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The violent legacy of fascism

Neofascist political violence in Italy, 1969–88

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Abstract: We still have limited knowledge about the long-term effects of fascism on European democracies. European countries experienced cycles of violence between the 1960s and 1980s. Can such violence be explained by legacies of mobilization during fascism? We study whether and how the Italian fascist experience of the 1920s affected political violence during the 1970s and 1980s. We created an original dataset of conflictual events at a subnational level in Italy. Using zero-inflated negative binomial regressions, we find that local membership of the fascist party in 1922—before the institutionalization of the fascist regime—predicts neofascist political violence at the provincial level more than 40 years later. New windows of opportunity facilitate the resurfacing of local fascist legacies: in the months when a new Minister of Interior is appointed, we observe higher levels of neofascist violence in provinces where the early presence of the fascist party was stronger.

Key words: conflict, fascism, Italy, legacies, terrorism, violence

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1   Introduction

Democracies are founded on the idea of managing incompatible preferences and interests across all groups in society in ways that avoid the use of violence. However, few democracies avoid violence altogether, especially in their early transition years. This was the case of Europe in the period after the Second World War and until the late 1980s. Between 1965 and 2005, Western European countries experienced 4,611 fatalities and 3,366 lethal attacks, with the peak of violence taking place in the 1970s and 1980s (De la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca 2011). All these countries were recovering from the trauma of two world wars, many of them with deep histories of autocracy, dictatorship, and fascism.

These cycles of violence in post-Second World War Europe have given rise to a large body of scholarly literature. Many studies have focused on the rise of revolutionary social movements in the 1970s, mainly originating from left-wing efforts to drive social change (Sánchez-Cuenca 2019; Tarrow 1989). Less studied is the re-emergence of neofascist movements that opposed what was seen as the weakness of liberal democracies to address the instability of that period (del Hierro 2022; Ferraresi 1996; Ignazi 2003). The resurfacing of neofascist groups was an important phenomenon because it suggested that the fascist ideology—then, as today—had remained active, although underground, despite the defeat of fascist regimes across Europe. In our research, we ask whether past local authoritarian experiences with fascism and its forms of mobilization may explain periods of political violence in evolving democracies. In other words, is there a risk of political violence for democracies due to legacies of authoritarian fascist ideologies? To address this question, we study the link between local experiences of early fascism in the 1920s in Italy and subsequent neofascist political violence during the 1970s and 1980s.

The establishment of the Italian republic in 1946, and the implementation of its democratic constitution in 1948, arose from the ashes of a violent and oppressive fascist regime that lasted twenty years. Democracy emerged after a short but virulent civil war in 1943–45 (Costalli and Ruggeri 2015b), which caused more than 100,000 battle-deaths and around 10,000 killings of civilians (Costalli et al. 2020). While recent studies have investigated the political legacies of the Italian civil war (Costalli and Ruggeri 2019), much less is known about the legacies of the preceding fascist rule. Yet, according to the Domestic Terrorism Victims data, Italy recorded 254 victims of domestic terrorism between 1965 and 2005, compared with 34 in Germany and 55 in France in the same period (de la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca 2011). These events place Italy as one of the most violent countries in Western Europe in that period, even though democratic institutions had solidified by then and the country experienced several years of remarkable economic growth.

The years from 1969 to 1988 are conventionally defined as the 'Years of Lead' because of the quantity, frequency, and virulence of political violence. According to our data, Italy experienced over 8,000 conflict events, including domestic terrorist attacks and other forms of political violence, leading to hundreds of deaths and several thousand wounded victims. We investigate the role of early fascist experience in this renewed cycle of violence and what mechanisms may explain the resurfacing of such legacies during the Years of Lead. We ask whether these violent events may have been the legacy of a grassroots ideological movement and fascist ideological networks formed in the 1920s and explore mechanisms that may shape the resurfacing of such legacies. We develop and test empirically a new theory of violent legacies of fascism based on a tripod of violent knowledge—*know what*, *know how*, and *know whom*. We argue that these three elements are key to explain how past legacies of fascism affect politics in the long term. We show, in addition, how contextual events—based on the unravelling of democratic procedures—can be catalysing

opportunities and facilitate the resurfacing of the violent legacy of fascism along these three elements.

Our work builds on a growing body of research on the legacies of authoritarian regimes on political attitudes, public opinion, and electoral behaviour (Bernhard and Karakoç 2007; Darden and Grzymala-Busse 2006; Dinas and Northmore-Ball 2020; Neundorf et al. 2020; Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2020). Few studies, however, have analysed the legacies of authoritarian regimes on political violence. Wucherpfennig et al. (2016) partly address this issue by studying the legacies of different colonial regimes on the likelihood of conflict in postcolonial states, while Sánchez-Cuenca (2019) argues that the legacies of post-First World War regimes help explain the occurrence of revolutionary (mainly left-wing) terrorism in developed countries in the 1960s and 1970s. In parallel, another body of research has studied the violent legacies of wars, rather than political regimes, both in developing countries[1] and in Europe (Balcells 2012; Costalli and Ruggeri 2015a, 2019; Rozenas et al. 2017). Others have focused on the long-term legacies of Nazi and Soviet authoritarian repression (Charnysh and Finkel 2017; Homola et al. 2020; Lupu and Peisakhin 2017; Rozenas and Zhukov 2019; Zhukov and Talibova 2018). An important remaining question is whether experiences with authoritarian legacies can also help to explain cycles of violence in emerging democracies, as was the case of many post-Second World War countries in Europe.

We contribute to the literature on authoritarian legacies in three ways. First, we study the legacy of fascism, rather than authoritarianism more generally, which is still an understudied phenomenon. In fact, few studies have analysed in detail the legacies of fascism beyond its repressive features (Charnysh and Finkel 2017; Homola et al. 2020).[2] Given the steady rise of extreme right-wing parties and views across Europe in recent decades, it is timely to understand how the legacies of fascism can transmit across time and resurface in vulnerable democratic periods. This research contributes to our understanding of the potential historical origins of European neofascism phenomena and their potential to influence future political processes through violence. Second, we focus on the effect of fascism on political violence, rather than more common outcomes in the literature on the legacies of authoritarianism, such as electoral behaviour and political attitudes. Political violence is an important outcome because fascist rhetoric is built upon the rejection of democratic political values and procedures, and the belief that violence offers the means to address societal conflicts that create social instability. Such narratives (*know what*) are, in turn, transmitted across time via socialization processes and covert institutionalization of fascist ideology, knowledge about the use of violent practices (*know how*), and the maintenance of violent (underground) networks (*know whom*). Third, we advance our understanding of the political legacies of authoritarianism by increasing temporal precision about when we should expect fascist violence. In fact, while geographically we show that neofascist violence tends to occur in the same areas where the original fascist mobilization was relatively stronger, we overcome the temporal underspecification that often characterizes the literature on legacies by offering a new theory of political opportunities and demonstrate that neofascist violence is more intense when liberal democracies seem uncertain on how to exercise the monopoly of violence.

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[1] This literature is reviewed in Verwimp et al. (2019).

[2] See also in special issue Charnysh and Riaz (2022) and de Juan et al. (2022).

2 Fascist legacy and political violence: theoretical mechanisms and empirical expectations

How do local experiences of fascist collective mobilization travel over time and affect local dynamics of political violence in evolving democracies? And what contextual events may explain how past fascist experiences affect later cycles of violence? In this section, we outline our theoretical arguments to explain how the legacy of a violent anti-democratic ideology can give rise to political violence in democracies decades after its defeat. Our central argument is that the legacies of fascism may re-emerge because local and contextualized networks of individuals can transfer the foundational norms and ideational preferences of fascist politics (*know what*), practices of violence (*know how*), and organizational and training networks (*know whom*). In other words, the potential for violence can be sustained and passed on over time into young democracies by covert activists thanks to the intertwined transfer of ideas, organization, and practices. We argue further that the emergence of these fascist legacies will be facilitated in a democratic regime when its non-violent conflict resolution processes and mediating institutional procedures (even if inadvertently) display indecision and uncertainty on how to use the legitimate monopoly of violence. The fascist legacy—as a karst river—keeps the covert tripod of violence knowledge alive to challenge the democratic institutions and its politics, especially in specific moments.

2.1 Legacies of fascism: intertwined know what, how, and whom

Several works focusing on how past authoritarian experiences can be internalized highlight the individual as their main analytical unit, assuming that 'individuals will adopt political attitudes and behaviours in line with the "official line" of the regime' (Neundorf and Pop-Eleches 2020: 1842), usually via socialization (Checkel 2017). While we fully acknowledge the importance of individual experiences and their legacies, we focus on the importance of the meso level—that is, the legacies of local and collective organizations, ideas, and practices. The experience of local mobilization due to the action of a violent ideology like fascism can have lasting effects through the persistence of local opportunities and organizational structures. Local opportunities of socialization introduce the idea of the superiority of fascism against the indecision and weakness of liberal democracy in the market of ideas (Coase 1974), especially among younger members of society. Organizational structures—usually underground—provide financial and training support for those who, hooked by extreme right-wing ideas, decide to pursue their political action outside non-violent electoral procedures and democratic representation. Fascist activists who manage to survive the fall of the regime could become political entrepreneurs of further political violence (Costalli and Ruggeri 2015a).[3] Their ideological message (*know what*, *know how*, and *know whom*) can last longer than their personal actions through the institutionalization of their organizational advantages, for instance through the establishment of local informal networks, practices, and transfer of ideas and political skills (Costalli and Ruggeri 2019), thus influencing the dynamics of political violence even after the apparent defeat of their ideology and regime.

This meso-level legacy is driven not only by local collective organizational capacity but also by the local presence of narratives and political entrepreneurs that maintain a set of ideological preferences and action-tendencies (Elster 1998). More explicitly, organizations characterized by exclusionary and illiberal ideologies that motivate and foster a culture of political violence can maintain and nourish these political beliefs and practices if they have local strongholds.

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[3] Many were also embedded in transnational neofascist networks across Europe (del Hierro 2022).

Proposition 1: Localities that experienced higher level of fascist mobilization and activism witness subsequently higher levels of neofascist violence.

2.2   Legacies of fascism and catalysing events

It has been argued that the legacies of previous political regimes can also be retriggered or exacerbated by new events (Dinas and Northmore-Ball 2020), which facilitate and catalyse the legacy. To go back to the metaphor of the karst river, the river (fascist ideology) is there, never gone, and resurfaces in light of new political opportunities. New political opportunities provide 'options for collective action, with chances and risks attached to them, which depend on factors outside the mobilizing group' (Koopmans 2004: 65), and these opportunities that can catalyse the fascist legacies should be understood according to the actors' 'beliefs about the opportunities' (Elster 1989: 20). The specific legacies we are investigating are characterized by an ideology based on anti-parliamentary and anti-liberal democratic values. The occupation of the state apparatus, the destruction of the parliamentary system, and the conduct of politics through violent means are constitutive features of the fascist ideology and its practices (Ebner 2011). Hence, the political groups that descend from these past local authoritarian and violent organizations do not aim to challenge the new democratic regime via parliamentary and electoral means, but rather to threaten and undermine the legitimate monopoly of violence by the state (Weinberg 1979).

The local networks that transfer norms and practices fostering a local legacy of fascism generally act as covert groups to survive. Most likely, they have few members and limited budgets. Hence, their planning and resourcing of actions, especially for large violent actions, need to be strategic, aiming for a high marginal return of political investment. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that neofascist underground cells wait for events that may provide a catalysing opportunity to show the weakness of a liberal democracy and that the only feasible logic in politics is violence. These groups aim to seize specific events and radicalize them to confirm via actions their political narratives. If the local legacy of fascism can be seen as a persistent and static political opportunity, new events—dynamic political opportunities—can facilitate and incentivize political violence (Giugni 2009).

In democracies there are several real, but also perceived and constructed, critical junctures when violent actions can be used by organized and antagonist forces against liberal institutions. The periods before, during, and after elections are typically such critical junctures (Birch et al. 2020). Certain ideological groups, given the nature of their system of beliefs (such as fascism) may want to contest the democratic state, but not necessarily within its institutions (e.g., through parliamentary participation). Their main objective is to reveal a fundamental weakness in how liberal regimes exercise the core role of the state: the physical protection of citizens from internal and external threats (Tilly 1978). Because democracies face a fragile and critical balance between the use of oppressive means by the state and their popular legitimacy (Davenport 2007), one of the weakest moments for democracies is when a democratically elected cabinet signals indecision—or its decisions are perceived as indecisive—in enforcing repressive measures and managing internal order. The reorganization of national cabinet ministers, especially those overseeing matters of national security, is one of those moments that can send unintended signals of government disagreement on how to deal with political violence and, therefore, provide dynamic windows of opportunity for violent actions (Rasler 1996).

Proposition 2: Localities that experienced higher levels of fascist mobilization and activism witness subsequently higher levels of neofascist violence when the democratic government signals indecision on the use of the monopoly of violence.

3   Years of Lead: the Italian case, 1969–88

The political violence that occurred in Italy during the Years of Lead[4] was perpetrated by many armed groups—both right-wing and left-wing—with different mobilization capacities, diverse forms of support from international and national actors and using varied repertoires of violence. The time span of this period is not perfectly defined, but it is usually considered to extend between the end of the 1960s until the late 1980s. The beginning of this long violent period is usually identified with the massacre of Piazza Fontana in December 1969, when right-wing extremists placed a bomb in a bank in Milan killing 17 people and wounding 88. The left-wing Brigate Rosse (Red Brigades) was probably the most tragically infamous armed group of the whole period, and most scholarly research has focused on left-wing political violence. However, several right-wing, neofascist groups were very active at the same time. These groups—such as the Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari (Armed Revolutionary Cells), Ordine Nuovo (New Order), Avanguardia Nazionale (National Vanguard), and Terza Posizione (Third Position)—opposed both the extreme left-wing movements and the state authorities by organizing violent clashes in the streets, armed attacks against policemen and judges, and bombings in public places.

Italy experienced a long period of modernization and economic development following the implementation of its new democratic constitution in 1948, with gross domestic product (GDP) growing on average by 6.9 per cent per year between 1948 and 1963 (Istat, n.d.a). However, economic growth also caused tensions in the job market, and inflation increased in 1963, followed by reductions in GDP growth in 1964 and 1965. Economic development in the period was also uneven. Some areas of the country were not included in the process of change; large migration flows increased the size of the suburbs of industrial cities and tensions arose in many areas. This deep social change implied new demands for the government, including civil modernization, education reforms, urban planning, and more labour rights (Tarrow 1989). A wave of protests started, fuelled by a new generation of young Italians who had not experienced the war, were not satisfied with the material improvements provided by the post-war economic growth, and wanted to claim a more prominent role in politics and society. The protests, rooted in the international cycle of student movements that started in the United States of America and involved France and Germany, amounted to 350 events in the first half of 1968 and reached almost 600 in the following six months (Tarrow 1989).

The protesters defined themselves as left-wing, but the institutional left-wing parties and trade unions were taken by surprise and experienced serious difficulties in dealing with the movement. The democratic institutions also faced severe challenges in managing the deep economic and social change. Neofascist movements started to exploit these social tensions and uncertainty to challenge the democratic order, riding the dissatisfaction of some marginalized groups and the fears of others (Zavoli 1992). On the one hand, conservative sectors of the society were scared by the political instability and the mounting left-wing movement. On the other hand, the youngsters leading the protests mainly belonged to the educated, urban middle class and therefore did not fully represent more marginalized sectors of the society and peripheral areas. Fascism, in the narratives of those who had kept and transferred its legacy underground, was perceived as a better response to the

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[4] The label comes from the movie directed by Margarethe von Trotta [*Anni di piombo* (*Die bleierne Zeit*), 1981]. The movie is about the political violence in Germany by the *Rote Armee* Faction during the same period of activity as the Red Brigades in Italy. The term Years of Lead stuck in Italy as a label to define twenty years of political turmoil. The movie won the Leone d'Oro at the 38th International Exhibit of Cinema in Venice, Italy.

growing instability, by providing order and voice to the marginalized, and overcoming the indecisions and weaknesses of democratic institutions (Ferraresi 1996).

Despite the defeat of the fascist regime and the prosecution of the fascist leadership, extreme right-wing ideologies and preferences did not completely disappear in the new democratic Italy. Fascism first developed in Italy but, unlike Germany, which was massively bombed and subsequently occupied by the Allied forces, or Japan, which experienced two atomic bombs and had its post-war constitution drafted by the staff of General Douglas MacArthur, Italy enjoyed much more autonomy after the end of the Second World War. In September 1943, the Italian king signed an armistice with the Allied forces and co-operated with them to liberate northern and central Italy from Nazi occupation and the remaining fascist militias (Costalli et al. 2020). An important role in the liberation was also played by the strong resistance movement, which constituted the roots of the new political parties (Costalli and Ruggeri 2015a, 2019). Italy thus enjoyed a much larger degree of autonomy in the management of post-war institutional reconstruction and transitional justice.

However, ordinary courts found themselves overwhelmed by thousands of cases due to crimes committed by fascists (Dondi 1999). To solve this technical stall, and 'quickly relaunch the country toward conditions of political and social peace',[5] after three years of civil war and post-civil war violence, in June 1946 the Minister of Justice Palmiro Togliatti, who was also the leader of the communist party in Italy (PCI), promoted an amnesty for crimes committed before August 1945.[6] The amnesty included political crimes and therefore thousands of middle and low-rank officials of the fascist regime and militias were liberated, either immediately or after short periods in jail. According to reliable estimates, more than 20,000 collaborationists and more than 5,000 fascists were set free due to the amnesty (Franzinelli 2016). If the Italian case could seem an outlier, due to its amnesty, it is in fact rather a forerunner of many other cases: between 1990 and 2016, 289 amnesties have been introduced because of ongoing conflict, as part of peace negotiations, or in post-conflict periods, 245 of which included political crimes (Mallinder 2020).

Although the new constitution banned the possibility of re-forming the fascist party, by December 1946 second-tier members of the vanquished regime had created a new party called Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI, Italian Social Movement). Despite being clearly right-wing and openly nostalgic of the fascist regime, MSI accepted to be part of the new democratic order, participating in the elections and denying the intention of re-establishing the previous regime. This ambiguous strategy was severely and repeatedly criticized by some members of the party, who opted out and founded some of the neofascist movements already mentioned. The leaders of these movements completely rejected democracy and any possible compromise with its institutions and procedures, were inflexibly anti-communist, and exalted the myth of violence (Zavoli 1992).

One important movement was Ordine Nuovo, created in Rome in 1969, with branches in other parts of Italy, especially in Veneto, Lombardia, Umbria, Campania, and Sicilia (Battaglini 1986: 32). The movement was ideologically and operationally revolutionary and it was strongly influenced by the thoughts and works of Julius Evola, a philosopher who participated in the fascist regime. Evola was described by the police as a 'teacher and spiritual father of this clique of fanatics' (Murgia 1976: 129). He was very explicit about the use of violent means: 'violence is the only possible and reasonable solution, but it presupposes intelligence, and intelligence is conspicuously absent'

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[5] See President's Decree no. 4 (Republic of Italy 1946).

[6] The amnesty excluded the most serious crimes, such as massacres and tortures, and the crimes committed by the highest ranks of the civil and military branches of the state administration. A total of 259 fascists got condemned to death penalty and 91 were executed, while the other death penalties were transformed into life sentences because of the amnesty (Franzinelli 2016).

(Salierno 1976: 142–43). Avanguardia Nazionale was first created as a youth movement by former members of MSI who shared part of their political path with the members of Ordine Nuovo. Openly neofascist and anti-democratic, the youth movement broke up in 1964, but was re-created again in 1970 by former members of MSI's youth section and finally disbanded in 1976. In these years, a younger generation of neofascists was growing increasingly dissatisfied with the ambiguous strategy of the MSI, who were perceived as being too slow in their actions. As a result of this dissatisfaction, between the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s the neofascist underground scene was dominated by the so-called spontaneous armed phenomenon (*spontaneismo armato*): small groups of young neofascist extremists who killed and wounded dozens of people in their almost nihilistic struggle against the state, using the name Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari almost as a label available to all small groups who shared the idea of acting immediately to overturn the democratic state in a violent fascist revolution, with no formal, rigid, and hierarchical organization (Capaldo et al. 1986).

Based on the theoretical propositions outlined in the previous section, we expect that local fascist strongholds established before the institutionalization of the Partito Nazionale Fascista (PNF, National Fascist Party) into a regime—hence, when the fascists were aiming for the control of the state but not yet controlling it—created long-lasting ideational and organizational legacies at the local level for the neofascist violence that resurfaced during the Years of Lead. As Ferraresi (1996: 52) put it:

> within this galaxy the *Ordine Nuovo* and the *Avanguardia Nazionale* occupied a role of unquestioned hegemony, for the length of their formal presence on the scene (about twenty years for the former, fifteen for the latter), the energy of their leadership, and the activities they carried out. Moreover, by way of personal and ideological continuity, they provided a crucial trait d'union among periods and generations of militants, linking the veterans of the 1940s with the *spontaneisti* terrorists of the 1970s and 1980s.

The local transfer of fascist ideology and actions took place via direct witnessing of the previous regime and writings, as in the case of Evola but also, for example, via the influence of academics like Pio Filippo Ronconi, a professor who had been a member of the Italian SS during the fascist regime (Dondi 2015: 58).

> *Hypothesis 1*. An above-average local membership of the PNF before the institutionalization of the fascist regime predicts higher levels of neofascist violence during the Years of Lead.

One of the most critical moments in Italy during the Years of Lead—as it happens in most evolving democracies—was the discussion about the use of violence and repression by the state against anti-democratic and violent groups. In Italy, the Minister of Interior (MoI) has a direct role in managing national security policies (Dondi 2015: 207) and monitors and reports systematically to parliament the actions of the police force and their local leadership (Satta 2016: 283). Such a role was so important and clear to neofascist organizations that, for instance, Mariano Rumor in 1973, at that time the MoI, was targeted in ways designed to alarm public opinion about the incapacity of the democratic institutions to deal with the violent escalation of the protests (Milan Tribunal, Sentence 22/02/2005). The MoI also has the power to declare political groups as illegal based on their violent activities, as eventually was the case of Avanguardia Nazionale. When Ordine Nuovo understood they could be banned, they declared: 'The decision of the Minister of Interior Affairs and of the government would be of an extreme gravity: we know we could be the next one' (Satta 2016: 178). Even though the Democrazia Cristiana (DC, Christian Democracy) was always in charge of the Italian governments during the Years of Lead, Italy witnessed twelve

reshuffles of the MoI, political figures who belonged to the DC but who represented different political positions within the party.[7] Given the centrality of this ministry, one of the most important catalysing events to show the weakness of liberal democracy and thus providing the opportunity for the resurfacing of local violent fascist legacies may have been reshuffles of the MoI.

> *Hypothesis 2.* Areas with a strong fascist legacy experienced higher level of neofascist violence during the Years of Lead in periods when there was a reshuffle of the Minister of Interior.

4   Data and research design

Even though political violence was widespread and frequent in Italy between the 1960s and 1980s, these events are not comprehensively documented. One exception is the dataset on the cycles of political protest and violence in Italy between 1966 and 1973 created by Della Porta and Tarrow (1986). This database codes all forms of disruptive direct action reported in the *Corriere della Sera* (based in Milan), but having a single newspaper as the main data source may lead to missing cases and geographical bias in reporting episodes. This database also covers only seven years, excludes some of the major events and the peak of the Years of Lead, and includes only aggregated national timeseries, which cannot be used to study subnational variation in violence. A more recent dataset, although not focused only on Italy, was created by de la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca (2011). This dataset collects information on fatalities of domestic terrorism in Western European countries between 1965 and 2005. Even though it covers a long historical period and the coding is supported by strong conceptualization, the data include only fatalities due to terrorism, hence limiting the possible repertoire of violence under scrutiny (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017; Kalyvas 2019).

Given this lack of available information, we created a new dataset of violent events during the Years of Lead in Italy by coding the description of all conflictual political events in that period.[8] Our dataset is based on the short description of events contained in a two-volume publication prepared by a research team of Italian scholars from the University La Sapienza in Rome (Schaerf et al. 1992). The information collected are from three broadly distributed national newspapers: *Il Corriere della Sera*, *Il Messaggero*, and *La Repubblica*. These newspapers are based in Milan and Rome but collect information from local journalists based in other Italian cities. Importantly, these newspapers represent different political positions: the establishment (*Corriere*), moderate-centre (*Messaggero*), and more progressive (*Repubblica*). The information obtained from these three newspapers was integrated and verified by the authors using local newspapers to ensure the capture of more minor localized events that were reported very succinctly in the main sources.

To construct our dataset, we started by using the chronology of events provided by Schaerf et al. (1992) and undertook a systematic analysis of all episodes reported to verify them and to unpack instances containing multiple events. The aim was to develop a more nuanced and granular dataset, elaborating on the diverse repertoires of political actions and the different groups active during the Years of Lead. We created a 'catalogue of violent events' (Biggs 2018; Tilly 1978), where we coded events based on an 'actor–action–target' structure, collecting information on actor characteristics, their modalities and repertoires, and their targets. We use this new catalogue of 8131 events to create a province-month panel covering the period between January 1969 and

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[7] For the full list of ministers, see Appendix Table A1.

[8] We provide a very detailed description of the dataset, measurement of different variables, validity, triangulation, and intercoder reliability in a company paper that is available upon request.

December 1988.[9] The different conflictual events in our dataset include non-violent and violent events. In Table 1, we provide our definitions and examples of contentious repertoires that were used to code different types of events.

Table 1: Definition and repertoires of conflictual events

Conflictual events	Definition	Repertories
Non-violent	Politically motivated acts of dissent in public and private spaces, including disruption of the activities of these places	Writing on walls, communiqué, speech in an organized setting, demonstrations, marches, occupations, strikes
Violent	Politically motivated acts aimed at damaging public and private proprieties, or attacks at the physical integrity of others	Clashes, aggressions, assaults, shootings, kneecapping, arson, Molotov throwing, bombs, kidnapping

Source: authors' compilation.

Figure 1 outlines trends in conflictual events attributed to neofascist groups during the Years of Lead (i.e. our main dependent variables). *Violent neofascist events* is the dominant sub-category of action, with substantially higher levels in the first half of the Years of Lead.

Figure 1: Time trends—neofascist events by action type
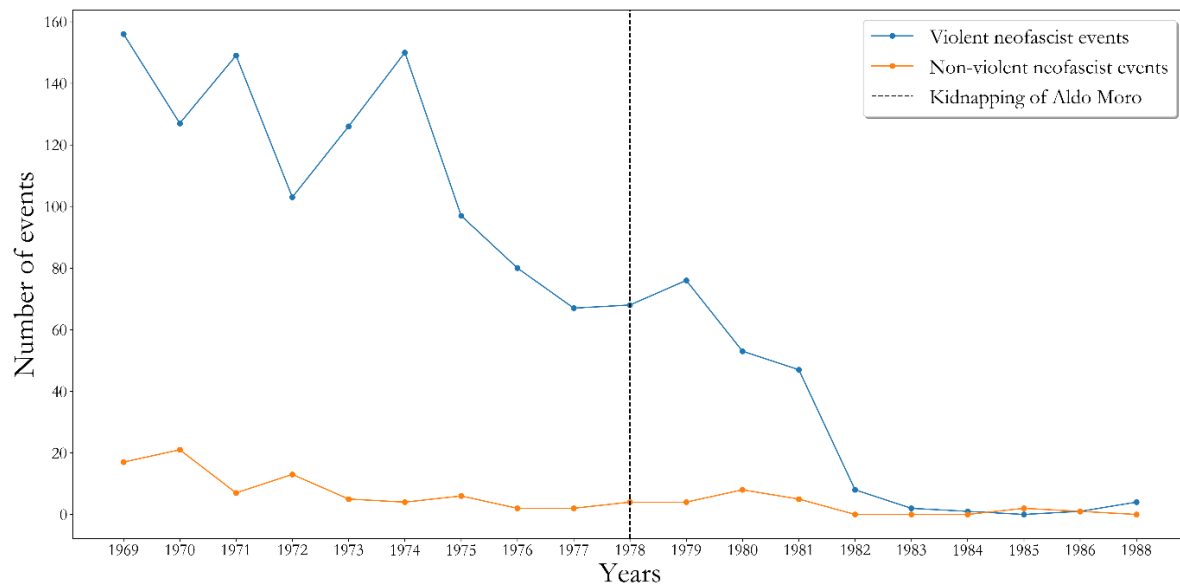
Source: authors' calculations using data extracted from Schaerf et al. (1992), according to categories defined in Table 1.

Our main explanatory variable is a dummy variable equal to one if the number of PNF members registered in the province on 31 December 1922 is higher than the national average. The data derive from the archives of the PNF and record the members of the party in each Italian province in the years preceding the institutionalization of the fascist regime (Gentile 1989). This variable captures those areas where the fascists (and their organizational structures) were particularly rooted well before the complete transformation of the existing legal system and the establishment of the regime (1925–26). After that moment, it is difficult to distinguish PNF membership as a result of political preferences from passive adherence to the party because of the change in the institutional setting. Figure 2 shows the geographic distribution of PNF members in 1922 across Italian

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[9] While we have information on the day and city where the event occurred, in the current study we aggregate observations at the province-month level to conduct statistical analysis.

provinces, whereas Figure 3 reports the distribution of violent neofascist events (per 100,000 people) during the Years of Lead. [10]

Figure 2: Geographic distribution of PNF membership in 1922
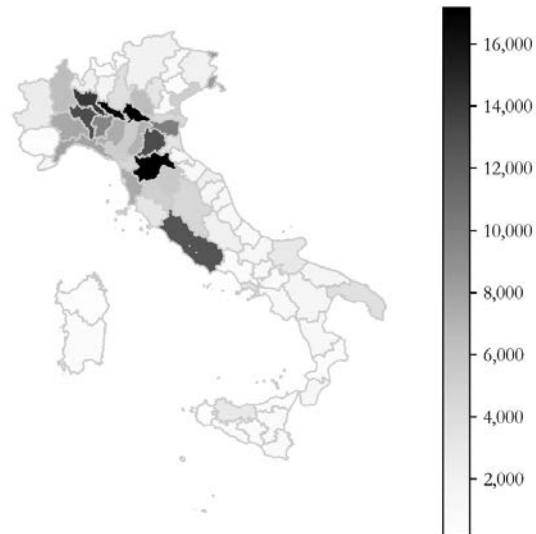
Source: authors' calculations using data from Gentile (1989).

Figure 3: Geographic distribution of violent neofascist events during the Years of Lead
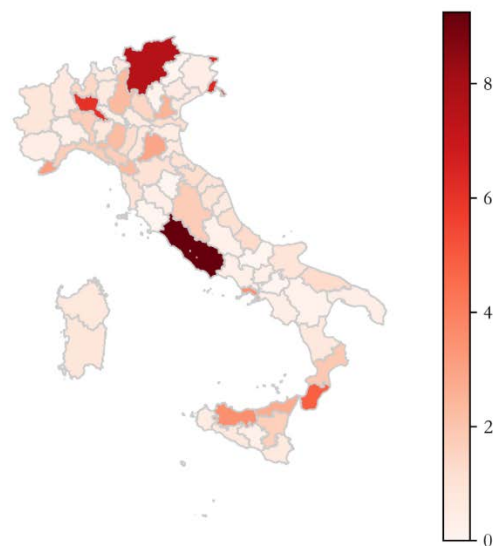
Source: authors' calculations using data extracted from Schaerf et al. (1992).

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[10] We use the historical geographical boundaries of Italian provinces in 1921 (see Istat, n.d.b).

To assess the effect of fascist membership in the 1920s on subsequent neofascist violence in the Years of Lead, we estimate zero-inflated negative binomial (ZINB) regressions, which are useful to model over-dispersed data (i.e. the conditional mean is not equal to the conditional variance) that are also sparse (Cameron and Trivedi 2013). In this way, we can model not just the count of conflictual events but also the probability that an event could occur. The regressions we estimate have two interlinked equations: the first equation models the data-generating process of the likelihood of an event occurring (i.e. risk of conflictual event in a province-month), whereas the second equation models the count of conflictual events. In this framework, the excess of zeros in the dependent variable (the first equation) is modelled as a function of covariates that might influence the likelihood of a political conflictual event occurring during the Years of Lead in a given Italian province. These covariates are the value added of industry in 1971 and 1981, as a proxy of the economic development of the province, the GDP per capita in 1971 and 1981 (measured in thousands of lire), and the average of the total population between 1971 and 1981.

The count process (the second equation) shows correlates of the number of conflictual events. We report these results in our main tables. This process contains our main independent variable of interest, that is, whether a province had a level of PNF members (registered on 31 December 1922) above the national average. This second equation also includes pre-treatment variables that might determine a non-random allocation of PNF members in the 1920s. These are GDP per capita in 1921, workforce in 1921 (measured in thousands of people), and male literacy in 1921 (measured as rate per 100 people). In the same equation, we also add a dummy variable equal to one if the province is in Southern Italy, to capture the geographical divide between Italian regions. The data used to estimate the control variables were obtained from the Italian Statistical Institute. The count process also includes a set of year fixed effects to control for shocks that are common to every province in a given year. In Appendix Table A2, we reproduced our baseline estimations using the raw number of PNF members in the province as an alternative measurement of our main explanatory variable. The results show no substantive change.

5 Empirical results

We start by estimating the effect of fascist cells in the 1920s on neofascist violence in the Years of Lead and move afterwards to a discussion of a central mechanism shaping the emergence of this legacy in specific periods.

5.1 The persistence of local legacies of fascism

Table 2 shows the results of estimating the legacy of PNF membership in the 1920s across a range of categories of conflictual political events that took place during the Years of Lead in Italy. We report estimates for the variables included into the count model (the second equation) and not the inflating stage (probability of having a conflictual event in a province-month).[11] All observations are defined at the province-month level. In Column 1, the dependent variable considers all conflictual political events present in our dataset between 1969 and 1988, independently of the identity of the perpetrator. Column 2 includes all violent events in the dataset, also independently of the identity of perpetrator. All other columns refer to conflictual events—non-violent (Column 4) and violent (Column 3)—perpetrated by neofascist actors.

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[11] Estimates for the variables included in the inflation models (i.e. the first equation) are presented in Appendix Table A3.

We observe a positive and statistically significant effect of above-average PNF membership in the 1920s on both conflictual and violent events that took place in Italy during the Years of Lead (Columns 1 and 2, respectively). The coefficient in the first column indicates that in provinces with strong PNF membership in the 1920s, the number of conflictual political events during the Years of Lead was 72.7 per cent[12] higher. The estimated effect of PNF membership increases in magnitude and statistical significance for events perpetrated by neofascist organizations, and of violent nature. For instance, Column 3 shows an increase in the expected number of violent neofascist events in 1969–88 by 120 per cent in provinces with higher PNF membership in the 1920s. By contrast, the coefficient of the PNF legacy is not significant for non-violent events (Column 4). Hence, our theory predicts violent legacies but not non-violent legacies.

Table 2: Main regressions: legacy of fascism, ZINB models

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	All events	All violent events	Violent neofascist events	Non-violent neofascist events
PNF membership in 1920s (dummy variable)	0.5462**	0.6187**	0.7905***	0.2428
	(0.267)	(0.263)	(0.287)	(0.388)
GDP per capita 1921 ('000)	−0.5264	−0.7036	−0.9965**	0.2066
	(0.500)	(0.503)	(0.487)	(0.757)
Work force 1921 ('000)	0.0042***	0.0039***	0.0033***	0.0013
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.001)
Male literacy 1921 (per 100)	−0.0016	0.0026	0.0074	0.0203
	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.021)
South	−0.4040	−0.5717	−0.2427	0.1636
	(0.443)	(0.398)	(0.344)	(0.513)
Constant	0.2073	−0.0349	0.8558	−4.3170**
	(1.219)	(1.243)	(1.114)	(1.953)
Observations	16,320	16,320	16,320	16,320

Note: robust standard errors in parentheses. ***$p<0.01$, **$p<0.05$, *$p<0.1$.

Source: authors' calculations using study data.

5.2 Mechanism analysis: the resurfacing of local fascist legacies

In Section 3 we argued that the resurfacing of fascist legacies is more likely to take place at times when neofascist organizations can use their tripod of knowledge to cast doubts over the ability of democratic institutions to protect citizens and exercise effectively the monopoly of violence. During the period between 1969 and 1988, Italy experienced several cabinet reshuffles. Of key importance, as discussed, are the reshuffles of the MoI, given the centrality of that ministry in maintaining social stability.[13] We compiled information on all months between 1969 and 1988 when the Italian government had cabinet reshuffles that affected the MoI and we operationalized cabinet reshuffle through a dummy variable equal to one in the months when an MoI is appointed.[14] To measure the mediating effect, we created a second variable that captures the

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[12] In the tables in this paper we report the raw coefficients, whereas in the text we calculated the proportional change.

[13] In the period considered (1969–88), we count 25 reshuffles of the Minister of Interior.

[14] This can happen because of the formation of a new government or within the same government when reshuffles take place. Hence, the minister appointed can be a new minister or the same as before.

interaction between the appointment of an MoI and the variable measuring the higher PNF membership. These terms are included in our preferred specification (Column 3 of Table 2).

To gain a better understanding of the dynamics of neofascist violence during the Years of Lead, we analyse different time intervals, also considering the months before and after the MoI appointment. These results are shown in Table 3. In the first column, we focus only on the month of the appointment. We notice a positive and statistically significant effect of the interaction variable on the predicted number of violent events committed by far-right groups, which supports our second hypothesis. The positive effect of the interaction counterbalances the negative effect of the coefficient that measures cabinet reshuffle on its own, resulting in a net increase in the number of expected events in provinces with a stronger fascist legacy. In Column 2, we extend the scope of the time window to the month before the appointment (i.e. the variable measuring cabinet reshuffle is equal to one in the month of the appointment and in the month before). The coefficient of the interaction term is now smaller in magnitude, but the effect is estimated more precisely. In Column 3, we consider the two months before the MoI appointment. The effect of the interaction term is now statistically significant at the 1 per cent level. In the next two columns, we consider instead the months after the appointment. We note that, when we extend the time window forward, the interaction terms are never statistically significant.[15] Taken together, these results suggest that neofascist organizations take advantage of reshuffles in the Minister of Interior to increase their violent actions and do so also in the periods before the reshuffle as they anticipate such political windows to open. It is plausible to assume that the two- to three-month period before an actual ministerial substitution takes place creates enough uncertainty and rumours of reshuffle that open opportunities for neofascist narratives to take stronger holds. The effect disappears once the MoI is in place, uncertainty decreases, and evidence supporting neofascist narratives diminishes.

Table 3: ZINB regressions—appointment of Minister of Interior Affairs

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Same month	One month before	Two months before	One month after	Two months after
PNF membership in 1920 (dummy variable)	0.7338***	0.7289**	0.6701**	0.7838***	0.7942***
	(0.126)	(0.294)	(0.283)	(0.303)	(0.299)
IntAppDummy	0.6072**				
	(0.280)				
AppointmentMoI	−0.4838**				
	(0.231)				
IntAppDummyBefore 1M		0.4014**			
		(0.169)			
AppointmentMoIBefore 1M		−0.4743***			
		(0.143)			
IntAppDummyBefore 2M			0.4407***		
			(0.148)		
AppointmentMoIBefore 2M			−0.3461**		
			(0.139)		
IntAppDummyAfter 1M				0.0500	
				(0.190)	
AppointmentMoIAfter 1M				−0.1889	

					(0.140)
IntAppDummyAfter 2M					−0.0129
					(0.135)
AppointmentMoIAfter 2M					−0.1676
					(0.107)
GDP per capita 1921 ('000)	−0.9967***	−1.0061**	−1.0015**	−0.9884**	−0.9917**
	(0.215)	(0.484)	(0.482)	(0.485)	(0.485)
Work force 1921 ('000)	0.0033***	0.0033***	0.0033***	0.0033***	0.0033***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Male literacy 1921 (per 100)	0.0077	0.0081	0.0075	0.0075	0.0076
	(0.009)	(0.018)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.018)
South	−0.2654	−0.2567	−0.2671	−0.2508	−0.2475
	(0.177)	(0.341)	(0.337)	(0.344)	(0.345)
Constant	0.8794*	0.8843	0.9497	0.8508	0.8761
	(0.483)	(1.118)	(1.109)	(1.113)	(1.103)
Observations	16,320	16,320	16,320	16,320	16,320

Note: robust standard errors in parentheses. ***$p<0.01$, **$p<0.05$, *$p<0.1$.

Source: authors' calculations using study data.

In Appendix Table A5, we narrow our definition of cabinet reshuffle to only those cases in which the MoI appointed was a new one, whereas before we were just looking at cabinet reshuffles. The effect of the interaction term is even larger, as shown graphically in Figure 4, where we plot the predictive margins for the interaction terms in Column 1 of both Table 3 and Appendix Table A5 (i.e. when we only consider the same month of the appointment/change). Although in both cases the appointment of the MoI increases the gap in the expected number of events between provinces with weak and strong legacy, this increase is larger when we focus on those instances where the MoI appointed was new (Figure 4b).

Figure 4: Predictive margins interaction: (a) *IntChangeDummy*; (b) *IntAppDummy*

(a)   (b)
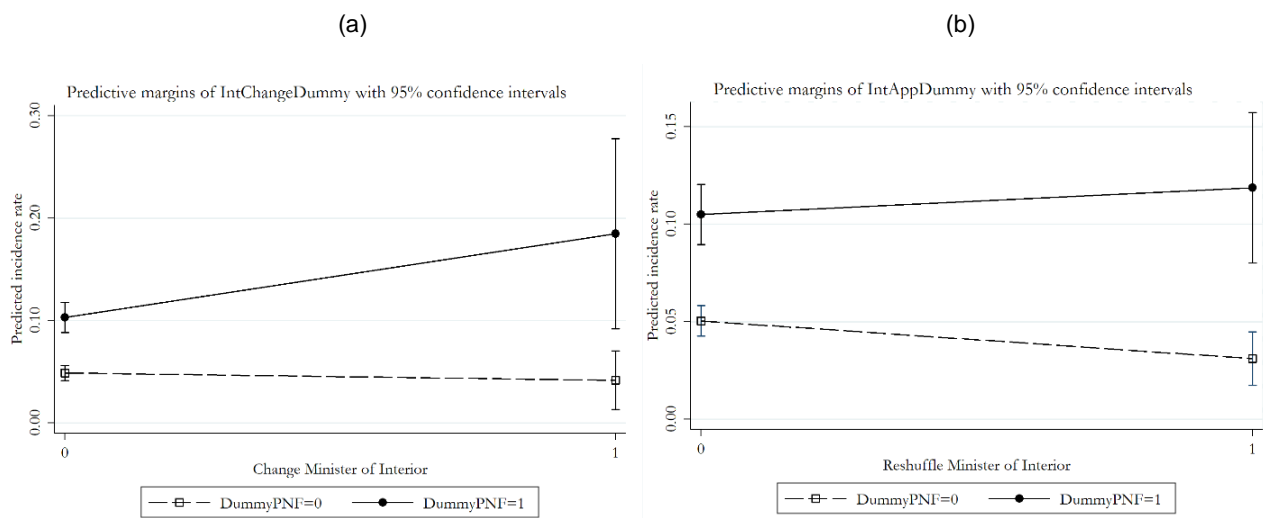
Note: the label *DummyPNF* represents the variable 'PNF membership in 1920s (dummy variable)' shown in Table 3 and Appendix Table A5.

Source: authors' calculations using study data.

6   Robustness: sensitivity analyses and alternative mechanisms

While we seriously consider possible alternative measures and mechanisms, our main findings do not change. In Appendix Table A2, we reproduce the findings of Table 2 using the number of PNF members in December 1922 as main independent variable. The resulting estimates are slightly less precise, but the pattern of results is essentially confirmed.[16] To check whether our results are driven by a few large episodes of neofascist violence, we reconduct our analysis excluding the province-month observations corresponding to the three main massacres perpetuated by far-right groups during the Years of Lead (i.e. the bombing at Piazza Fontana in Milan, December 1969; the bombing at Piazza della Loggia in Brescia, May 1974; and the bombing at Bologna train station, August 1980). Results in Appendix Table A6 hold.

In the following section, we discuss how we tackled possible non-randomness of PNF presence. We control for factors that might confound the relationship between local fascist legacy and subsequent far-right violence in the Years of Lead, outline further sensitivity analyses of the results already discussed, and evaluate alternative mechanisms that could challenge our theoretical arguments and findings.

6.1   Confounding factors

As discussed, in all specifications we controlled for a series of pre-treatment social economic factors, such as GDP per capita, workforce characteristics, and male literacy in the 1920s, which may have had long-term effects on local political dynamics. The inclusion of year fixed effects in the count model controls for homogeneous shocks across all the provinces. However, other factors could have simultaneously affected local fascist presence in the 1920s and subsequent violence in the Years of Lead.

The violent movements of the early 1920s may have created a culture of violence born from overall discontent with democratic institutions, thus explaining violence in general and not just the resurgence of neofascist violence. To evaluate this possibility, we reproduce the estimations in Column 3 of Table 2 by replacing the dependent variable with the number of violent events committed by left-wing terrorist groups (e.g., Brigate Rosse). Results are reported in Column 1 of Appendix Table A7. The effect of PNF membership on left-wing violence is not statistically significant, indicating that local fascist legacies did not influence violence perpetrated by non-fascist political actors.[17]

The legacy effect we capture could potentially be a mechanical effect driven by (historical) local political preferences. Thus, we add in the original specification of Column 3 in Table 2 the share of votes for either the Blocco Nazionale (National Bloc) or the PNF in the 1921 general elections (Appendix Table A8, Model 1).[18] The Blocco Nazionale was a right-wing coalition of political parties proposed by the liberal Giovanni Giolitti, with the aim of exploiting the rising fascist movement against the socialist, communist, and people's parties (Lussu 1945). The lists presented under the Blocco Nazionale, while gathering a broad range of political forces (e.g., nationalists,

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[16] We also reproduce the results of Appendix Tables A8 and A12.

[17] In Column 2 of Appendix Table A7, we replace the dummy variable representing PNF membership with the number of PNF members. Again, there is no statistically significant effect.

[18] Voting data derive from Corbetta and Piretti (2009).

liberals, democrats) also included fascist candidates.[19] The legacy effect decreases only slightly in magnitude but the results are robust to the inclusion of the control. Second, in Column 2 of Appendix Table A8, we add the share of votes for the communists in the same elections, to account for the preferences towards the extreme left, because the violent legacy could have been a by-product of long-term minorities of local activists against left-wing local majorities. Again, the main insights from our findings do not change.

Next, in Appendix Table A9, we reproduce the results of Table 2 and Appendix Tables A8 and A12, including in the first equation of the ZINB regression the share of votes for the MSI in the latest elections. This exercise asks whether the fascist legacy effect reflects the local political presence of this far-right party, which might be considered the heir of the PNF. As shown, the coefficient for higher PNF membership in the 1920s is not affected by the addition of this variable.

We could ask why the neofascist groups should execute violent attacks in areas where they are stronger instead of trying to 'conquer and control' other areas without fascist legacies. We need to clarify that none of the groups active in Italy during the Years of Lead were sufficiently strong to organize an insurgency and aim at territorial control. These groups were more active in areas with stronger legacies because such legacies were crucial for them to operate as we theorize earlier. However, a mechanism of provincial proximity as the base of attacks could potentially challenge our results. In Appendix Table A10, we create a spatial lag of fascist legacy—how strong is the legacy in the surroundings?—which captures potential diffusion effects and models possible strategic actions between provinces. Provinces surrounded by areas with strong legacy could have more neofascist violence. Hence, we include in the estimations a spatial lag and its interaction with our main explanatory variable (i.e. higher PNF membership in the 1920s).[20] The interaction term captures whether these spillovers are mainly directed towards provinces that also have a strong legacy (and thus stronger local networks) or not. If the proximity base mechanism is an alternative mechanism compared with our local legacy mechanism, once controlling for this interaction, we should lose statistical significance for the local legacy as predictor of local neofascist events. However, the dummy variable measuring PNF membership is still positive and statistically significant, and the inclusion of the spatial lag captures positive spillovers from neighbouring provinces with fascist legacy. The negative coefficient of the interaction variable suggests that the effect is directed towards provinces where strong local networks, ideas, and practices are *not* present. These results suggest a relative mobility of neofascist actors towards provinces that had weaker fascist legacies, yet our main variable about local fascist legacy is still significant.

In Appendix Table A11 we adopt a control function approach (Wooldridge 2015) to mitigate the potential endogeneity of PNF membership. Under this approach, we first estimate the predicted number of PNF members with ordinary least square, using all the regressors included in the count model plus an exogenous instrument. The exogenous instrument we use is the total number of deaths in the First World War (at the province level), as there are strong theoretical arguments for assuming a direct effect of the variable on early PNF membership. Notably, the historical literature suggests that variation in experience, trauma, and memory of violence on the war front during the

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[19] We did not use the share of votes for the Fasci Italiani di Combattimento, a fascist organization considered the forerunner of the PNF) alone, because the organization presented an independent list just in two constituencies (Naples and Verona).

[20] The spatial lag is created by counting the number of surrounding provinces with fascist legacy, divided by the total number of neighbouring provinces. It takes values between zero and one.

First World War shaped early PNF membership across Italy (Alcalde 2017).[21] We compiled the data on the First World War casualties of Italian soldiers using the '*Albo d'oro*' of the Italian Ministry of Defence, the most reliable source of soldiers' causalities (Fornasin 2017). We include the residuals from the first stage in the count model to control for the potential endogeneity of PNF membership. We bootstrap standard errors to account for the two-stage procedure. The effect of interest is still positive and significant across the different models, with the main difference being that we now also observe a (marginally) significant legacy effect on the non-violent events perpetrated by far-right groups. We only focus on the direction of the effects as coefficients are not scaled. We note that these results need to be interpreted with some caution, given the assumptions of this method. Notably, the statistical independence between the joint distribution of the error terms from the two equations and the full set of regressors cannot be tested. We apply the procedure using the number of members of the PNF instead of the dummy variable, as dealing with a potential endogenous dichotomous variable in nonlinear models is an additional concern under this framework. Our substantive insights remain unchanged. These results, even if interpreted with caution, alongside the robustness exercises conducted earlier, reassure us about the validity of our main findings.

6.2   Alternative explanations for the violent legacy of fascism

Given the history of Italy, we have interpreted our results as evidence for a long-term effect of fascist legacies on neofascist violence during the Years of Lead. However, this period involved complex relationships between various political factions—rather than a simple rise of neofascism—and strong animosity between right- and left-wing groups and between these groups and the government. Hence, it could be argued that our results reflect not the long-term legacies of fascism, but rather the response of far-right groups to left-wing violence during the 1970s and 1980s. To account for this alternative explanation, in Column 1 of Appendix Table A12, we report the results generated by including in the first equation the number of violent events committed by left-wing terrorist groups in the same month. The effect of PNF membership is still large and significant at the 1 per cent level.

According to another alternative interpretation, neofascist violence during the Years of Lead might be a response to the violence that took place during the period preceding the formation of the fascist regime in Italy. Between 1920 and 1921 repeated violent clashes occurred between socialist and fascist groups. Memories of this period could have affected future cycles of violence. To account for this, in Column 2 of Appendix Table A12, we add to the count model a variable capturing the total number of deaths in the political clashes that occurred between 1920 and 1921, as they might be systematically correlated with the early presence of PNF members. Our results are not substantially affected by the inclusion of this variable.

Further, we could observe neofascist violence during the Years of Lead as a response either to actions carried out by the government against far-right political groups or to state repression against such groups in general. In Appendix Table A13, we analyse whether retaliation could be an alternative factor explaining the rise of neofascist violence in the 1970s and 1980s. In Column 1, we reproduce the specification of Column 2 in Appendix Table A12 by adding to the first equation the total number of events of state repression against far-right actors (at the province-

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[21] Acemoglu et al. (2022) use deaths of soldiers from the First World War as predictors for socialist support in 1919. Yet, the historical literature has developed theoretical and empirical material on a more direct effect of the First World War on mobilization of fascist first-movers.

month level).[22] The effect of higher PNF membership remains strong and highly significant. In the remaining columns of Appendix Table A13, we explore the legacy effect when the sample is split according to the cumulated level of state repression over the whole time period, to capture those areas where the activity of the state is systematically higher.[23] We observe a non-monotonic trend in the effect of PNF membership: the impact of the fascist legacy seems to increase for low levels of repression, then drops when repression seems to reach its optimum level and it is effectively able to tackle the neofascist organizational structures that coordinate violence. After this point, we observe a strong backlash: excessive repression is likely to exacerbate tensions and magnifies the effect of the legacy, leading to a substantial increase in the level of far-right violence.

Finally, local neofascist violence could also be explained with a logic of revenge resulting from the killings of fascist militants by partisans following Liberation Day in 1945, instead of early PNF membership. Liberation of Italy was completed on 25 April 1945, but in the following months left-wing members of partisan bands caused about 10,000 deaths through extra-judicial executions of individuals who were somehow considered linked to the fascist regime (Dondi 1999; Grandi 2013). Given the brutality of these actions, neofascist violence during the Years of Lead might capture a long-lasting retaliation for these killings, which are likely to coincide with early PNF membership. Such retaliation could also represent a channel through which the fascist legacy exacerbates the level of neofascist violence. To evaluate this possibility, in Appendix Table A14 we add to the specifications of Table 2 and Appendix Tables A8 and A12 the number of extra-judicial deaths in a given province immediately after Liberation Day, together with its interaction with the dummy variable capturing strong fascist legacy. The effect of the legacy stays strong and positive, whereas the independent effect of the killings on the level of neofascist violence appears to be negative, contradicting a potential retaliation argument. Retaliation does not seem to be a mediating factor either, as the interaction term is never statistically significant.

6.3 Robustness of fascist legacy resurfacing

To assess the reliability of the findings reported in Table 3, we conduct a placebo test to assess the validity of our mechanism (the reshuffle of the MoI). This exercise randomly selects months in which we assume a new appointment takes place when there was none. We then test whether, with this new set of 'placebo nominations', we still observe an exacerbation of the legacy effect.[24] A statistically significant coefficient of the interaction between the placebo and PNF membership would cast doubts on our main findings. In Appendix Table A15, we report the results considering as time windows the same month of the appointment, one month before, and two months before (the periods for which we observe a significant effect in Table 3). The interaction coefficient is

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[22] These events are divided into two sub-categories. The first one ('Repression') follows the definition provided by Davenport (2007), for which 'repression involves the actual or threatened use of physical sanctions against an individual or organization, within the territorial jurisdiction of the state, for the purpose of imposing a cost on the target as well as deterring specific activities and/or beliefs perceived to be challenging to government personnel, practices or institutions'. Examples are police charges, clearing out an occupied building, or prohibiting rallies. The other sub-category ('Investigation') involves the stages of an investigation process (e.g., a sentence in a trial or extraditions).

[23] To split the sample, we compute quartiles according to the total number of state repression's events occurring in a given province across all years (1969–88), weighted by the province's population.

[24] To perform the test, we consider all possible months in our dataset excluding those in which an actual appointment of the MoI took place (so that we do not include 'true' cases in our randomization procedure). Next, we randomly select a number of 'placebo nominations' (i.e. months) equal to the number of actual appointments in the original dataset (to make the power of our placebo test consistent with the power of the treatment). Having the same number of cases ensures that we have the same probability of detecting a statistically significant effect.

never statistically different from zero, providing further support to our previous mechanism analysis.

In the last two columns of Appendix Table A15, we address the possibility that reverse causality might affect our estimates in Table 3; in other words, that the rise in the level of far-right violence may lead to a weakening of the government (and thus the reorganization of the cabinet) and not vice versa. Hence, we estimate logit models where the dependent variable is the appointment of an MoI and the main explanatory variable is the level of neofascist violence at the province-month level. Results are reported in Column 4. The coefficient for the new explanatory variable is not statistically different from zero. In Column 5, we add the frequency of violent events committed by far-left terrorist groups. Results remain unchanged. Taken together, these results show no evidence of a potential reverse causality bias in our analysis.[25]

Finally, in Appendix Table A16, we test an alternative political juncture that could be exploited by neofascist groups to raise the level of unrest: general elections.[26] The relevant interaction term is never statistically significant, providing no support for this alternative conceptualization, and strengthening the evidence that the fascist legacy does not resurface when there is uncertainty about the outcome of liberal democracy procedures—elections—but when there is uncertainty in liberal democracies on how to deal with the monopoly of violence: MoI reshuffles.

7   Conclusion

Fascism first emerged in Italy in 1919 and the National Fascist Party was founded in 1921. It spread in various forms to many other countries and across different continents. Its German mutation caused the Second World War and was defeated after millions of deaths. However, to what extent was it really defeated? Contemporary political events show that anti-democratic ideologies do not disappear forever, and ideological networks—even if composed only by a scant minority—can survive as karst rivers that continue irrigating parts of society and re-emerge on the surface at specific critical junctures. We show that fascism, with its legacy of ideas and practices, including the use of violence, can survive under the skin of largely democratic societies for decades thanks to the existence of local networks that transmit its theoretical and practical messages over time, and then re-emerge when the context provides favourable opportunities.

This process was particularly evident in post-Second World War Italy. Measures of transitional justice were implemented to pacify the country after a bloody civil war and to guarantee the operation of crucial branches of the state administration. By doing so, many second-tier members of the fascist regime were reintegrated in the Italian society and fascist networks were not fully eradicated. We show that the experience of local grassroots fascist mobilization, with its legacy of ideas, organizational capacity, and violent practices, survived for decades and was reactivated when the democratic political life of the country seemed to offer favourable opportunities for action. For a fascist movement, such favourable opportunity is the (perceived) weakness of democratic

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[25] Note that in the estimations in Columns 4 and 5 of Appendix Table A15 we only consider provinces with weak fascist legacy (i.e. where PNF membership is below the national average). This is because if we were to expect an effect of increased far-right violence on the likelihood of an MoI appointment, this effect should hold across all provinces (irrespective of their fascist legacy). Hence, we exclude areas with strong legacy to partial out the effect of PNF membership on the level of neofascist violence.

[26] In the time period covered by our dataset, general elections were held in Italy in May 1972, June 1976, June 1979, June 1983, and June 1987.

regimes and their (perceived) difficulties in managing public order and ensuring the security of citizens. In the case of Italy, the mass protests of the New Left in the 1970s provided political instability and were met by governmental indecision. Hence, the neofascist movements chased an opportunity to fight against the 'red' threat and the so-claimed weak and incompetent democratic institutions.

While most of the literature on authoritarian legacies has focused on the legacies of authoritarian institutions or on the legacies of repression, we contribute investigating and revealing the legacies of an authoritarian ideological movement, and specifically the legacy of fascism, which is still an understudied phenomenon. We explain how such legacy can be transmitted over time and show how these legacies can survive as karst rivers even after the destruction of autocratic institutions, influencing not only the political behaviour of citizens in democratic countries but also the level, location, and timing of political violence.

Naturally, our research shares all the limitations of single case studies. However, considering the that the violent legacy of fascism is still understudied, it seems appropriate to start by focusing on Italy, where fascism was born and then diffused. Italy also offers an uncommon wealth of data that allows for detailed analyses, shedding light on possible future pathways for studies of other historical and contemporary cases of fascist legacies. We hope our analysis opens new avenues for future research on this aspect of the history of contemporary Europe, as well as elsewhere where fascist legacies may still remain as karst rivers.

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Appendix

Table A1: List of Ministers of Interior included in our dataset

Ministers	Exit date
Paolo Emilio Taviani	24 June 1968
Franco Restivo	17 February 1972
Mariano Rumor	7 July 1973
Paolo Emilio Taviani	23 November 1974
Luigi Gui	11 February 1976
Francesco Cossiga	11 May 1978
Giulio Andreotti	13 June 1978
Virginio Rognogni	13 July 1983
Amintore Fanfani	4 August 1983
Oscar Luigi Scalfaro	29 July 1987
Amintore Fanfani	12 April 1988
Anonio Gava	16 October 1990

Source: authors' compilation.

Table A2: ZINB regressions—PNF members

Variables	(1) GE	(2) VE	(3) VF (I)	(4) NVF	(5) VF (II)	(6) VF (III)	(7) VF (IV)	(8) VF (V)
PNF membership in 1920s ('000)	0.0626*	0.0690**	0.0924**	0.0600	0.0797***	0.0911***	0.0886***	0.0851***
	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.042)	(0.043)	(0.031)	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.025)
GDP per capita 1921 ('000)	−0.5847	−0.7612	−1.0253**	0.0824	−0.6538*	−0.3746	−0.4210	−0.4462
	(0.475)	(0.474)	(0.445)	(0.683)	(0.396)	(0.425)	(0.445)	(0.448)
Work force 1921 ('000)	0.0039***	0.0035***	0.0027***	0.0010	0.0026***	0.0023***	0.0024***	0.0024***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Male literacy 1921 (per 100)	0.0021	0.0066	0.0089	0.0271	0.0039	−0.0028	−0.0028	−0.0018
	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.022)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)
South	−0.3879	−0.5716	−0.2857	0.0765	−0.1230	−0.1381	−0.1637	−0.1604
	(0.429)	(0.384)	(0.330)	(0.517)	(0.327)	(0.301)	(0.302)	(0.295)
Votes share B–F					−1.7651***	−1.8286***	−1.8134***	−1.8945***
					(0.625)	(0.519)	(0.514)	(0.513)
Votes share communists						−6.1968***	−5.9837***	−6.1763***
						(2.238)	(2.212)	(2.221)
Total deaths 1920–21								0.0049
								(0.013)
Constant	0.1263	−0.1364	0.8663	−4.7059***	0.4183	0.3481	0.4827	0.4786
	(1.159)	(1.180)	(1.065)	(1.676)	(0.879)	(0.908)	(0.939)	(0.925)
Observations	16,320	16,320	16,320	16,320	16,080	16,080	16,080	16,080

Note: GE, general events; VE, violent events; VF, violent neofascist events; NVF, non-violent neofascist events. GDP per capita is in thousands of lire, work force and PNF membership are in thousands of people, and the male literacy rate is per 100 people. Robust standard errors in parentheses. ***$p<0.01$, **$p<0.05$, *$p<0.1$.

Source: authors' compilation based on our own data collection.

Table A3: ZINB Regressions—inflation models

Variables	(1) GE	(2) VE	(3) VF (I)	(4) NVF
Average population 1971–81	−0.0000**	−0.0000***	−0.0000***	−0.0000***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
VA industry 1971 (in billion)	0.0026	0.0022	0.0029	0.0029
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
VA industry 1981 (in billion)	−0.0006	−0.0005	−0.0004	−0.0003
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
GDP per capita 1981 ('000)	0.0006***	0.0005***	0.0003	0.0001
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
GDP per capita 1971 ('000)	−0.0039***	−0.0034***	−0.0022*	−0.0006
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Constant	2.1239**	2.8702***	3.4222***	3.4451
	(0.836)	(0.794)	(0.751)	(2.505)
Observations	16,320	16,320	16,320	16,320

Note: GE, general events; VE, violent events; VF, violent neofascist events; NVF, non-violent neofascist events. all inflation models are logit. GDP per capita is in thousands of lire; value added of industry is in billions of lire. Robust standard errors in parentheses. ***$p<0.01$, **$p<0.05$, *$p<0.1$.

Source: authors' calculations using study data.

Table A4: ZINB regressions—appointment MoI (additional controls)

Variables	(1) Same month	(2) One month before	(3) Two months before	(4) One month after	(5) Two months after
PNF membership in 1920 (dummy variable)	0.6983***	0.7000***	0.6453***	0.7352***	0.7356***
	(0.137)	(0.191)	(0.188)	(0.196)	(0.194)
IntAppDummy	0.5087*				
	(0.281)				
AppointmentMoI	−0.4034*				
	(0.234)				
IntAppDummyBefore 1M		0.3213*			
		(0.172)			
AppointmentMoIBefore 1M		−0.4112***			
		(0.142)			
IntAppDummyBefore 2M			0.3754**		
			(0.146)		
AppointmentMoIBefore 2M			−0.3110**		
			(0.136)		
IntAppDummyAfter 1M				0.0758	
				(0.184)	
AppointmentMoIAfter 1M				−0.1887	
				(0.136)	
IntAppDummyAfter 2M					0.0192
					(0.130)
AppointmentMoIAfter 2M					−0.1839*
					(0.104)
GDP per capita 1921 ('000)	−0.4656*	−0.4680	−0.4715	−0.4494	−0.4514
	(0.241)	(0.464)	(0.467)	(0.466)	(0.464)
Work force 1921 ('000)	0.0029***	0.0029***	0.0029***	0.0028***	0.0028***
	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)

Male literacy 1921 (per 100)	−0.0018	−0.0016	−0.0020	−0.0022	−0.0019
	(0.009)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)
South	−0.1442	−0.1377	−0.1500	−0.1305	−0.1261
	(0.184)	(0.285)	(0.286)	(0.287)	(0.286)
Votes share B–F	−1.9974***	−1.9997***	−1.9763***	−2.0140***	−2.0272***
	(0.330)	(0.492)	(0.481)	(0.483)	(0.482)
Votes share communists	−5.5935***	−5.5945**	−5.5358**	−5.6202**	−5.6200**
	(1.212)	(2.213)	(2.212)	(2.226)	(2.235)
Total deaths 1920–21	0.0087	0.0083	0.0082	0.0084	0.0088
	(0.008)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Constant	0.5368	0.5383	0.6017	0.5180	0.5332
	(0.512)	(0.877)	(0.881)	(0.874)	(0.864)
Observations	16,080	16,080	16,080	16,080	16,080

Note: GDP per capita is in thousands of lire, work force in thousands of people, and the male literacy rate is per 100 people. Robust standard errors in parentheses. ***$p<0.01$, **$p<0.05$, *$p<0.1$.

Source: authors' calculations using study data.

Table A5: ZINB regressions—Change of Minister of Interior Affairs

Variables	(1) Same month	(2) One month before	(3) Two months before	(4) One month after	(5) Two months after
PNF membership in 1920 (dummy variable)	0.7469***	0.7579***	0.7563***	0.7742***	0.7768***
	(0.124)	(0.293)	(0.292)	(0.296)	(0.298)
IntChangeDummy	0.7427*				
	(0.427)				
ChangeMoI	−0.1581				
	(0.354)				
IntChangeDummyBefore 1M		0.5665*			
		(0.299)			
ChangeMoIBefore 1M		−0.3367			
		(0.277)			
IntChangeDummyBefore 2M			0.5081**		
			(0.249)		
ChangeMoIBefore 2M			−0.5102**		
			(0.217)		
IntChangeDummyAfter 1M				0.1713	
				(0.333)	
ChangeMoIAfter 1M				−0.0199	
				(0.279)	
IntChangeDummyAfter 2M					0.1184
					(0.264)
ChangeMoIAfter 2M					−0.0235
					(0.221)
GDP per capita 1921 ('000)	−0.9715***	−0.9949**	−1.0039**	−0.9865**	−0.9918**
	(0.214)	(0.484)	(0.483)	(0.487)	(0.488)
Work force 1921 ('000)	0.0033***	0.0033***	0.0033***	0.0033***	0.0033***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Male literacy 1921 (per 100)	0.0068	0.0075	0.0077	0.0071	0.0072
	(0.008)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)
South	−0.2317	−0.2387	−0.2492	−0.2399	−0.2425
	(0.176)	(0.342)	(0.342)	(0.344)	(0.345)

Constant	0.8522*	0.8659	0.8781	0.8532	0.8624
	(0.478)	(1.101)	(1.107)	(1.110)	(1.112)
Observations	16,320	16,320	16,320	16,320	16,320

Note: robust standard errors in parentheses. ***$p<0.01$, **$p<0.05$, *$p<0.1$.

Source: authors' calculations using study data.

Table A6: ZINB regressions—without main neofascist massacres

Variables	(1) GE	(2) VE	(3) VF (I)	(4) NVF	(5) VF (II)	(6) VF (III)	(7) VF (IV)	(8) VF (V)
PNF membership in 1920s (dummy variable)	0.5472**	0.6207**	0.7973***	0.2680	0.7734***	0.8186***	0.8023***	0.7532***
	(0.267)	(0.263)	(0.287)	(0.404)	(0.206)	(0.200)	(0.197)	(0.187)
GDP per capita 1921 ('000)	−0.5251	−0.7026	−1.0084**	0.0774	−0.6564	−0.3831	−0.4324	−0.4755
	(0.498)	(0.502)	(0.484)	(0.750)	(0.422)	(0.451)	(0.470)	(0.463)
Work force 1921 ('000)	0.0042***	0.0039***	0.0033***	0.0014	0.0030***	0.0028***	0.0029***	0.0029***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Male literacy 1921 (per 100)	−0.0019	0.0025	0.0078	0.0242	0.0034	−0.0038	−0.0037	−0.0017
	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.021)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.015)
South	−0.4059	−0.5729	−0.2460	0.1171	−0.0779	−0.1057	−0.1303	−0.1248
	(0.443)	(0.398)	(0.344)	(0.506)	(0.314)	(0.295)	(0.293)	(0.286)
Votes share B–F					−1.8137***	−1.8870***	−1.8673***	−2.0071***
					(0.530)	(0.487)	(0.473)	(0.484)
Votes share communists						−5.3854**	−5.2110**	−5.6055**
						(2.262)	(2.219)	(2.224)
Total deaths 1920–21								0.0085
								(0.012)
Constant	0.2249	−0.0358	0.8549	−4.2550**	0.4197	0.4082	0.5372	0.5156
	(1.216)	(1.241)	(1.109)	(2.102)	(0.819)	(0.868)	(0.891)	(0.870)
Observations	16,317	16,317	16,317	16,317	16,077	16,077	16,077	16,077

Note: GE, general events; VE, violent events; VF, violent neofascist events; NVF, non-violent neofascist events. GDP per capita is in thousands of lire, work force and PNF membership are in thousands of people, and the male literacy rate is per 100 people. Robust standard errors in parentheses. ***$p<0.01$, **$p<0.05$, *$p<0.1$.

Source: authors' calculations using study data.

Table A7: ZINB regressions—violent left-wing terrorism

Variables	(1) Violent left-wing terrorism	(2) Violent left-wing terrorism
PNF membership in 1920s (dummy variable)	0.4088	
	(0.288)	
PNF membership in 1920s ('000)		0.0391
		(0.031)
GDP per capita 1921 ('000)	−0.7367	−0.7479
	(0.526)	(0.542)
Work force 1921 ('000)	0.0037***	0.0035***
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Male literacy 1921 (per 100)	0.0132	0.0158
	(0.022)	(0.024)
South	−1.4494***	−1.4579***
	(0.514)	(0.527)
Constant	−18.5347***	−18.6013***
	(1.563)	(1.750)
Observations	16,320	16,320

Note: GDP per capita is in thousands of lire, work force in thousands of people, and the male literacy rate is per 100 people. Robust standard errors in parentheses. ***$p<0.01$, **$p<0.05$, *$p<0.1$.

Source: authors' calculations using study data.

Table A8: ZINB regressions—robustness

Variables	(1) Violent neofascist events	(2) Violent neofascist events
PNF membership in 1920s (dummy variable)	0.7663***	0.8136***
	(0.206)	(0.199)
GDP per capita 1921 ('000)	−0.6416	−0.3683
	(0.426)	(0.456)
Work force 1921 ('000)	0.0030***	0.0028***
	(0.000)	(0.001)
Male literacy 1921 (per 100)	0.0030	−0.0043
	(0.016)	(0.016)
South	−0.0739	−0.1037
	(0.315)	(0.296)
Votes share B–F	−1.8195***	−1.8937***
	(0.533)	(0.490)
Votes share communists		−5.3901**
		(2.270)
Constant	0.4152	0.4088
	(0.826)	(0.876)
Observations	16,080	16,080

Note: GDP per capita is measured in thousands of lire; work force is measured in thousands of people, and the male literacy rate is measured per 100 people. Robust standard errors in parentheses. ***$p<0.01$, **$p<0.05$, *$p<0.1$.

Source: authors' calculations using study data.

Table A9: ZINB regressions—MSI share

Variables	(1) GE	(2) VE	(3) VF (I)	(4) NVF	(5) VF (II)	(6) VF (III)	(7) VF (IV)	(8) VF (V)
PNF membership in 1920s (dummy variable)	0.5488**	0.6191**	0.7964***	0.2375	0.7712***	0.8155***	0.7992***	0.7476***
	(0.267)	(0.263)	(0.284)	(0.412)	(0.204)	(0.198)	(0.196)	(0.186)
GDP per capita 1921 ('000)	−0.5367	−0.7045	−1.0057**	0.2062	−0.6515	−0.3745	−0.4234	−0.4710
	(0.492)	(0.496)	(0.480)	(0.760)	(0.419)	(0.448)	(0.468)	(0.457)
Work force 1921 ('000)	0.0042***	0.0039***	0.0033***	0.0013	0.0030***	0.0028***	0.0029***	0.0029***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Male literacy 1921 (per 100)	−0.0011	0.0026	0.0080	0.0198	0.0035	−0.0040	−0.0039	−0.0017
	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.017)	(0.021)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.015)
South	−0.4098	−0.5724	−0.2491	0.1681	−0.0799	−0.1060	−0.1304	−0.1249
	(0.441)	(0.394)	(0.343)	(0.498)	(0.314)	(0.296)	(0.294)	(0.286)
Votes share B–F					−1.8153***	−1.8924***	−1.8723***	−2.0196***
					(0.534)	(0.491)	(0.476)	(0.486)
Votes share communists						−5.3579**	−5.1802**	−5.5876**
						(2.278)	(2.233)	(2.227)
Total deaths 1920–21								0.0090
								(0.012)
Constant	0.2189	−0.0345	0.8499	−4.2787**	0.4155	0.4107	0.5377	0.5156
	(1.219)	(1.243)	(1.124)	(2.129)	(0.826)	(0.876)	(0.897)	(0.875)
Observations	16,320	16,320	16,320	16,320	16,080	16,080	16,080	16,080

Note: GE, general events; VE, violent events; VF, violent neofascist events; NVF, non-violent neofascist events. GDP per capita is in thousands of lire, work force in thousands of people, and the male literacy rate is per 100 people. Robust standard errors in parentheses. ***$p<0.01$, **$p<0.05$, *$p<0.1$.

Source: authors' calculations using study data.

Table A10: ZINB regressions—spatial lag

Variables	(1) GE	(2) VE	(3) VF (I)	(4) NVF	(5) VF (II)	(6) VF (III)	(7) VF (IV)	(8) VF (V)
PNF membership in 1920s (dummy variable)	1.6889**	1.7452***	1.5339***	0.5373	1.0875***	1.2617***	1.2450***	1.2697***
	(0.728)	(0.590)	(0.505)	(0.641)	(0.398)	(0.446)	(0.444)	(0.489)
Spatial lag	1.7006**	1.9404**	1.5645**	3.0434**	1.6438**	2.0548***	1.9906***	2.0150***
	(0.829)	(0.798)	(0.753)	(1.424)	(0.644)	(0.662)	(0.655)	(0.738)
IntSpatialLag	−2.5078**	−2.6245**	−2.0825**	−1.7846	−1.3630*	−1.7644**	−1.7201**	−1.7530**
	(1.222)	(1.029)	(0.839)	(1.323)	(0.708)	(0.753)	(0.754)	(0.855)
GDP per capita 1921 ('000)	−0.8138	−1.0056*	−1.1547**	−0.5882	−0.9786**	−0.7334	−0.7575	−0.7518
	(0.572)	(0.552)	(0.512)	(0.988)	(0.496)	(0.547)	(0.563)	(0.551)
Work force 1921 ('000)	0.0045***	0.0044***	0.0037***	0.0030	0.0037***	0.0036***	0.0037***	0.0037***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Male literacy 1921 (per 100)	−0.0121	−0.0086	−0.0004	0.0162	−0.0039	−0.0146	−0.0141	−0.0147
	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)
South	−0.2862	−0.4075	−0.1076	0.1066	−0.0013	−0.0029	−0.0190	−0.0175
	(0.415)	(0.352)	(0.347)	(0.606)	(0.356)	(0.333)	(0.332)	(0.333)
Votes share B–F					−1.7539***	−1.8234***	−1.8019***	−1.7623***
					(0.483)	(0.398)	(0.390)	(0.512)
Votes share communists						−6.4158***	−6.2525***	−6.1645***
						(2.181)	(2.137)	(2.108)
Total deaths 1920–21								−0.0021
								(0.017)
Constant	1.2989	0.9995	1.3900	−3.3377**	1.2816	1.4897	1.5461	1.5597
	(1.450)	(1.263)	(1.151)	(1.693)	(0.994)	(1.052)	(1.063)	(1.092)
Observations	16,320	16,320	16,320	16,320	16,080	16,080	16,080	16,080

Note: GE, general events; VE, violent events; VF, violent neofascist events; NVF, non-violent neofascist events. GDP per capita is in thousands of lire, work force in thousands of people, and the male literacy rate is per 100 people. Robust standard errors in parentheses. ***$p<0.01$, **$p<0.05$, *$p<0.1$.

Source: authors' calculations using study data.

Table A11: ZINB regressions—control function approach

Variables	(1) GE	(2) VE	(3) VF (I)	(4) NVF	(5) VF (II)	(6) VF (III)	(7) VF (IV)	(8) VF (V)
PNF membership in 1920s ('000)	0.3546***	0.3661***	0.3476***	0.2696*	0.3256***	0.3266***	0.3294***	0.4067***
	(0.031)	(0.033)	(0.048)	(0.155)	(0.066)	(0.054)	(0.060)	(0.072)
Residuals PNF membership in 1920s ('000)	−0.3542***	−0.3600***	−0.3124***	−0.2239	−0.2890***	−0.2787***	−0.2824***	−0.3592***
	(0.034)	(0.037)	(0.053)	(0.154)	(0.070)	(0.058)	(0.065)	(0.078)
GDP per capita 1921 ('000)	−1.6757***	−1.7349***	−1.6564***	−0.4937	−0.9488***	−0.6201***	−0.6446***	−0.5795**
	(0.146)	(0.172)	(0.253)	(0.912)	(0.226)	(0.215)	(0.168)	(0.242)
Work force 1921 ('000)	0.0022***	0.0018***	0.0013***	−0.0002	0.0009*	0.0007	0.0007	0.0007
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.000)
Male literacy 1921 (per 100)	0.0034	0.0106**	0.0079	0.0269	0.0009	−0.0049	−0.0048	−0.0123
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.009)	(0.018)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.011)
South	−0.1395	−0.1801	0.2040	0.1381	0.4180**	0.3745**	0.3703*	0.4038**
	(0.098)	(0.135)	(0.141)	(0.389)	(0.178)	(0.169)	(0.191)	(0.196)
Votes share B–F					−3.1976***	−3.1291***	−3.1570***	−3.1976***
					(0.393)	(0.401)	(0.491)	(0.470)
Votes share communists						−8.2584***	−8.2633***	−8.6378***
						(1.271)	(1.292)	(1.385)
Total deaths 1920–21								−0.0349***
								(0.012)
Constant	2.5242***	1.6435***	1.9757***	−3.8433*	1.0855**	0.9214*	0.9815***	1.2730**
	(0.264)	(0.365)	(0.480)	(2.296)	(0.514)	(0.478)	(0.379)	(0.506)
Observations	16,320	16,320	16,320	16,320	16,080	16,080	16,080	16,080

Note: GE, general events; VE, violent events; VF, violent neofascist events; NVF, non-violent neofascist events. GDP per capita is in thousands of lire, work force and PNF membership are in thousands of people, and the male literacy rate is per 100 people. Bootstrapped standard errors in parentheses. ***$p<0.01$, **$p<0.05$, *$p<0.1$.

Source: authors' calculations using study data.

Table A12: ZINB regressions—alternative mechanisms

Variables	(1) Violent neofascist events	(2) Violent neofascist events
PNF membership in 1920s (dummy variable)	0.7976***	0.7477***
	(0.197)	(0.187)
GDP per capita 1921 ('000)	−0.4165	−0.4605
	(0.475)	(0.466)
Work force 1921 ('000)	0.0029***	0.0029***
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Male literacy 1921 (per 100)	−0.0042	−0.0021
	(0.016)	(0.015)
South	−0.1279	−0.1219
	(0.295)	(0.287)
Votes share B–F	−1.8743***	−2.0161***
	(0.476)	(0.486)
Votes share communists	−5.2183**	−5.6196**
	(2.226)	(2.227)
Total deaths 1920–21		0.0087
		(0.012)
Constant	0.5356	0.5139
	(0.899)	(0.878)
Observations	16,080	16,080

Note: GDP per capita is measured in thousands of lire; work force is measured in thousands of people, and the male literacy rate is measured per 100 people. Robust standard errors in parentheses. ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1.

Source: authors' calculations using study data.

Table A13: ZINB regressions—state repression

Variables	(1) Violent neofascist events	(2) Quartile I	(3) Quartile II	(4) Quartile III	(5) Quartile IV
PNF membership in 1920s (dummy variable)	0.7241***	0.8441	1.2960**	−0.0879	2.2888***
	(0.189)	(0.561)	(0.534)	(0.220)	(0.746)
GDP per capita 1921 ('000)	−0.5438	0.1371	1.9790***	−1.0829	2.0723**
	(0.450)	(1.519)	(0.701)	(0.689)	(0.960)
Male literacy 1921 (per 100)	−0.0058	0.0142	−0.0190	0.0346**	−0.0864
	(0.014)	(0.033)	(0.022)	(0.015)	(0.083)
Work force 1921 ('000)	0.0030***	−0.0077	0.0050	0.0039***	−0.0012
	(0.001)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.001)	(0.001)
South	−0.2680	0.4722	2.1381***	0.0622	−1.4578
	(0.259)	(0.694)	(0.387)	(0.236)	(2.026)
Votes share B–F	−1.8187***	−0.4089	−1.4915	−0.6662	−2.4967
	(0.482)	(3.111)	(1.273)	(0.565)	(2.800)
Votes share communists	−4.6640**	2.0392	−19.3444***	−10.3122***	−16.0916
	(2.012)	(3.353)	(2.899)	(3.840)	(14.610)
Total deaths 1920–21	0.0033	−0.0402	0.0238	0.0163	−0.0674**
	(0.013)	(0.049)	(0.026)	(0.010)	(0.030)
Constant	1.0502	−1.1196	−6.0060***	−0.5409	1.3953
	(0.745)	(3.344)	(1.965)	(1.020)	(4.733)
Observations	16,080	5,040	3,600	3,600	3,840

Note: GDP per capita is in thousands of lire, work force in thousands of people, and the male literacy rate is per 100 people. Robust standard errors in parentheses. ***$p<0.01$, **$p<0.05$, *$p<0.1$.

Source: authors' calculations using study data.

Table A14: ZINB regressions—retaliation

Variables	(1) GE	(2) VE	(3) VF (I)	(4) NVF	(5) VF (II)	(6) VF (III)	(7) VF (IV)	(8) VF (V)
PNF membership in 1920 (dummy variable)	0.6694*	0.7343**	0.7354***	0.1005	0.7214***	0.8653***	0.8367***	0.7508***
	(0.381)	(0.330)	(0.247)	(0.497)	(0.203)	(0.207)	(0.193)	(0.190)
IntPostDeaths	−0.0007	−0.0008	−0.0004	0.0004	−0.0003	−0.0007	−0.0006	−0.0006
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
PostDeaths	−0.0005	−0.0006**	−0.0015***	−0.0015	−0.0012***	−0.0007	−0.0008*	−0.0008*
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
GDP per capita 1921 ('000)	−0.0870	−0.1661	−0.2480	0.4461	−0.1935	0.0545	−0.0117	−0.0717
	(0.490)	(0.448)	(0.416)	(0.887)	(0.405)	(0.412)	(0.438)	(0.407)
Work force 1921 ('000)	0.0042***	0.0038***	0.0035***	0.0024	0.0033***	0.0030***	0.0032***	0.0031***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Male literacy 1921 (per 100)	0.0045	0.0106	0.0157	0.0280	0.0112	0.0030	0.0033	0.0066
	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.017)	(0.026)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.015)
South	−0.0308	−0.1157	0.3377	0.4795	0.3228	0.2865	0.2620	0.2773
	(0.419)	(0.349)	(0.337)	(0.559)	(0.326)	(0.316)	(0.310)	(0.295)
Votes share B–F					−1.2477**	−1.3948***	−1.3661***	−1.5296***
					(0.558)	(0.527)	(0.525)	(0.532)
Votes share communists						−5.0096**	−4.7251*	−5.0566**
						(2.534)	(2.501)	(2.484)
Total deaths 1920–21								0.0115
								(0.014)
Constant	−1.5110	−2.1966**	−1.9573**	−6.1116*	−1.6164*	−1.5438	−1.3793	−1.4538
	(1.254)	(1.056)	(0.982)	(3.322)	(0.897)	(0.972)	(0.972)	(0.942)
Observations	16,320	16,320	16,320	16,320	16,080	16,080	16,080	16,080

Note: GE, general events; VE, violent events; VF, violent neofascist events; NVF, non-violent neofascist events. GDP per capita is in thousands of lire, work force in thousands of people, and the male literacy rate is per 100 people. Robust standard errors in parentheses. ***$p<0.01$, **$p<0.05$, *$p<0.1$.

Source: authors' calculations using study data.

Table A15: ZINB regressions—placebo test and reverse causality

Variables	(1) Same month	(2) One month before	(3) Two months before	(4) Logit (I)	(5) Logit (II)
PNF membership in 1920s (dummy variable)	0.8008***	0.7957***	0.8135***		
	(0.127)	(0.282)	(0.283)		
Freq VF				−0.2276	−0.2216
				(0.157)	(0.155)
Freq VLT					−0.0563
					(0.068)
IntPlaceboDummy	−0.0906				
	(0.252)				
PlaceboAppointmentMoI	0.1139				
	(0.194)				
IntPlaceboDummyBefore 1M		−0.0212			
		(0.128)			
PlaceboAppointmentMoIBefore 1M		0.0398			
		(0.105)			
IntPlaceboDummyBefore 2M			−0.0650		
			(0.120)		
PlaceboAppointmentMoIBefore 2M			0.0722		
			(0.076)		
GDP per capita 1921 ('000)	−0.9983***	−0.9979**	−1.0011**		
	(0.215)	(0.486)	(0.485)		
Work force 1921 ('000)	0.0033***	0.0033***	0.0033***		
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)		
Male literacy 1921 (per 100)	0.0074	0.0075	0.0075		
	(0.008)	(0.018)	(0.018)		
South	−0.2447	−0.2423	−0.2425	−0.0044	−0.0071
	(0.177)	(0.345)	(0.344)	(0.006)	(0.007)
Average population 1971–81				0.0000	0.0000
				(0.000)	(0.000)
GDP industry 1971 (Billion)				0.0000	0.0001
				(0.000)	(0.000)
GDP industry 1971 (Billion)				−0.0000	−0.0000**
				(0.000)	(0.000)
GDP per capita 1981 ('000)				0.0000	0.0000
				(0.000)	(0.000)
GDP per capita 1971 ('000)				0.0000	−0.0000
				(0.000)	(0.000)
Constant	0.8486*	0.8481	0.8368	−2.4101***	−2.4123***
	(0.483)	(1.119)	(1.117)	(0.011)	(0.012)
Observations	16,320	16,320	16,320	8,640	8,640

Note: VF, violent neofascist events; VLT, violent left-wing terrorism. GDP per capita is in thousands of lire, work force in thousands of people, the male literacy rate is per 100 people, and GDP of industry is in billions of lire. Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Source: authors' calculations using study data.

Table A16: ZINB regressions—elections

Variables	(1) Same month	(2) One month before	(3) Two months before	(4) One month after	(5) Two months after
PNF membership in 1920s (dummy variable)	0.7747***	0.7798***	0.7995***	0.7824***	0.7863***
	(0.124)	(0.281)	(0.282)	(0.285)	(0.288)
IntElectionsDummy	0.6546				
	(0.645)				
Elections	−0.1773				
	(0.549)				
IntElectionsDummyBefore 1M		0.2575			
		(0.397)			
ElectionsBefore 1M		0.0261			
		(0.303)			
IntElectionsDummyBefore 2M			−0.1418		
			(0.289)		
ElectionsBefore 2M			0.4534**		
			(0.225)		
IntElectionsDummyAfter 1M				0.5629	
				(0.554)	
ElectionsAfter 1M				−0.6365	
				(0.532)	
IntElectionsDummyAfter 2M					0.5560
					(0.485)
ElectionsAfter 2M					−0.8712*
					(0.472)
GDP per capita 1921 ('000)	−0.9834***	−0.9913**	−1.0016**	−0.9909**	−0.9979**
	(0.214)	(0.486)	(0.489)	(0.486)	(0.486)
Work force 1921 ('000)	0.0033***	0.0033***	0.0033***	0.0033***	0.0033***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Male literacy 1921 (per 100)	0.0070	0.0072	0.0075	0.0074	0.0079
	(0.008)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.017)
South	−0.2396	−0.2445	−0.2488	−0.2352	−0.2308
	(0.177)	(0.345)	(0.345)	(0.344)	(0.341)
Constant	0.8579*	0.8647	0.8478	0.8473	0.8267
	(0.482)	(1.114)	(1.116)	(1.116)	(1.111)
Observations	16,320	16,320	16,320	16,320	16,320

Note: GDP per capita is in thousands of lire, work force in thousands of people, and the male literacy rate is per 100 people. Robust standard errors in parentheses. ***$p<0.01$, **$p<0.05$, *$p<0.1$.

Source: authors' calculations using study data.