BEYOND BORDERS

Vladimir Zhdanov

Post-Authoritarian Devolution: The Case of the First Italian Republic

ZHDANOV, Vladimir — MPA, Ph.D. (History), Ph.D. (Political Science), Independent scholar. Address: 990 North Pleasant St. Amherst, MA 01002, USA.

Email: v.a.zhdanov100@gmail.com

Based on the comparative analysis methodology in its case study form, this article examines the origins, the design, and the consequences of territorial arrangements in Italy, i.e. a country in which settling the stateness problem coincided with the process of post-authoritarian transformation. This experience — particularly the pacted transition (although it was not explicitly pronounced in Italy despite the fact that the state never witnessed any post-war anti-fascist lustration of bureaucracy) — was later used as an example for the Spanish model of democratic reforms, which in turn became paradigmatic. This article traces the long-lasting impact of the historic bloc between the industrial bourgeoisie of the Italian North and the landlords of the Italian South (Mezzogiorno) that contributed to the conservation of the socioeconomic backwardness of the latter. Special attention is given to the influence of the structural constraints of international bipolarity that laid down the external framework of the so-called "Italian anomaly", that is, the lack for almost half a century left-wing and right-wing political parties' alteration in power. This anomaly delayed Italian regionalization despite its having been envisaged in the constitution. However, the objective socioeconomic demands of a welfare state created possibilities for the birth of regions in the early 1970s. The emergence of the Northern League gave a new dimension to Italian politics by radically reshaping its traditional structures. These developments, taken together with the cleansing of a corrupted Italian political class, the referendum of 1993, and the new electoral law ultimately caused the demise of the First Republic.

Keywords: devolution; nationalism; regionalization; Italy; political anomaly; special statute regions; ordinary regions; the Northern League.

Introduction

Devolution means the emergence of regional political autonomy in relation to a center, an autonomy which "consists of a capacity to take decisions and to implement them on the basis of adequate resources" [Newton, Donaghy 1997: 123]. Contrary to federalism, in which the authority of different territorial levels of power is secured by a constitution and cannot be changed unilaterally, devolution reflects the more protagonistic character of a center, which retains the right to interfere in regions' activities [Bogdanor 1979: 2]. As the political expression of regionalization, that is, the reaction of a central government to regionalism (i.e., the demands of regions for a larger share of control over their territories), modern European devolution depends upon the following set of factors.

First is the factor of ethnic (or exclusive) and civil (or economic) nationalism. The latter is the feature of a more advanced level of civil society, which rejects

ethnic nationalism and its rigid definition of ethnicity. Civil nationalism ascribes decisive meaning to the right of people to choose their nationality according to their affiliation with the culture and history of a given nation [Keating 1996: 1–7].

Secondly, devolution may be regarded as an immanent feature of modern political development which is linked to the ideology of decentralization, especially in countries that passed through the stage of authoritarianism [Baldi 2006: 28]. The "third wave" of democratization, launched by the Portuguese revolution of 1974, enabled these demands, latently ripened in the previous decades. An example is the Spanish model of democratic transition, which in fact became paradigmatic in this respect [Linz, Stepan 1996: 87].

Thirdly, it was the development of a welfare state and the subsequent rise of its social functions that demanded more rigorous economic planning [Baldi 2006: 23–26]. The number and volume of these functions and their financing were growing faster at the regional level than at the national one. The demand for social services led to the overburdening of welfare state, which negatively affected the efficiency of governing. Under these circumstances, the center began to regard civilized forms of nationalism not as an opponent but sometimes as an ally capable of taking on some administrative and even political functions. This development caused a transformation of the political system from one in which different territorial levels of power were acting rather independently from each other, to a system of mutual interdependence [Ocaña 1989: 89].

Fourthly, the rise of a welfare state caused an explosive growth of interest groups and ushered in the relative decline of political parties. The redistribution of authority between different territorial levels of government seriously affected the distribution of authority between political institutions, as well as the influence of various interest groups [Giordano 2000: 451−452; Wilson 2015: 186]. The peculiarity of the Italian case "was that party structures, interest associations and public agricultural and industrial institutions were all linked together in a complex decision-making structure in which the parties played a central role" despite "the fact that it lacked … the possibility for all political parties to establish alliances and to be in government" [Morlino 2013: 342].

Last, but not least, is the factor of European integration that went along with devolution in the now-EU member-states. Since the 1970s, the EEC has had programs financing European sub-national governments: "the European Union is part of a system of multi-level governance which is driven by identity politics as well as by functional and distributional pressures" [Hooghe, Marks 2008: 23].

In Italy, which along with Spain represents the most suitable subject for a focused comparison of Russian politics in its 'most similar' research design due to the parallels of their historical developments, political cultures and institutions rooted in the authoritarian past, along with the role of the national center as a protagonist, led to the asymmetrical distribution of power and administrative capacities among political entities belonging to the same territorial level. The Italian and Spanish solutions to regional problems present the most interesting example of regionalization for Russia in the face of the revival of conflict between the center and the periphery as one of the main indicators of a systemic crisis. In the process of devolution, the Italian state successfully evolved from its unitary and highly centralized form into one that reflects a substantial degree of decentralization, and although it is not really federal, several federalization projects have developed there in recent decades.

Italian devolution preceded the regional reforms in Spain that proceeded there after the demise of the Franco regime, and similarly, the Italian regional state was a form of political compromise that could be placed at some point between the poles of a highly centralized state and a confederation. This point's coordinates were determined by a specific combination of different elites' strategies, which to a great extent were determined by elites' identities.

Historical Background

History is non-linear and path-dependent. It is marked by "points of no return"—the intersections of several alternatives of possible historical development—in which the future is especially vulnerable even to minor decisions made by the factions of political class. Each of these alternatives is backed by specific combinations of the elites' strategies . The modern history of Italy is generally seen to have had six crossing points: (1) the Risorgimento—the creation of a unified Italian state under the hegemony of Piedmont; (2) the Giolitti era (1901-1914)—the unsuccessful attempt to broaden the social basis of the Italian state; (3) the early1920s and the rise of the Fascist regime; (4) the fall of the Fascist regime and the emergence of democratic Italy; (5) the rise of the welfare state; and (6) the crisis of the First and the birth of the Second Italian Republic. Of these points of no return, three (the Risorgimento and the rise and fall of the First Italian Republic) most strongly correlate to the dichotomy of centralism-decentralism in Italian politics.

The unification of Italy was not a spontaneous popular movement, but a deliberate, and essentially military effort, to build a nation-state. By taking advantage of many regional conflicts happening at the time, the Risorgimento was able to co-opt the support of strategically important local elites [Mack Smith 1997: 51]. Unification resulted in neither the demolition of traditional political and economic structures nor their radical modification; rather, the new Italian state was a conglomerate of different territories and social systems. The annexation of the Neapolitan Kingdom and the Papal States meant that this conglomerate would face such explosive social and political problems as "the Southern Question"[1] and "the Vatican Question."[2]

The industrial bourgeoisie of the North was interested in the expansion of the national market, in the preservation of their monopoly over industrial production, and the complete elimination of southern manufacturing. The politics of the southern landlords aimed at the preservation of the semi-feudal socioeconomic relations present in southern villages, the protection of their property rights and privileges, and last but not least, the maintenance of high grain prices and land rents. The political alliance of elites with such mutually complementary interests eliminated the possibility of a radical reform of traditional structures in the South. The main political actors of the Mezzogiorno were more inclined to reserve the narrow internal market for the privileged groups than encourage the rapid modernization of the Italian economy and society. The national political class—consisting of an alliance between the northern bourgeoisie and southern landowners—thought that its interests could be better secured in a highly centralized state. This historic bloc thereby gave birth to the conservative bias of Italian stateness [Weibel 1971: 20–21]. The latter took the form of a modern unitary state in which the center completely dominated the periphery.[3]

In a narrow sense, it was the price the southern landlords were willing to pay for the suppression of peasant uprisings. From a broader perspective, it was a typical case of internal colonialism, where the main societal actors of the national core (the North) formed an alliance with the main societal actors of the periphery (the South) to boost the economic growth of the former by preserving the socioeconomic and political status quo of the latter. Over the centuries, southern elites had developed forms of compromises with authorities in ex-

1 "The Southern Question" refers to the economic, social, and cultural backwardness of the Italian South, which emerged as the result of the diverse evolutionary paths along which different Italian territories developed throughout history. As Mack Smith explained: 'The Southern Question has been the greatest manifestation of regionalism in modern Italian history, for it has perpetuated the division of Italians up into *nordici* and *sudici*' [Mack Smith 1974: 135].

2 "The Vatican Question" refers to the problem of relationships between the Italian state and Catholics in general, and the Vatican in particular. This problem began with the forced annexation of the Papal States, which laid down the basis for a long period of Vatican hostility towards the Italian state.

3 "Both the constitution of the kingdom, with its English-type parliament, and the administration, with its French-type centralization, stemmed from Piedmont" [Hearder 1983: 246].

change for privileges. The practice of *transformismo*[4] and the clientelist links between politicians and local notables were emerging at an ever-increasing rate as the social basis for the governing coalitions in Rome [Hine 1993: 15]. The inclusion of conservative local elites in the policy-making process at the national level became the most serious hindrance to the modernization of the Italian South.

From the very moment of unification two extremely different types of society and polity—in the form of the traditional society of the South and the much more dynamic capitalist North—began to interact as a complex system of economic, social, and political interdependence. After unification, the economic and social diversity of the formerly independent Italian states resulted in polarization (due to the mutual opposition of the elements of development and backwardness) and in the emergence of the so-called dualist model, which became the basic component of further socioeconomic, cultural, and political developments.[5] Because of its narrow social basis, the Italian state of that period had very limited capacity for political maneuvering and lacked effective mechanisms to extinguish political conflicts. The state constantly fluctuated between the extremes of liberalism (with its heyday during the Giolitti era) and the ever-growing popularity of the idea of a strong state, which found its full expression during the Fascist regime.

The post-World War I settlement further contributed to Italian heterogeneity. In accordance with the Saint-Germaine peace treaty of 10 September 1919, Italy annexed the southern provinces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, i.e., Alto Adige (South Tyrol) and Venezia Giulia, with their predominantly non-Italian populations (e.g., Italians constituted only 16% of the people living in South Tyrol) which had quite different systems of government that could hardly conform to rigid Italian centralism. This meant that Italian stateness would encounter additional challenges in the future, since the populations of these provinces were neither ready to renounce their traditional local autonomy nor reject their cultural identity [Weibel 1971: 26].

In the sixty years that followed the Risorgimento, the modes of strategic games of elites in Turin (and later in Rome) with peripheral elites passed through all possible varieties of accommodating the latter (the pure patrimonial form of state-building during the Risorgimento, the special legislation for the South, the unsuccessful attempts during the Giolitti era to broaden the social spectrum of the main political actors, and finally —the restoration of the unilateral treatment of territorial elites under the Mussolini regime). It should be noted here that the corporatist institutional arrangements of the Fascist state, which buttressed the strategic games of the political core with the functional elites of Italian society, completely replaced the strategic games of the center with the elites of periphery.

The First Italian Republic (1948–1994)

The fall of the Fascist regime and the end of the Second World War instigated the democratic transformation of Italy. Fascist over-centralization had placed the question of Italian democratization in a very dramatic context, but it was clear that the country needed a new constitutional and institutional framework. On 2 June 1946, a popular referendum decided on the form that the Italian state would take; the monarchy was narrowly abolished by 12.7 million people (while 10.7 million supported it) and the Republic was proclaimed [Lepre 2004:

[4] In the Italian political context, *transformismo* referred to the parliamentary practice of continuous vote-trading between the government and the opposition. In particular, it was widely practiced by southern deputies who supported any political party in power in exchange for the freedom of action in the South. In essence, *transformismo* became the political expression of the historic bloc [Keating 1988: 118].

[5] Dualism means the existence of a complex socioeconomic structure in which the opposing elements of backwardness and modernity and the traditional agrarian and modern industrial sectors of the economy are highly mutually interdependent and play complementary roles. By the time of Risorgimento, dualism was linked to the existence of extreme economic, social, and cultural diversity in the Italian states, and was further strengthened by the peculiarities of the unification process, i.e., the social alliance of the northern bourgeoisie and southern landlords [Tarrow 1977: 11–24].

72]. The referendum confirmed once again the existence of two Italies—the North and the South—which remained rather different in their political preferences; for example, in the South the majority of the votes favored the monarchy. The referendum coincided with the elections to the Constitutional Assembly, which gave the qualified majority to three main parties: the Christian Democrats (DC) received 35.1% of the vote, the Socialists (PSI) 20.7%, and the Communists (PCI) received 18.9% of the vote [Kogan 1983: 25–26].

But by the end of 1945, the anti-Fascist coalition had slowly begun to disintegrate. The catalyst for this breakdown was the question of whether to restore the pre-Fascist form of the state or to pursue the devolution of power. Regionalization as a means of altering the state's structure gradually gained broad popular support. However, there was no consensus about how it might be carried out. The reformation of the Italian state involved three main factors: (1) the separatist movements present on the islands and in border regions; (2) the need to increase popular political participation as one of the cornerstones of a democracy; and (3) overcoming the incomplete unification that should be manifested in the comprehensive development of the South [Keating 1988: 135].

This internal political cleavage of Italian polity was exacerbated by the external factors, particularly the beginning of the Cold War. The expulsion of the Communists and Socialists from the coalition government in 1947, which was a precondition for receiving US economic aid [Lepre 2004: 87–88]**,** marked the beginning of the so-called Italian 'political anomaly' (a.k.a., the "imperfect two-party system," "polarized pluralism," and a "blocked democracy") [Briquet 1997: 49–50]. Its basic feature consisted of the absence of a systemic opposition to balance the ruling party while also being recognized as a reliable partner in strategic political games. Such a 'political anomaly' was described as *conventio ad excludendum* (a convention according to which one or more political parties were considered unfit to participate in the cabinet), which "thwarted the functioning of Italy's postwar parliamentary democracy, that is, away from being a system that allows for alternation and thus meaningful debate in government, between majority and opposition" [Ventresca 2004: 150].

The parties' programmatic stances on the regional issue fitted into highly ideological interpretations of Italian history and various strategies of socioeconomic and political developments. Beneath these elaborate strategies were assessments of each party's relative political capacity and estimations of the possibility of controlling the government in Rome. Rapid normalization also implied a pact with the existing bureaucracy, which remained intact after the fall of Fascism [Cassese, Torchia 1993: 96].

Constitutional Framework

On 22 December 1947, the Constitutional Assembly adopted the Constitution of the Italian Republic that went into effect on 1 January 1948. It was a progressive constitution as the outcome of a complex negotiation between different political actors who had played decisive roles in the Resistance. As would happen three decades later in Spain, the founding fathers of the Italian Republic tried to delay for as long as possible finding solutions to many of Italy's political problems, among them the form of Italian stateness. The constitution formally declared the decentralization of state power and its devolution to the regions. It defined the broad spectrum of regional competencies in finance and taxation, agrarian and social policies, and economic development and planning. This way, Italian devolution went beyond the limits of ordinary functional decentralization, but it did not come even close to a federal state. Without destroying the unitary state, the regions were expected to counteract the over-centralization, uniformity, and lack of flexibility of the national government by permitting some degree of political autonomy [Baldi 2006: 81–82].

Italian asymmetrical stateness was largely based on the specific historical circumstances that played out during the Resistance, mainly centered on the existence of separatist movements on the geographical fringes of Italy, particularly in Sicily [Perdomo 2001: 76]. The Constitutional Assembly *de facto* recognized the special

character of these territories, thus drastically reducing the scope for political maneuvering in the subsequent discussions on the form that Italian stateness would take [Baldi 2006: 80–81]. The confirmation of a Sicilian special statute on 15 May 1946 reduced this scope for political maneuvering even further. The creation of the special regions made the initial regionalization of Italy inevitable [Bifulco 2004: 10–12]. The hastiness and aptness of these decisions were much criticized later, because insufficient coordination of the special statutes with the Constitution and the lack of clearly defined relationships between Rome and the special regions set the scene for many conflicts.

The spatial distribution of parties' domination in Italy was one of the major factors that shaped the historically concrete form of Italian stateness. The PCI's dominance in the central regions of Italy determined its insistence on the creation of strong regions, thus motivating the Christian Democratic reluctance to pass the enabling legislation. The institutionalization of regions in these conditions would mean that Rome would have fewer channels to control the politics in the opposition-dominated regions. If the DC were sure it could control the regional governments exclusively through the party channels it would permit the regions to get more autonomy. But the existence of a geographically concentrated opposition substantially contributed to the centralist tendencies of the Italian political system [Baldi, Baldini 2008: 77–78].

The Constitution of 1948 defined Italy as a 'regional unitary state', i.e., an intermediary form between unitary and federal stateness. While proclaiming the unity and indivisibility of Italy it also stressed the necessity of political decentralization and local self-governance. Articles 114–127 and 130–133 recognized regions as an immanent part of the Italian state without recognizing their sovereignty. The whole idea of the regional state was based on the Catholic principle of subsidiarity, i.e., the strict hierarchy of levels with clearly defined competencies [Bifulco 2004: 34–37]. All regional legislation, i.e., that which was issued not only by the ordinary regions but also by the special ones, was subjected to the preliminary control of the national government to ensure its compatibility with regional competencies, the articles of the Italian Constitution, basic national interests, and the interests of other regions.

Due to specific historical starting conditions, i.e., the existence of regions with special statutes (Sicily, Sardinia, Trentino-Alto Adige, and Valle d'Aosta), the stateness of the Italian republic emerged in the form of an asymmetrical regional state in the same manner as it would later come into being in Spain. According to article 116, these regions had "specific forms and conditions of autonomy" which were determined by different statutes. Special regions have got their own legislative power in the areas of economic development, finance, taxation, social services, insurance, labor relations, and higher education. While the special regions had broad competencies in finance and taxation, the competencies of ordinary ones were limited in these areas to a minimum. The latter had the right to impose some minor taxes as well as to impose a regional addition to the national taxes within limits defined by Rome. However, the main difference between these regions and the ordinary ones manifested itself in the fact that contrary to the latter, which possessed only concurrent legislation, i.e., the legislation that was restricted by the corresponding national legislation, the former had the right to "exclusive legislation" which varies substantially from region to region [Weibel 1971: 365–417].

Title V of the Constitution stated that elections to all regional legislatures were to be carried out within a year after its adoption. It envisaged that within a three-year period, all Italian laws would have been revised according to the new territorial framework. However, up until 1970 these constitutional articles were a dead letter: there was no real regional stratum in Italy, with the exception of the special regions. The formation of ordinary regions was postponed for two decades. The landslide victory of the Christian Democrats at the parliamentary elections of 1948 led to their decision to ignore the constitutional provisions on regionalization in order to secure the party's political hegemony—the position that was adamantly supported by the national bureaucracy, which did not endure the process of antifascist lustration [Di Palma 1982: 122].

The regional state in Italy was the result of an unbalanced compromise among the country's main political actors that was marked from the very beginning by serious contradictions. The ambiguity of the constitutional provisions for the regions encouraged each political party to interpret the regional reform in a manner that would enhance their own powers. This compromise was further complicated by the delay of regionalization until 1970 when it reflected a new political balance. Still, the Constitution of 1948 meant more than just the abolition of monarchy—it provided the constitutional framework for the territorial modernization of the country. Since the unification of 1861, the Constitution represented the most important turning point in Italian history [Ciuffoletti 1994: vii–viii].

Although comprehensive regional reform was delayed almost indefinitely, the special regions were established as scheduled. All of them were regions on the Italian periphery that could be distinguished by their rather visible and particular socioeconomic (Sicily and Sardinia), cultural, and linguistic traditions (Trentino-Alto Adige and Valle d'Aosta). More important than this social background was the influence of an additional set of political actors in these regions in the form of separatist movements and foreign powers [Galli, Prandi 1970: 27].

Even more crucial was the fact that, contrary to their Spanish counterparts (i.e., the Basque Country and Catalonia, which, in addition to their obvious cultural-linguistic differences represent the most economically dynamic regions of Spain) and due to their small geographic and demographic sizes, Trentino-Alto Adige, Valle d'Aosta, and Friuli-Venezia Giulia (the latter was established in 1963 [Baldi, Baldini 2008: 79]) failed to develop strong regionalist parties capable of playing serious roles in the political coalitions in the lower house of the Italian Parliament. Moreover, having been incapacitated in its role as a territorially representative body, the Senate was unable to support the interests of these regions institutionally [Palermo, Wilson 2014: 511].

In the absence of strong regional parties and institutionalized regional representation by the upper house of the Italian Parliament, Italian devolution was held hostage by the balance of power between a variety of national political actors who used the former as additional leverage for their own political gain and not as the means to satisfy the demands of the regions [Ciuffoletti 1994: 165–166].

The Southern Question

Although the Italian constitution envisaged the creation of two types of regions—ordinary and special—in reality their formal differences were overshadowed by the much more obvious differences between two main Italian mega-regions: the North and the South. They represented two different models of interest aggregation: in the North, interests were voiced via interest groups and political parties, and in the South, this was achieved through clientelism, which was used by almost all political parties (with only one possible exception of the PCI).

Frightened by the possible revival of peripheral separatism that had already played the role of midwife in the birth of asymmetrical Italian stateness, the national political class responded to the unsolved problems of the South with official and unofficial policies and political tactics. Its actions—although formally denying the discretionary treatment of special (already existing) and ordinary (only existing on paper) regions—in reality treated different societal actors in these territories preferentially.

A new governmental agency aimed at the institutional substitution of political asymmetry among prospective regions with the asymmetry of policies towards the South was created in 1950 under the title of *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* (Fund for the South) [Watson 1970: 10]. The establishment of the *Cassa* represented an alternative response of the national political class to the full-fledged regionalization of the southern regions which could have had unforeseen ramifications for Italian stateness. Under the rigid structural constraints of the Cold War, only this alternative was viable because no forms of popular representation at the local level could be accepted since they might have led to the abolition of the Italian political anomaly.

Since 1950, the policy of providing special assistance to the South became one of the main factors behind the development of the modern system of political power and social control in Italy, both of which were based on the distribution of public spending. This new form of historic compromise resulted in further increasing the dependency of the South, which once again had to pay for the expansion of northern industries. Consequently, the political elites of southern Italy started regarding themselves as the intermediaries of this distributional policy [Tullio-Altan 2000: 154].

At the beginning, the special policies for southern development were mainly concentrated on the formation of industrial infrastructure. Later, the theory of the growth poles demanded large-scale interventions of the state in targeted regions [Kogan 1983: 138]. In Italy's particular political environment, the theory of the growth poles met the needs of southern local elites. Since these political bosses could not hinder the policies regarding the industrial development of the Mezzogiorno, they tried to support only selected programs that could be placed under their control. These policies were implemented to stimulate self-supporting growth-cycles through making investments into the industries that already had relatively well-developed infrastructure, thus permitting the state to step back from the market after correcting its imbalances. The special measures for the leveling of economic differentiation between Italian territories led to the permanent expansion of industrial installations in order to ensure the continuous influx of funds [Baudner, Bull 2013: 213–214].

Further development of the Mezzogiorno was marked by the extensive modernization of its social and cultural spheres. This was achieved through the further elaboration of clientelist political mechanisms that played the role of the territorial expression of *transformismo*. Regional authorities quickly became the immanent part of the patronage system. Moreover, the regional political dimension of the South was immediately occupied by traditional power mechanisms, based on the hegemony and clientelism of parties [Hopkin, Mastropaolo 2001: 155–158]. The spread of large-scale political corruption, which was based on the clientelist networks, was furthered by the polarization of political culture in the climate of the Cold War and through the sudden availability of financial resources for the purposes of reconstruction [Finley, Mack Smith, Duggan 1987: 221]. The inclusion of the Socialist Party in the governing coalition did not alter this political arrangement since the PSI soon became accustomed to the existing clientelist practices.

Political clientelism achieved its most developed form and penetrated all social spheres in southern Italy for only there did it find the best combination of historic peculiarities in which it could take root and flourish. It was the DC that became the nucleus of clientelism, where the notables of pre-war *transformismo* found their new political niche. The 1947 demise of the national unity government gave a new form to the old system of *transformismo*, in which the southern Italian notables of the DC played the role of intermediaries. This reincarnation of the old political elite took place within the framework of a still highly centralized state, whose new democratic institutions contributed to the establishment of additional clientelist channels.

The colonization of state and society by the DC was especially extensive in southern Italy. There, the Christian Democrats secured a monopoly over the mechanisms of power for the transfer of demand for favors. The political hegemony of the DC at the national level provided it with necessary resources [Finley, Mack Smith, Duggan 1987: 222]. The expansion of state intervention into socioeconomic matters in general and into the programs for the development of the Mezzogiorno in particular supplied this renovated clientelist structure with the new methods of the *sottogoverno* system.[6] This change in the rules of the strategic games resulted in the blocking of the development process since self-sustaining growth in the Mezzogiorno would undermine the structures of dependence upon which the entire clientelist system was based.

[6] *Sottogoverno* means the distribution of administrative positions in the governmental bodies proportionally to the relative political weight of the parties of the ruling coalition. *Sottogoverno* was an important element of *partocrazia* (the dominance of political parties).

During the socioeconomic reconstruction of the 1950s, the clientelist system was also modernized and the individual relationships between patrons and clients were substituted by the mechanisms of the mass parties. The Christian Democrats established a special office for the political and organizational development of the backward territories, which transferred the control over southern politics and southern party organizations from the notables to political managers who operated under the direct control of politicians at the national level. This change produced a more efficient patronage system in which the old relaxed network of individual patrons was replaced by the party machinery controlled by Rome [Keating 1988: 142]. Voting was understood in this system not as a democratic act but as an expression of one's affiliation with a particular clientele [Della Porta 1997: 45].

The mass-party patronage system discouraged the collective representation of interests outside political parties or regionalist movements in the Mezzogiorno. The parties, which constituted the fundamental pillars of the Italian political system, were snatching up every attempt of institutional change, while turning them to their own advantage and blocking real political and administrative reforms. For instance, if implemented, the system of regional planning would undermine the very basis of DC power in the South, i.e. "the discretionary control of the distribution of credits and benefits and the dependence of communities and social groups upon the Party machine" [Keating 1988: 155].

The crippled functioning of public institutions and the inefficiency of public administration contributed to the spread of corruption, clientelism, and criminal favors on an even larger scale, and "the DC and its coalition partners plundered the bureaucracies for patronage" [Warner 2001: 138]. The citizens' trust in the ability of the state to guarantee their rights was considerably diminished by these developments. The latter reinforced the necessity to secure the privileged channels of access to public services. Ultimately, this led to the emergence of mechanisms of selective inclusion which shaped the circles of the privileged few who would be ready to pay and take the bribes, and exclude all others from participation [Della Porta 1997: 39].

The drawbacks of the planning process led to the lack of adequate precision in the targeting of socioeconomic goals. Moreover, the administration's planning incapacity led to the practice of last-minute political agreements or administrative improvisations, which undermined the strategy of long-term planning. The planning process was also subject to the pressure of local political groups that stipulated the provision of socioeconomic programs in the form of thousands of smaller sub-programs. This splitting substantially facilitated the misuse and abuse of public funds, while at the same time the exhaustion of available public resources and the political changes on the national level gradually deprived clientelism of its legitimacy.

The hardly pronounced willingness of southern regional political actors to make the regions an appropriate framework for their political activity to a large extent was caused by the absence of a developed regional self-identity in the Mezzogiorno. Not until the mid-1960s—the preparation period for the comprehensive regionalization of Italy—was the southern question combined with political discussions about this new form of Italian stateness [Cassese, Torchia 1993: 96–97]. Although many factors that were usually regarded as the causes of political regionalism and regional nationalism—such as the increasing developmental differences, the growth of social tension, urbanization crises, and different historical traditions—were typical of Mezzogiorno, they did not lead in Southern Italy to the rise of noticeable peripheral regionalism during analyzed period.

The explanation for this historical anomaly should be primarily sought in the peculiarities of the Italian political system in the South in general and in southern political culture in particular. Southern Italy was distinguished by two political phenomena: on the one side there was a distinctive distancing from the state; on the other there was a widespread mentality of dependence that placed the central state as the guarantor of social welfare and development. Both phenomena were the elements of the clientelist system that connected the distant capital with individualistic, particularistic, and locally embedded interests.

The Birth of the Italian Regional State

In the early 1960s a new concept of the regions emerged. To an ever-increasing extent, the regions were regarded as the instrument for consolidation of DC achievements, which were the result of its successful economic policy in the 1950s. The "economic miracle" of the 1950s and early 1960s permitted Italy to transform itself into a welfare state [Ferrera, Gualmini 2000: 188]. However, Christian Democrats became the victims of their own success: this new type of state caused an exponential increase in the government's functions and responsibilities. The old highly centralized system of governance could no longer cope with the problems of modern society and the welfare state. The functional requirements of the welfare state demanded a new administrative level between the provincial and the national ones [Cassese, Torchia 1993: 97].

Regionalization was the organizational response of the Italian political class to the contradictions inherent in an emerging welfare state in the new political environment, which showed that traditional forms of political alliances with local elites had exhausted their capacity. The national government needed to prove its reformist potential, and regional reform was found to be the most inexpensive response to political pressure that would not radically alter the existing government institutions [Baldi, Baldini 2008: 81–82].

Elections to the first regional councils became possible in June 1970 after both chambers of the Italian parliament had passed the regional electoral law in February 1968. But for the next two years, the regional governments had only nominal authority until Rome had completed the transfer of administrative personnel and financial competencies to the meso-level. Only then did the regional parliaments pass the statutes of ordinary regions in May-June 1971. The creation of ordinary regions was a decisive step in reforming the highly centralized Italian political system. This development added a broad new dimension in the forging of political coalitions. It was followed by a series of laws and decrees that delegated to regions the competencies that had previously belonged to the national government. Italian devolution was an attempt to create a new state that would bind all parts of the country in an extremely diverse socioeconomic and cultural environment. This diversity caused the multiple forms and scales of autonomy that were ascribed to the special regions, whereas the ordinary regions were given a homogeneous institutional and political-administrative structure [Mazzoleni 2009: 136–138].

Regionalization was regarded as one of the main tools to increase democratic participation and make economic planning more comprehensive. The regional reform in Italy also represented an attempt to avert the overloading of the central government and the over-expansion of the national bureaucracy while preserving the functions of the welfare state [Dente 1997: 199]. The latter was an especially difficult task in Italy, which lacked an adequate quantity of sufficiently trained modern bureaucracy. The transfer of the whole spectrum of Italian socioeconomic and political problems into a completely new territorial dimension was regarded by many representatives of the Italian political class as an effective tool aimed to compensate the inadequacies of administrative cadres. The solutions of these problems could be shifted to the regions while leaving the benefits of politics to the national stratum of Italian ruling elites [Cassese, Torchia 1993: 108]. Also, the Italian business community expected that the opening of the regional dimension would decrease and channel social tensions to the lower level [Chiaramonte 1998: 843]. Regional reform was also an attractive goal for the parties and political movements that either belonged to the opposition or were excluded from the ranks of the Italian political class [Putnam, Leonardi, Nanetti 1993: 20]. The strategies of political actors, which coincided in regionalization, were buttressed by the profoundly different ideologies and views of the regions. However, between 1968 and 1970 the activities of these actors reinforced each other and pointed towards the creation of regions as the way to overcome the Italian political crisis [Cassese, Torchia 1993: 97].

These strategies were supported by two major changes in the Italian economy and society. First, impressive economic growth made more resources available not only for the purposes of accumulation but also for distribution, for "pluralism and institutional polycentrism in Italy depends strongly on the availability of economic

and financial resources; redistribution cannot be enforced simply by diminishing resources for one group in favour of another group, but only by giving more to every group, or at least maintaining the previous allocations" [Cassese, Torchia 1993: 96]. Second, it was through the profound changes in the realm of Italian political sub-cultures, where not only the authoritarian culture of the Fascist period gave way to democratic values, but also the erosion of traditional "white" sub-culture (upon which the entire Christian Democratic identity was based) took place.[7]

But the role of the regions in national political decision-making was severely restricted. The electoral districts continued to be formed on a provincial level. That is why the broad competencies that the state had in the regions were not balanced by the participation of the latter in national political decision-making and the national political class remained more interested in making connections with the provincial elites who had more leverage over the elections than their regional counterparts [Gold 2003: 52]. Although some degree of financial autonomy was envisaged in the Italian Constitution, in reality ordinary regions lacked almost any freedom in their financial operations.[8] In 1993, the tax receipts from all three levels of local government in Italy—regional, provincial, and communal—accounted for only 3.7% of total tax revenues.[9]

The real devolution of competencies from the national level to the regions occurred only in the mid-1970s during the second phase of regionalization. After the remarkable victory of the Communists in the 1974 regional elections, the 'left alternative' and the 'historic compromise' between the PCI and the DC threatened to finally be realized [Kogan 1983: 289–291]. The united "regionalization front" that emerged at that time in the Italian Parliament was a coalition of various political forces from northern and southern Italy under the auspices of Lombardy (the progressive DC) and Emilia-Romagna (the PCI). These diverse political forces were backed by sympathetic media and public opinion as well as by the Ministry and the Inter-parliamentary Commission on the Regions [Putnam, Leonardi, Nanetti 1993: 21]. The convergence of these different forces led to the expansion of regional competencies in 1977.

The establishment of ordinary regions in the 1970s did not contribute much to the development of the South. Instead of the regionalization of Mezzogiorno leading to increased popular participation and transparency, it led to the formation of new political mediators who were oriented towards the satisfaction of their own interests. Above all, they used their control over public funds as the means of fabricating political consensus [Vannucci 1997: 55]. Instead of lessening the disparities between the Italian North and South, the reform actually intensified them, since the prosperous regions of the North got some respite from the "stultifying grasp of Rome" [Vannucci 1997: 61]. Meanwhile, the regions of the Mezzogiorno were still dependent upon the policies of the national government, which had in its ranks an impressive number of the southern political class members, and was not immune to the pressure of its regional counterparts and continued to pursue policies of economic redistribution and financial transfers to the Mezzogiorno.

During this period there were also several attempts to reform the policy for southern development. In 1986, the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* was replaced by the "Agency of the South." The elimination of the *Cassa* was instigated to demonstrate the rejection of the old centralized policies for southern development and the adoption of new integrated programs. The regions of the Mezzogiorno had to have the right of initiative in the sphere of southern modernization. Based on these initiatives, the central government together with the regions had to elaborate on three-year plans for their economic development [Gualini 2004: 83–84].

---

7 These changes, albeit to a lesser degree, also affected the "red" sub-culture of the Left due to the different mechanism of its generational socialization [Marletti 1997: 70].

8 "Most financial transfers from the national government to the regions were earmarked for specific programmes or projects, which gave central government the ability to insist on joint management of these resources" [Grote 1996: 260].

9 The overage revenues for the local governments were that time 12% for unitary states and 31.4% for federations [Gold 2003: 51].

By the time of the Second Republic, the Italian South still could not overcome the gap between it and the North despite forty years of the special policy for southern development.[10] The South continued to be a protected market for northern industries [Trigilia 1993: 117]. But in the early 1990s, the logic of European integration and especially the prospects of participation in the EU's monetary union began to exert pressure on traditional forms of public budgeting in Italy, whose industrial policy and the policy for the development of the South were blamed by the other members the EU as a breach of fair competition. In the context of European integration, the collapse of the previous policies for southern development contributed to the dissolution of traditional mechanisms of political consensus, which in the past had served to ease social tensions.

Control over the rules of the political game and over public finances was still the prerogative of Rome, whose policies towards the regions were less based upon formal political strategies than they were on informal ones. The culturally superior northern regions possessed more economic and social resources that made them much more prepared than their southern counterparts to engage in successful political bargaining with Rome [Dente 1997: 198].

This cultural background led to the emergence of two different political styles: the northern regions oriented themselves towards horizontal political strategies, whereas the southern regions preferred vertical ones. While the former strongly favored the methods of collective actions on the horizontal level that actually took the form of a broad regional front, the southern regions favored the vertical strategies that prioritized their patrons at the national level [Putnam, Leonardi, Nanetti 1993: 23]. These political links to Rome that characterized southern Italy were further reinforced by government policies for support of the Mezzogiorno that promoted the transformation of the southern political structures of dependence into a culture of dependence. By the 1980s, it had become apparent that there were two different development models in Italy: while the northern economy was concentrated around industrial development, the economy of the South was oriented towards the distribution of economic resources and monetary transfers from Rome.

The slow progress of regionalization in Italy was caused by the leveling influence of a highly centralized Italian party system. In the 1970s, the parties were much more strongly centralized than anybody could have predicted in 1948. The newly created regions immediately found themselves placed within a narrow political space between hierarchically structured, rigid all-Italian political parties, which were distinguished by their almost exclusively nation-oriented agendas, and traditionally strong provincial political structures [Desideri, Santantonio 1997: 96–97].

After the establishment of ordinary regions, the national parties restructured themselves according to this new framework and created their regional branches. But this development was not accompanied by a subsequent transfer of political capacities from the national and provincial levels. Instead, political and financial structures continued to privilege the national elites; public finance was the domain of the national parties while their regional counterparts were completely excluded from this lucrative sphere [Putnam, Leonardi, Nanetti 1993: 46]. These negative developments were much more visible in the South where the creation of regional branches of the national parties led to the establishment of additional channels of clientelist structures, which further contributed to the inefficiency of the governance in the Mezzogiorno, especially within ordinary regions.

It was the North that began to increasingly demonstrate its separatist inclinations. But these processes did not start right after the establishment of ordinary regions in 1970. With only a few political actors—like the South Tyrolean People's party—there was hardly a visible separatist movement during the 1970s. That changed in the late 1970s with the emergence of *Liga Veneta* (1979) and *Lega Lombarda* (1982) —later *Movimento Lega*

[10] In the mid-1990s, 36% of the population resided in the South but its contribution to the Italian GNP was 25% and it only accounted for 9% of exports [Koff, Koff 2000: 5].

Nord (1989) —which would play a major role in the radical reshaping of traditional political structures in Italy [Gold 2003: 79–85]. *Lega Lombarda* emerged during the 1987 elections in Lombardy with a modest 2.7% of the vote but only three years later it had secured 21% of the vote in the same region [Lotti 1997: 163]. It was the Northern League with its solid 25% of northern votes and 18.7% of the national ones at the parliamentary elections of 1992 that put an end to Italian politics as an exclusive game played by national political elites [Tullio-Altan 2000: 252].

The emergence of the League was the result of profound socioeconomic changes that were taking place in the Italian North throughout the 1970s. Firstly, it reflected the growth of the 'third Italy' in the northeastern part of the country, i.e., the development of export-oriented small and mid-sized businesses. Secondly, it demonstrated the continuous erosion of the "white" sub-culture that gave way to the growth of the new territorial type of identity [Marletti 1997: 70]. The success of the Northern League at the end of the 1980s was at least partly the result of the inefficient governance of Rome. During that time, the League actively supported the idea of broad federalism. For the League, the latter became synonymous with the new *laissez-faire* policies for the northern parts of the country while centralism was regarded as synonymous with southern parasitism [Bencardino 1997: 26]. The League questioned the ability of prosperous regions in the North to be the main generators of resources for financial transfers to Italian South [Ciuffoletti 1994: 176–177]. The concurrent economic crisis, which led to fiscal restrictions, was a substantial supporting factor for such criticism.

The parliamentary elections of 5–6 April 1992 were the last to be carried out on the basis of proportional representation. Despite staying within the limits of the First Republic political system, they played the role of the harbinger of political cataclysm. For the first time in history, the DC did not reach the threshold of 30% of the votes, having been electorally deprived by the League [Lotti 1997: 167]. To reform the organizational structure of the regions, the new legislature and the coalition government on 23 July 1992 established the special bicameral commission (*Bicamerale*-I). On 27 October 1993, the commission presented its suggestions to the public. According to it, for the first time in Italian history the regions should have acquired a comprehensive system of self-governance and autonomous legislative, administrative, and financial powers which would have transformed them into real political autonomies [Ciuffoletti 1994: 185].

If implemented, this change to article 117 of the Constitution might have put an end to the asymmetrical nature of Italian regionalism. Contrary to the existing model of regionalism in which the national state discreetly delegated some of its competencies to the regions, it would be the latter that would transfer functions to the state that could not be performed at the regional level, i.e., foreign policy, national defense and national security, national finance, the guarantees of civil liberties, national economic planning and the basic welfare programs. These radical propositions were never implemented. Instead, there were only minor changes made to the regional electoral system in February 1995 [Pizzetti 1996: 238].

In the early 1990s, massive criticism of the special policies for the support of the Mezzogiorno came from across the entire Italian political spectrum. The abolition of traditional state interventions for the development of the South took place in 1993 under the joint pressure of the Italian Left and the Northern League. In 1993, the national government completely eliminated the traditional forms of the policy for southern development [Gualini 2004: 83–84]. Despite much justifiable criticism, the policy for southern development admittedly allowed the Mezzogiorno to overcome its economic isolation and to develop a basic infrastructure for further industrialization. However, at the same time it contributed to socioeconomic immobility in the South because it caused an increase in public wealth without a subsequent increase in economic productivity.

The analyzed period witnessed the steady transformation of weak corporatist institutional arrangements (whose temporary revival was caused in the postwar decades by the Italian political anomaly, which in its turn was a function of the rigid Cold War structural framework) into the abortive form of asymmetrical stateness. The

latter was caused by the inability of regionalist parties to participate at the national level as well as the colonization of the Italian state by the Christian Democrats. Only by the end of the 1980s had the weak Italian form of asymmetrical stateness started to dissolve steadily under the pressure of three interconnected factors: the end of the Cold War, which led to the end of the Italian political anomaly, and the emergence of the Northern League that was capable of participating in strategic games at the national level because its political power was buttressed by the economic power of the northern regions.

Italian Regions in the EU Context

From the beginning of the ordinary regions, Rome was explicitly clear in its intentions to restrict their contact with the institutions of the European Community while the supra-national institutions of the latter became the supportive factor encouraging the development of Italian regions. The criteria for the transfer of administrative competencies to the regions, according to EEC guidelines, were set in Italy by Law N 382 (1975), which explicitly restricted their international activity [Condorelli 1986: 147–148]. This regulation prevented the Italian regions from institutionalizing their own representative bodies in Brussels in the same way as federal states did. However, despite these restrictions, the EEC exerted a shaping influence on the role of Italian regions. Since the late 1980s, regional policy has been an ever-increasing component in the activities of the European Commission [Keating 1988: 167].

The reforms of EU structural funds in the 1980s and early 1990s assigned to European regions a much more important role in the planning and transaction of the funds' programs than was initially intended. Although this development hardly gave Italian regions any substantial influence over their participation in the elaboration of EU structural policy, it increased their consulting role and improved their access to crucial information. The effective participation of Italian regions in the EEC regional policy primarily depended on their success in securing informal relationships with those ministries that were involved in Community's political decision-making. Among these ministries, a crucial role was played by the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Economic Planning (CIPE), charged with coordinating Italian policies in the EEC [Grote 1996: 262–266].

The Maastricht Treaty, which acknowledged the principle of subsidiarity, represented the climax of this development that indirectly assigned to the regions of Europe an important role in the new European order and brought a real institutional reform through establishing the Committee of Regions in Brussels [Harvie 1994: 54]. The realization of the principle of subsidiarity turned to be the focal point of the demands of European regions in general and the Italian regions in particular [Ciuffoletti 1994: 181–183].

The End of the First Republic

While the 1960s and 1970s were characterized by terrorism and political violence in Italy, the 1980s turned out to be a period of extreme corruption that became institutionalized and systemic [Della Porta 1997: 35]. Italy only began to seriously tackle corruption in 1992, which was the year that marked the beginning of the end of the First Republic. The decisive crisis of the Italian multiparty system that occurred in the early 1990s was caused not only by inter-party clashes, but also by such external factors as the collapse of so-called "real socialism" in Eastern Europe [Tullio-Altan 2000: 248–249].

Italy was the only western country in which drastic changes to the party system and political regime coincided with the democratization of Eastern Europe. Consequently, Italian "blocked democracy" suddenly began to move: the elimination of the confrontation between the West and the East, economic crisis in the country, the declining influence of two main Italian political subcultures—Catholic and Communist—and political scandals which revealed enormous elite corruption, all led to a profound legitimacy crisis of the leading Italian

political parties [De Paulis-Dalambert 2006: 7–8].[11] Italy witnessed the emergence of new political forces that had hardly been seen previously or had not existed at all: *Forza Italia*, the Northern League, and the MSI-National Alliance [Lotti 1997: 173–174].

The crisis of the First Republic's political system convinced its elites that it was necessary to change the rules of the electoral game. This change would make possible the regrouping of traditional political parties and would open up an opportunity for the new political forces of the post-industrial society to achieve a more adequate representation of their interests in the structures of power. After receiving the approval of the majority of Italians to reform the electoral system in a referendum held on 18 April 1993, the Italian Parliament elaborated and adopted a new electoral law. In this referendum, 90% of the 77% of Italian voters who took part in it approved of the recommended changes. According to them, the principle electoral district for the Senate should be the region, and its 315 seats should be distributed proportionately. Only two regions—Valle d'Aosta and Molise —were exempted from the proportional distribution of seats by electing one and two senators. The system of proportional representation, which guided the elections to the Lower House of the Italian Parliament, gave way to the plurality voting system. Six hundred and thirty seats in the Chamber of Deputies had be distributed between the regions according to the number of their inhabitants, with three-quarters of the deputies to be elected in the single-member districts and only one-quarter on the basis of proportional representation [Lotti 1997: 172].

As a result of these changes, the Italian electoral system was radically overhauled. The elections of 27 March 1994 that were held on the basis of the new electoral law led to highly unexpected political outcomes that severely undermined the existing political system of the First Republic. The parties of the Left (including the left-wing faction of Christian Democrats) who had been the prime forces behind the electoral reform, were quite sure of their dominance over the traditional as well as the new right-wing parties. But it was the latter that won the elections by a landslide. Contrary to the fears of the Northern League's leaders, it was rewarded by the new electoral system: for the Chamber of Deputies they polled 3,237,000 votes, while the National Alliance (AN) got 5,202,000 and *Forza Italia* received 8,119,000. In total, the League gained 117 seats, compared with 109 for the AN and 99 for *Forza Italia* [Tambini 2001: 64].

The new Italian Right's victories were caused primarily by their discriminatory strategy in the formation of electoral coalitions. Because it was entirely impossible for the League and the National Alliance to find any common denominators in their platforms beyond their hostility towards non-European immigrants,[12] *Forza Italia* forged two territorially distinct political coalitions: in the North it allied with the League, while in the South it joined forces with the National Alliance [Lotti 1997: 73–74]. The alliance of the League with *Forza Italia* in the North was based on their similar stances on the causes of inefficiency in public institutions and their support of privatization as the best remedy to overcome this deficiency [Ciuffoletti 1994: 77].

By destroying the old party system these developments signified the transformation of the First Italian Republic into the Second Republic. The elections showed that the aggregation of political and social interests

[11] "Ideological bipolarity, which juxtaposed two main political cultures (the 'white' culture of the Christian democracy and the 'red' culture of the Communists) lost its meaning after the demise of the Communism; besides that the financial crisis of the state and the welfare system drastically reduced the redistributive capacities of the social institutions, and subsequently the power of political parties, which secured control" [Briquet 1997: 51].

[12] "Whereas the League stands for federalism, the AN calls for 'presidentialism' — a more powerful central executive. The AN's strongest base of support is among relatively poor voters in Italy's south — the part of the country from which the League wishes to divorce itself" [Rosenthal 1996: 163]. To pay tribute to Bossi's political flexibility it should be noted that the possibility of forming a coalition with Berlusconi's party pressed the League to modify its political slogans. The previous separatist model was transformed into a more moderate one. It rejected the separation of the North and envisaged the creation of an Italian federation that would consist of nine states and twenty regions. If implemented, this concept would lead to the emergence of a renewed centralization of state power in three capitals—Milan, Florence, and Naples—instead of genuine devolution.

had become much more diverse than they had been during the years of the First Republic. The parties of the Right became the immanent feature of the Italian political landscape. It became obvious that the antifascist ideals lost the importance they had had for the founding fathers of the First Republic. It was a clear signal that the priorities of the Italian political culture had changed throughout the 1980s, which went unnoticed by the leaders of political class who were still engaged in the games of *transformismo*. The basic elements of the transfer from the First to the Second Italian Republic were the following: starting in 1992, the cleansing of the corrupted traditional Italian political class and the structures it occupied; the referendum of 1993 and the new electoral law; and the results of the 1994 elections that showed that the pendulum of Italian politics had become unblocked at last.

Conclusion

The crisis of the early 1990s revived and redefined the problems of regionalization. By that time, the inadequacies of the Italian regional system had become obvious to all representatives of the Italian political class; as Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti described it: "Public management in many regions has been a Kafkaesque combination of lethargy and chaos" [Putnam, Leonardi, Nanetti 1993: 48]. Regional political institutions were reproducing the failings of their national counterpart that was characterized by rampant clientelism, particularism, and chronic political instability.

The legitimacy crisis of the old Italian political class, which was caused by waves of scandal in the early 1990s, was conducive to the emergence of populist regionalism. New regional movements, mainly in the North where propaganda to separate northern Italy from a corrupted Rome met popular support, widened the spectrum of Italian political parties. Although regionalist movements had always latently existed in Italy, they revealed themselves only during times of crisis caused by the games of either internal or external political actors—often both at the same time. The regional question in Italy was the result of inadequate political, economic, social, and cultural national integration, the inadequate development of democracy, and the inefficient functioning of state institutions.

The end of the Italian political anomaly led to the emergence of territorial identities, which in turn formed the basis of the further expansion of asymmetric stateness. The rise of separatist tendencies in the North made the reform of Italian stateness almost inevitable. By the end of the second millennium, the Italian polity, which had previously always been capable of eradicating socioeconomic and political problems by means of the mechanisms of clientelism and *transformismo*, reached its limits of expansion. The end of the Italian political anomaly, radically shaken by the scandals of *tangentopoli* at home as well as the drastic changes experienced beyond its borders, and the deepening of European integration promised to put an end to the uni-dimensional forced asymmetry of Italy's ordinary and special regions by including them in the multidimensional European regional framework.

The regionalization of Italy, which for more than a century had been the function of national elites' interests and thus—by default—a top-down process, was steadily being replaced by a bottom-up process while being promoted by the regional actors who were more and more inclined to proclaim federalist ideas [Desideri, Santantonio 1997: 99]. The national stratum of the Italian political class responded to the pressure of its meso-level counterparts by incrementally broadening regional competencies without the comprehensive constitutional reform of Italian stateness; this gradually evolved into a system characterized as "cooperative regionalism" [Palermo, Wilson 2014: 512].

From the beginning of the 1990s, the regions had found themselves in a very different environment caused by *tangentopoli* which on the surface had appeared to be a purely political scandal but actually shattered many other dimensions of the Italian economy and society and launched the ongoing transformation of the Italian

polity: “From 1992 onwards, many regions found themselves politically decapitated due to the number of elected members incriminated” [Dente 1997: 182]. Consequently, and as had happened many times before in the course of modern Italian history, the regional question was again placed at the very center of political discourse.

However, in comparison to other major transformations of the Italian polity, this regional discourse had two major differences. First of all was the actual intensity of the discourse and the variety of its participants (including political parties, the media, scholars, unions, and even the Catholic Church)—all of whom suggested different plans for Italian devolution. The second distinguishing feature was the active participation of the regions; most interestingly, it was not the special regions but the ordinary ones that were its most energetic protagonists. The ordinary regions—especially the regions of the North—demanded the widening of their competencies that would promote them to the level of the special regions. Regionalism became a new dimension of Italian politics in which the horizontal links of the actors dominate traditional clientelist vertical links, thereby representing a change that gave a serious impetus to the socioeconomic and political modernization of this territorial level of government.

The regions of the Italian North-East that have in the last thirty years developed export-oriented industries based on small and medium-sized enterprises illustrate the inclusion of European regions into the process of ‘glocalization’ in general and into the process of European integration in particular [Bagnasco, Oberti 1998: 155–156]. The case of the Italian North-East is a typical example of how unbalanced economic growth is often followed by an increase in political demands for greater political autonomy [Rosenthal 1996: 162]. In Italy, international competition played the role of external catalyst, which aggravated regional competition at the domestic level, and thus intensified the criticism of Rome, whose dysfunctional (at least according to the leaders of those regions) policies hindered regional socioeconomic development. Among these claims, the demands for tax autonomy were the most persistent [Cook, Morgan 1994: 105].

These developments demonstrated the diminishing capacity of Italian national integration and even more than the activities of the Northern League pointed to the necessity of another reform of Italian stateness. This was recognized by many Italians throughout the country, even though these preferences were spread highly unevenly among the regions. While in 1994 more than half of Italians in the northern regions expressed their sympathies for the federalization of the country, only about a third of the southerners had the same preferences. Consequently, about a third of Italians in the North had negative opinions on federalization, while in the South this amounted to more than half. The results of these polls demonstrated the preference of the Southerners for the traditional policies of redistribution and reflected their fear that broader regionalization might lead to even larger disparities. The people of the Mezzogiorno still regarded the strong centralized state as the best guarantor of economic support and as protection against further imbalances [Gold 2003: 67]. Social guarantees, as well as developmental policies, continue to be dependent in southern Italy upon transfers and the structural interventions of the state. That is why the orientation towards the national level of political decision-making was much stronger there than it was in the North. The existing cultural and sociopolitical peculiarities of the South were reinforced by these policies even further which had a negative impact on the politics in these regions because the regional dimension there was perceived as less relevant than in the North. The inability of the southern regions to fill the areas of authority assigned to them by the constitution made it easy for the central government to intervene frequently in their affairs, thus competing with or substituting regional institutions.

The very success of a few northern regions clearly demonstrated the limits of Italian devolution, which was put in place by the constitutional framework of the First Republic. The 2001 constitutional reform substantially changed the relations between Rome and the regional governments and affected the congruence of ordinary and special status regions. While their asymmetry was constitutionally confirmed, the ordinary regions

were given the right to request the transfer of additional competencies by acts of the Parliament. Article 117 now lists all the legislative powers of the central state and leaves all other policy fields to the regions. The latter now has full control over healthcare and gained an enhanced role in economic development, professional training, agriculture, and the environment [Palermo, Wilson 2014: 514].

The most prosperous Italian regions saw the possibility of continuing their successful political and economic developments not only through the transformation of Italy into a fully-fledged federal state but also through a broadening of the regions' participation in the "Europe of the regions," i.e., the inclusion of Italian regions into the growing framework of European meso-level governments. After the first wave of European regionalization in the 1970s, the regions of the EU emerged in the early 1990s as a potential area for economic and political modernization. The parallel developments of European supra-national structures lead to the erosion of European nation states, although this process cannot be regarded as a mere zero-sum game. The process of European unification is strengthening the role of the regions as an appropriate framework for political action and is inducing concessions from the nation-states. The EU support for the process that assigns more democratic rights and functions to sub-national bodies opens up new possibilities for the political activity of the regions. The current crisis of the Union may cause its supra-national structures to turn to its sub-national and regional nationalisms for support in its attempt to curb the state-wide nationalisms emerging in Europe.

References

Bagnasco A., Oberti M. (1998) Italy: 'Le Trompe-l'œil' of Regions. *Regions in Europe*, London: Routledge, pp. 150–165.

Baldi B. (2006) *Regioni e federalismo. L'Italia el'Europa* [Regions and Federalism. Italy and Europe], Bologna: CLUEB (in Italian).

Baldi B., Baldini G. (2008) *Italia. Da stato unitario a stato federale. Territorializzazione della politica, devoluzione e adattamento instituzionale* [From Unitary State to Federal State. Territorialization of Politics, Devolution and Institutional Adaptation], Bologna: Società editirice il Mulino, pp. 69–112 (in Italian).

Baudner J., Bull M. J. (2013) The Europeanisation of National Institutions Reassessed: A Comparison of Regional Policies in Germany and Italy. *Comparative European Politics*, vol. 11, no 2, pp. 201–221.

Bencardino F. (1997) *Federalismo e regionalismo in Italia: prospettive di riasetto politico amministrativo* [Federalism and Regionalism in Italy, the Prospects of a Political-Administrative Reorganization], Napoli: Edizioni scientifiche italiane (in Italian).

Bifulco R. (2004) *Le regioni* [The Regions], Bologna: Società editirice il Mulino (in Italian).

Bogdanor V. (1979) *Devolution*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Briquet J.-L. (1997) Fine dell'anomalia italiana? [The End of Italian Anomaly?] *Stanchi di miracoli: il sistema politico italiano in cerca di normalità* [Tired of Miracles: The Italian Political System in Search of Normality], Milano: Guerini e associate, pp. 49–59 (in Italian).

Cassese S., Torchia L. (1993) The Meso Level in Italy. *The Rise of Meso-Government in Europe*, London: Sage, pp. 91–116.

Chiaramonte U. (1998) *Il dibattito sulle autonomie nella storia d'Italia, 1796–1996: uniti, federalismo, regionalismo, decentramento* [The Debate on Autonomy in the History of Italy, 1796–1996; Unity, Federalism, Regionalism, Decentralization], Milano: F. Angeli Storia (in Italian).

Ciuffoletti Z. (1994) *Federalismo e regionalismo: da Cattaneo alla Lega* [Federalism and Regionalism: from Cattaneo to the League], Roma: Laterza (in Italian).

Condorelli L. (1986) The Powers of Regions in the Field of External Relations: The Italian Experience. *Regionalism in European Politics*, London: PSI, pp. 144–154.

Cook P., Morgan K. (1994) Growth Regions under Duress: Renewal Strategies in Baden-Würtemberg and Emilia-Romagana. *Globalization, Institutions, and Regional Development in Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 91–117.

Della Porta D. (1997) The Vicious Circle of Corruption in Italy. *Democracy and Corruption in Europe*, London: Pinter, pp. 35–49.

Dente B. (1997) Sub-National Governments in the Long Italian Transition. *West European Politics,* vol. 20, no 1, pp. 176–193.

Desideri C., Santantonio V. (1997) Building a Third Level in Europe: Prospects and Difficulties in Italy. *The Regional Dimension of the European Union. Towards a Third Level in Europe?* London: Frank Cass, pp. 96–116.

De Paulis-Dalambert M. P. (2006) Avant-propos [Introduction]. *L'Italie entre XXe et XXIe siècle: la transition infinie* [Italy between the XX and XXI Centuries: the Infinite Transition], Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, pp. 7–11 (in French).

Di Palma G. (1982) Italy: Is There a Legacy and Is It Fascist? *From Dictatorship to Democracy: Coping with the Legacies of Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism*, London: Greenwood Press, pp. 107–134.

Ferrera M., Gualmini E. (2000) Reforms by Consensus: The Welfare State in Italian Transition. *Recasting European Welfare States*, London: Frank Cass, pp. 187–208.

Finley M. I., Mack Smith D., Duggan C. (1987) *A History of Sicily*, New York: Elisabeth Sifton Books-Viking.

Galli G, Prandi A. (1970) *Patterns of Political Participation in Italy*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Giordano B. (2000) Italian Regionalism or 'Padanian' Nationalism — The Political Project of the Lega Nord in Italian Politics. *Political Geography,* vol. 19, pp. 445–471.

Gold T. W. (2003) *The Lega Nord and Contemporary Politics in Italy*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Grote J. R. (1996) Cohesion in Italy: A View on Non-Economic Disparities. *Cohesion Policy and European Integration: Building Multi-Level Governance*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 256–293.

Gualini E. (2004) *Multi-Level Governance and Institutional Change: The Europeanization of Regional Policy in Italy*, Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Harvie C. (1994) *The Rise of Regional Europe*, London: Routledge.

Hearder H. (1983) *Italy in the Age of the Risorgimento. 1790–1870*, New York: Longman.

Hine D. (1993) *Governing Italy. The Politics of Bargained Pluralism,* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Hooghe L., Marks G. (2008) A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus. *British Journal of Political Science,* vol. 39, pp. 1–23.

Hopkin J., Mastropaolo A. (2001) From Patronage to Clientelism: Comparing the Italian and Spanish Experiences. *Clientelism, Interests, and Democratic Representation: The European Experience in Historical and Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 152–171.

Keating M. (1988) *State and Regional Nationalism: Territorial Politics and the European State*, London: Harvester & Wheatsheaf.

Keating M. (1996) *Nations Against the State. The New Politics of Nationalism in Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland,* New York: St. Martin Press, Inc.

Koff Z., Koff S. P. (2000) *Italy. From the First to the Second Republic,* London: Routledge.

Kogan N. (1983) *A Political History of Italy: The Postwar Years*, New York: Praeger Publishers.

Lepre A. (2004) *Storia della prima Repubblica. L'Italia dal 1943 al 2003* [History of the First Republic. Italy from 1943 to 2003], Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino (in Italian).

Linz J. J., Stepan A. (1996) *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe,* Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.

Lotti L. (1997) *I partiti della Repubblica: La politica in Italia dal 1946 al 1997* [The Parties of the Republic. The Politics in Italy from 1946 to1997], Firenze: Felice Le Monnier (in Italian).

Mack Smith D. (1974) Regionalism. *Modern Italy: A Topical History Since 1861*, New York: New York University Press, pp. 125–146.

Mack Smith D. (1997) *Modern Italy. A Political History*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Marletti C. (1997) Perché non siamo un paese "normale" [Because We are not a "Normal" Country] *Stanchi di miracoli: il sistema politico italiano in cerca di normalità* [Tired of Miracles: The Italian Political System in Search of Normality], Milano: Guerini e associate, pp. 61–72 (in Italian).

Mazzoleni M. (2009) The Italian Regionalisation: A Story of Partisan Logics. *Modern Italy*, vol. 14, no 2, pp. 135–150.

Morlino L. (2013) The Impossible Transition and the Unstable New Mix: Italy 1992–2012. *Comparative European Politics*, vol. 11, no 3, pp. 337–359.

Newton M. T., Donaghy P. J. (1997) *Institutions of Modern Spain. A Political and Economic Guide,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ocaña L. M. (1989) El Estado de las Autonomías territoriales. Aspectos institutionales [The State of Territorial Autonomies. Institutional Aspects]. *Pasado, presente y futuro de las Communidades Autónomas* [Past, Present and Future of Autonomous Communities], Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Económicos, pp. 71–163 (in Spanish).

Palermo F., Wilson A. (2014) The Multi-level Dynamics of State Decentralization in Italy. *Comparative European Politics*, vol. 12, no 4/5, pp. 510–530.

Perdomo J. V. (2001) *La región en la organización territorial del estado* [The Region in the Territorial Organization of State]**,** Bogotá: Centro Editorial Universidad del Rosario (in Spanish).

Pizzetti F. (1996) *Federalismo, regionalismo e riforma dello Stato* [Federalism, Regionalism and the Reform of the State], Torino: Bollati Boringhieri (in Italian).

Putnam R., Leonardi R., Nanetti R. Y. (1993) *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Rosenthal L. (1996) Dateline Rome: The New Face of Western Democracy. *Foreign Policy,* vol. 104, no 4, pp. 154–168.

Tambini D. (2001) *Nationalism in Italian Politics: The Stories of the Northern League, 1980–2000*, London: Routledge.

Tarrow S. G. (1977) *Between Center and Periphery. Grassroots Politicians in Italy and France*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Trigilia C. (1993) Governare la diversità: le condizioni non economiche dello sviluppo [Governing the Diversity: Non-economic Conditions of Development]. *Regionalismo e Mezzogiorno* [Regionalism and Southern Italy]: GENS, pp. 113–131 (in Italian).

Tullio-Altan C. (2000) *La nostra Italia, clientelismo, transformismo e ribellismo dall'Unità al 2000* [Our Italy, Clientelism, Transformism and Rebellion from Unification to 2000], Milano: Edizioni Giuridiche Economiche Aziendali (in Italian).

Vannucci A. (1997) Politicians and Godfathers: Mafia and Political Corruption in Italy. *Democracy and Corruption in Europe*, London: Pinter, pp. 50–64.

Ventresca R. (2004) *From Fascism to Democracy: Culture and Politics in the Italian Election of 1948,* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Warner C. M. (2001) Mass Parties and Clientelism: France and Italy. *Clientelism, Interests, and Democratic Representation. The European Experience in Historical and Comparative Perspective,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 122–151.

Watson M. M. (1970) *Regional Development Policy and Administration in Italy*, London: Longman.

Weibel E. (1971) *La création des régiones autonomes à statut special en Italie* [The Creation of Autonomous Regions of Special Statute in Italy], Paris: Librairie DROZ (in French).

Wilson A. (2015) Direct Election of Regional Presidents and Party Change in Italy. *Modern Italy*, vol. 20, no 2, pp. 185–198.

Citation: Zhdanov V. (2017) Post-Authoritarian Devolution: The Case of the First Italian Republic. *Journal of Economic Sociology = Ekonomicheskaya sotsiologiya*, vol. 18, no 1, pp. 110–131. Available at: https://ecsoc.hse.ru/2017-18-1.html (in English).