1973 Italians who satisfied with the way democracy works were 27 % and this figure decreased to 12 % by 1993. In contrast, the European average was about 41 % in 1973 and increased to 43 % in 1993. The manifestation of the dissatisfaction that was expressed in the form of antiparty feeling, Sani and Segatti believe, was a legacy of the Fascist regime. The Fascist ideology dictated that loyal to the nation means loyal toward the Fascist party. In other words, citizens' loyalty

was not understood “in pluralist sense of loyalty to a party.” (162). This brought about profound impacts to the Italian citizens as well as to the development of political parties during the formation of the First Republic. To the citizens, the Fascist ideology left in the minds of Italians a high degree of political distrust toward political parties; to parties, it hindered parties’ organizational development.

Following Sani and Segatti’s argument, we can say that the cultural factor can partly explain the collapse of the Italian party system. Due to the growing dissatisfaction with the performance of democratic institutions (i.e. political parties), the collapse of the party system basically was a matter of time. Widely exposed corruptions and political scandals that involved leaders of PSI and DC the early 1990s served as a trigger for the collapse of the First Republic’s party system and marked the dawn of a new party system. Thus, it can be said that the emergence of the right wing parties is explained at the system level – external to the parties. Stated differently, they overlook the internal dynamics of the new parties as well as the relationship between parties and their supporters. Sani and Segatti’s argument definitely does not touch the question of the new parties’ durability.

Leonardo Morlino (2001) also develops an argument similar to Sani and Segatti’s in regard to the emergence of the right wing parties in Italy. Setting aside his detailed description on the phases of party organizational development, he explains that the new parties were formed to seize political opportunities that were available in the early 1990s. As the old party system disintegrated, politicians were eager to fill the empty political space on the center-right of the political continuum formerly sealed by Democrazia Cristiana. In the case of Lega Nord, Morlino says that it filled “the space left vacant by catholic culture following secularization in [Veneto, Lombardy, and Piedmont].” (127). It is also true for Forza Italia. A television magnate, Silvio Berlusconi, established this new party as he saw the available political opportunity at the time when the center-right party was disintegrating (128). While this argument is structural in nature, it still does not tell us where the supports for the right wing parties come from.

Gunther and Montero (2001) – as previously discussed – provide us a theory of political partisanship that deals with the source of political

supports for political parties in Southern Europe – including Italy. They convincingly argue that the cleavage encapsulation and well anchored partisanship were responsible to the stability of the Italian party system during the First Republic. Yet this argument cannot be carried too far for explaining the collapse of the party system and the emergence of the new right wing parties. The theory of partisanship is more for explaining the stability of support for parties and party system. As Gunther and Montero themselves indicate, explanation for the transformation of the Italian party system, among other factors, should be sought at the cleavage level. The weakening social-structuration and the eroding religious cleavage, in their view, are partly responsible to the diminishing old-type of partisanship (see pp. 140-41). In this way, partisanship is treated as the dependent variable. Yet Gunther and Montero do not fully pursue other types of cleavages that eventually become active or activated by the politicians of the right in Italy. Neither do they conclusively claim that in Italy the cleavages have at all been disappearing. Gunther and Montero's point on the need of connecting cleavages and political parties, however, is instructive.

On this issue, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) provide us a cleavage theory that has now become classic. The core of their argument says that the existence of cleavages will determine the patterns of political oppositions or constellation of political parties. But Lipset and Rokkan (1967) prudently insist, "cleavages do not translate themselves into party oppositions as a matter of course." (p. 112). Lipset and Rokkan do mention factors that affect the possibility of cleavage translation into party opposition: the costs and payoffs of mergers, alliances, and coalitions (p. 117). Yet they never claim with certainty whether these factors – including the electoral strategy – really shape the last product of translation. At this point, Sartori enters the discussion stating that in many cases "some cleavages are not translated at all." (1976: 176). He does not buy what he calls the old-style sociology argument that "[takes] for granted that cleavages are reflected in and not produced by political system." (ibid). Instead, he underlines the crucial role of translator in the process of handling or mishandling the translation.

Przeworski and Sprague (1986) propose a more forceful argument regarding the role of translators in the process of cleavage translation. They state that it is politicians or party activists who make the decision

whether they will activate a dormant cleavage and then pursue a strategy that can galvanize political support from the activated cleavage. When the politicians feel relatively sure that by activating a particular cleavage they could obtain an electoral advantage, they will activate it. A strategy of campaign is then crafted to appeal voters belong to that cleavage. Otherwise, they will drop the decision to activate the dormant cleavage and then pursue another strategy (see, pp. 55-56).

Lipset & Rokkan and Przeworski & Sprague theories basically suggest us to simultaneously pay attention to cleavages and political actors. Existing cleavages can be a potential source of relatively stable support for political parties. But it is only possible when politicians deliberately activate the cleavages. Differently put, the cleavages can become social bases of political parties. Otherwise, the particular existing cleavages for whatever reason are not activated or suppressed and they failed to translate into a political party. In the following section we shall see that the Italian right wing parties essentially stand on the region-based cleavages that began to form in the second half of the 19th century. These cleavages remained inactive since the Giolliti and Mussolini eras, and during the period of the First Republic. Activated in the late of 1980s, to a large extent, the region-based cleavage can explain why the Italian right wing parties seem to endure over time.

The North-South Cleavages

It is well known that politics in Italy is marked by the presence of multiple social cleavages: class, religion, and Left/Right cleavages all exist (see Gunther and Montero 2001: 96-111). In comparison, the intensity of cleavage-derived political conflicts and the multiplicity of cleavages may be lower than of Spain. In terms of their political significance, however, in both countries, the politics of cleavages is equally important. As happened in Spain, the social cleavages in Italy emerged as by-product of nation-state building process. This means that the cleavages have formed through history.

The history of religious cleavage, for example, according to Gunther and Montero can be traced back in the period of Risorgimento “when two subcultures – one *rossa* and the other *bianca* – emerged as by-product of the founding of the Italian nation-state.” (2001: 137). The process of state building itself touched the political and economic interests of the Catholic

Church where in certain regions the state allowed the confiscation of land belonged to the Church. The conflict between the state and the Church culminated when the Church accordingly issued the *non-expedit* – a policy that urged the Catholics to stay away from politics. This policy was definitely a direct attack on the legitimacy of the new state. Since then, the State-Church tension has colored the Italian politics. A degree of political reconciliation took place during the Mussolini's era when the Catholic Church endorsed Mussolini's power. The Church's political trace could also be found during the First Republic era where the Church established links with the then governing party of Democrazia Cristiana through various institutions such as Catholic Action, Confindustria, and Coltivatore Diretti (Gunther and Montero 2001: 139; see also, Duggan 1994: 187).

To make the Italian politics more complicated, class cleavage also came into being very early in the political history of Italy. As documented by Duggan, workers' cooperatives had begun to flourish in the 1890s and they became radicalized later on – in which Michael Bakunin, a Russian anarchist, played a significant role (Duggan 1994: 163). Transformismo – power alternation carried out by the Italian elite on the left and on the right – reflected the actual and potential political impacts of the class cleavage. This basically was a political way out crafted by the Italian elite at that time to prevent the working class (i.e. the socialists) from power (Cotta 1992: 150-153; see also, LaPalombara 1987: 12-13). The establishment of Partito Socialista Italiano (PSI) in 1892 was not a coincident that it saturated political partisanship of the left. Since the universal suffrage was introduced to the whole population of Italy in 1919, PSI has become one of the major players in Italian politics. It is true that during the Fascism era of Mussolini, parties did not have an opportunity to mobilize political support for election. Through the Fascism era, however, it displayed continuity in the composition of elite and mobilization patterns (Puhle 2001: 274). Later on, PSI resurfaced as a historic party and competed for power immediately after the First Republic was founded in 1948.

In addition, the Left and Right cleavages have also crowded the Italian contemporary politics. Following the data collected by Gunther and Montero, the Italian citizens are divided into two camps in terms of placement of self in the continuum of Left and Right. Even though not as sharp as in Greece, more Italians place themselves either in the Left

or on the Right than in the Center (Gunther and Montero 2001: 104). It is possible to seek how these cleavages have formed through history – if we loosely define what we mean by Left and Right. However, for the purpose of searching the social base(s) of the new right wing parties in Italy we need to explore the long neglected cleavages of the North and South. How have they formed?

The existence of North-South cleavages is reflected in the contemporary Italian political lexicon as the Northern question (Allum 2000; Sassoon 1997). The Northern question consists of several strands of related issues attributable to the Northern regions' interest. Bull and Gilbert, after studying the Lega Nord, come with an understanding that the Northern question "coincide[s] with the interests and needs of a model of development based on small- and medium-sized firms and clamouring for regional autonomy and fiscal federalism." (2001: 167). More specifically, this refers to the North-East regions such as Lombardy, Veneto, and Emilia-Romagna. Furthermore, the Northern question touches a political issue where the northerners – as reported by *Corriere della Sera* – complain about political underrepresentation in the cabinet and other governmental posts "for an area which accounted for a ninth of the population, an eighth of all capital firms, a seventh of the national wealth ..." (2001: 167-68).

In a wider context, the Northern question embraces other northern regions that include industrial centers such as Milan, Turin, and Genoa in the northwest Italy's (event it emerged earlier in these areas). During the economic boom of the 1980s, there was a general opinion among the northerners that the state itself was seen as the obstacle to the northern economic growth. At the same time they believed that the government inclined to favor the South (Allum, 2000: 39). Most of the economic resources that were drawn from the North – and then channeled to the South – was seen as a waste for it did not reduce unemployment rate during that period. Neither did it produce a self-generating economic growth in the South (ibid).

The Northern question gained a new relevance when scandalous events committed by the government officials broke out and hit the media headlines in the 1980s. The Northern question took form as a direct assault towards the central government in Rome of being corrupt and distrusted – in addition to the accusation of being incompetent and too excessively

centralized (see Sani and Segatti 2001: 168). In short, the dividing line between North and South has gotten clearer since the late 1980s.

It should be clear by now that the North-South cleavages do exist in Italy. A further investigation on the history of this cleavage will strengthen this account. Duggan, for example, identifies the North-South political gap that emerged very early in Italy. During the process of Italy's unification, the liberals of the North and South had different conceptions about what the Italian state should be:

"[The Northern] outlook was shaped by vigour of the civil society into which they had been born; a society of entrepreneurial landowners ... For them it seemed natural that state should act merely to facilitate and safeguard the activities of the industrious, such as Britain. In the South, by contrast, where most landowners were absentee, infrastructure lacking, and the rule of law weak, liberalism was conceived of in rather different terms ... liberalism had no meaning here, it was often felt, unless it was 'built' through strong state action ... " (119)

These different visions seem more political. Yet the political differences are attributed to the regions. In addition, the visions are linked to the economic and social features of each region. The North was more industrial, marked by entrepreneurial spirit and strong civil society. The South was just the opposite. The North-South economic gap was evident as shown in the following table:

Italy's Regional Variations (1861)

	Population 1861 (millions)	Value of agricultural production (1857)	Cotton spindles (1857)	Km of roads (1863)
Piedmont/ Liguria	3.6	169	197,000	16,500
Sardinia	0.6	23	--	986
Lombardy	3.3	238	123,046	20,901
Veneto	2.3	128	30,000	--
Parma/ Modena	0.9	174	--	25,776
Papal States	3.2	68	30,000	
Tuscany	1.9	117	3,000	12,381
Kingdom of Two Sicilies	9.2	81	70,000	13,787

Notes: ^alire/hectare.

Source: Duggan, 1994: 152 (adaptation).

As can be seen in the table, “provinces” that constitute the northern region such as Piedmont, Lombardy, and Veneto in the 1860s were more developed than the provinces located in the South. The economic achievements of the North were higher both in terms of agricultural and industrial products (cotton spindles). This uneven development that led to economic gap between North and South was even strengthened for the period of Giolitti’s administration (1901-1914). New industries were planted in Turin and other cities in the northern areas. Engineering and chemical industries led the growth of Italy’s economy at that time, including Fiat, Alfa, and Lancia (see Duggan 1994: pp. 172-3).

Under Fascism (1922-1943), industries “continued to progress along the lines laid down during Giolitti an period, with particular growth in the chemical, electrical and machine sectors.” (Duggan, 1994: 219). It even became at that time the world’s largest exporter of artificial fiber. Even though the growth of car industry was held back due to the limited domestic market, machine manufacturing flourished together with other industrial products – especially chemical-related products (220). Indeed, Italy under Mussolini suffered from the 1930s world economic depression; but the point is that the North-South economic gap between persisted during this era.

During the two first decades of the First Republic, the North-South situation was not much different from the old one. The fact that the North economically grew faster reflected in the phenomenon of great migration from the South to the North that culminated during the economic miracle years from 1953 to 1963² (Allum, 2000: 12; Zamagni, 2000: 49). To make a balanced view, it is worth noting that the Italian government did make efforts to overcome the South economic backwardness. Since 1960s, through special public intervention and the use of the Southern Development Fund the government promoted the dispersion of industrial plants to the South. By 1970s this policy seemed to bear fruit when the North-South economic gap was getting narrower (Allum 2000: 37). However, the world’s energy crisis held back this process. But the dominant perception among the

² In addition, two other waves of migration towards the northern region took place in the 1930s in the 1970s as well (see Zamagni 2001: 49. Sassoon, 1997: 31-36). The pull factor was the economic growth concentrated in the North and at the same time poverty in the South also became the push factor.

Northerners – as previously described – was that the government failed to deal with the Southern problem. And some politicians from the North began to question the benefits of the government policy for the North.

The historical account as described above confirms that the North-South cleavages exist in Italy. The Northern question they have become prominent since 1990s basically roots in the Italian political history – just like the religious and class cleavages. It has persisted through time, from the period of Italy's unification, Giolitti and Fascism eras, to the period of the First Republic. The fact that the North cleavage has been present suggests that it could potentially be translated into political parties.

Activating the Cleavage

Having acknowledged that the North cleavage objectively exists, we may say that this cleavage can potentially become a social base for political parties from which they can dig a relatively stable political support. As previously noted, it can only happen when this long-time dormant cleavage is to be activated. The key is that politicians must activate by selling a campaign program that coincide with the interests of the people belong to the North cleavage (see Przeworski and Sprague 1986: 55-56). Lega Nord is a glaring example. In a public statement that, for example, one of the Lega Nord's leader, Umberto Bossi, once made an appeal by emphasizing the need to preserve Lombardy's interest:

"Lombardy is not an idiot who will pay other people's debts. Lombardy is not going to follow Rome passively into bankruptcy because it has no intention sacrificing the rights of its citizens, the sweat of its sons, the diligence and personality of its people on the altar of Roman misgovernment." (Fassini, 1998 as quoted by Bull and Gilbert 2001: 13).

At other times Bossi stood out as the defender of the whole northern region saying, "The center and the South contribute only 36 per cent of the GDP, yet it absorbs 55 per cent of public expenditure. Rome takes far more than it gives to the North." (Sassoon, 1997: 263). The slogan launched by Lega Nord also draws a sharp dividing line between the North and South: "*Roma ladrona, la Lega non perdona*" (Rome, big thief, the League does not forgive).

Forza Italia in a similar way has also exploited the North sentiment in order to secure political support. One of the core campaign themes launched by Forza Italia is its emphasis on the importance of civil society.

This idea implies that the overweening role of the national state should be reduced. At the same time Forza Italia asserts governmental human resources should come from private sectors. (see, Sani and Segatti, 2001: 175). This assertion reminds us to the format of the state as idealized by the northerners during the formation of the Italian state in the late 19th century. This is to say that Forza Italia skillfully identifies itself as the carrier of the North's interest. In fact, this party made an alliance with the other right wing parties (Lega Nord and Alleanza Nazionale) during the 1994 election. This means that Forza Italia also endorsed the idea of representing the interest of the North as widely campaigned by Lega Nord.

We have seen so far that the right wing parties – particularly Lega Nord and Forza Italia – basically have a strong social base for their political support. And they have skillfully crafted their campaigns that match with the Northern question. Differently put, the right wing parties have been able to activate a dormant cleavage and to translate potential support into actual votes. The following table demonstrates that the parties do really have a social base in the northern region:

Distribution of Valid Votes in the Regional Election of 2000 (provincial list) Percentage of in Selected Regions

	North Regions			South Regions		
	Piedmont	Lombardy	Veneto	Campania	Basilica	Calabria
Left:						
DS	17.7	20.2	12.3	14.2	17.5	14.3
RC	5.5	6.4	3.0	3.8	3.5	3.0
CI	2.0	1.9	1.0	1.6	2.1	3.1
Right:						
FI	30.8	33.9	30.4	20.9	13.2	18.3
LN	7.6	15.5	12.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
AN	11.9	9.7	9.8	11.2	6.0	10.4
Others*						
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

*I. Democratici, PPI, Unione dem.per. l'Europas, Rinnov. Italiano-Dini, Fed. Dei Verdi, SDI, PRI, CDU, CCD, Pannella-Bonino, Autonomisti, and other smaller parties. *Source: Adapted from Caciagli and Zuckerman (2001: 232)*

At this point, this paper has fulfilled its tasks to answer a set of questions posed in the introductory section. First, on the question of why the right wing parties achieved the electoral success, this paper has demonstrated that the key of success lies in the presence of the North

cleavage. This cleavage has become the social base for the parties and the cleavage supplies the parties with relatively stable political preference. Second, on the question of whether or not their electoral success was merely a reflection protest voting, this paper argues that protest voting played a role in the initial electoral success. But protest voting could not sustain as the only explanatory variable for the parties' durability. Shortly, the presence of the North cleavage to a large extent can explain both the parties' electoral success and their durability. Finally, the right wing parties have proved to be able to activate the North cleavage by capturing the interests of a large segment of the northerners. This is why the right wing parties have gained their prominence while the left parties seem to be part of the Italian past – at least in the northern regions. Differently put, it is the course of the Italian political history that opened political opportunity for the right, partly because party of the left (PSI) was involved in the corruption and mismanagement during the period of the First Republic.

Conclusion

One major conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis is that the Italian right wing parties are more than a protest party. They do not come from nowhere. Instead, they stand on a strong social base that has made them able to survive more than here elections. It is worth noting here that this paper does not make a claim that the right wing parties have developed themselves to become cleavage parties. It might be too far if we jump to a conclusion that the Italian right wing parties (Lega Nord, Forza Italia, and Alleanza Nazionale) have developed a partisan base that connects the North cleavage to the parties as the former major parties did. As characterized by many scholars, Forza Italia, for example, is very weak in terms of organizational reach. It relied heavily on the mass media (especially television) to appeal voters and depended heavily on Berlusconi personality and leadership (Morlino 131-32). In this way, Forza Italia is not comparable to the old parties (PSI, DC, and PCI) in terms of its ability to penetrate the society. It is simply not a mass-based party.

Another caveat should be added. This paper deliberately did not take into account other possible factors that affect the electoral success of the right wing parties. Institutional, cultural, and international factors can all be influential to shape the political fate of the right wing parties. Also, the dynamics of coalition and conflicts between the right wing parties is

ignored; and at the same time the multiplicity of issues that divide the political positions of the right wing parties are downplayed. In short, the argument developed in this paper serves as a complement to the other existing explanations. *****

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