The political legacies of wartime resistance

How local communities in Italy keep anti-fascist sentiments alive

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Abstract: Can past wartime experiences other than violence have long-term effects on political attitudes and behaviours? How are these legacies sustained across generations and beyond those who directly experienced war? We explore these questions in Italy, a country whose democratic institutions were forged after a civil war (1943–45) fought between an armed resistance movement and Nazi–Fascist forces. We argue that local experiences of resistance left anti-fascist legacies that can be translated into contemporary political action. We detail a process of community-based intergenerational transmission linking past wartime experiences and recent political outcomes consisting of three core activities—memorialization, localization, and mobilization—put forward by memory entrepreneurs. To empirically substantiate this argument, we use a multi-method design that combines a statistical analysis of original georeferenced data across Italian municipalities and a within-case analysis of a purposely selected locality. Our study advances the growing literature on the long-term political legacies of war by improving our understanding of the processes and mechanisms underlying the transmission of political memories over time and across generations. Moreover, it emphasizes armed resistance as a critical source of war's long-term political legacies and explores political effects beyond electoral and party politics.

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1   Introduction

Many European countries have experienced intense episodes of armed resistance to foreign occupation and authoritarian rule, especially during World War II. Examples include the *partigiani* in Italy, the *maquisards* in Vichy France, the *andartes* in Greece, the *partizani* in the former Yugoslavia, and the underground Jewish resistance in ghettos and concentration camps throughout Eastern Europe. These experiences were essential for post-war national regeneration and political reconstruction and constituted a foundational moment for establishing democratic systems in many European countries. However, contrary to the principles, identities, and institutions upheld by resistance movements, in some of these countries far-right parties with explicit fascist and neo-Nazi ideologies have recently emerged or strengthened. The success of these parties, and mainstream political forces' inability to muster the consensus to curb them, questions the notion that critical past events can shape current political dynamics.

We argue that the legacy of resistance *can* shape contemporary politics in meaningful ways. The formation and constant reinforcement of localized collective memories about resistance extend the reach of anti-fascist preferences beyond those who lived through war, and can be translated into various forms of political action. To explain how past wartime experiences are linked to contemporary political behaviour, we detail a community-based transmission process based on three core activities (memorialization, localization, and mobilization) carried out by national and local actors invested in preserving memory—what we call 'memory entrepreneurs'.

We empirically evaluate this argument in Italy, a country that experienced an intense period of armed partisan resistance against Nazi–Fascist forces during its civil war (1943–45). Leveraging spatial variation in the presence of partisan bands and a novel behavioural measure of anti-fascist preferences from a recent nationwide, grassroots anti-fascist campaign, we first establish a statistical association between an area's experiences of resistance during the war and contemporary anti-fascist preferences. This association is robust to multiple model specifications and helps us cast doubt on key alternative explanations. In a second step, we offer qualitative within-case evidence of the theorized process linking past experiences of resistance to contemporary support for the anti-fascist campaign. We illustrate how physical and experiential memorialization, anchored in local referents and led by a committed group of memory entrepreneurs, helps explain how the legacies of the resistance have been kept alive, transmitted across generations, and tapped into to mobilize support for the campaign.

This study makes three core contributions to the growing literature on the long-term political legacies of war. First, we theorize a process of community-based intergenerational transmission and activation and provide detailed within-case evidence of how it operates. In doing so, we heed recent calls to go beyond estimating effects to explore a broader range of empirical strategies to address the challenges of tracing the mechanisms through which historical legacies are transmitted (e.g., Balcells and Solomon 2020: 177; Charnysh and Peisakhin 2022; Davenport et al. 2019; Simpser et al. 2018: 434; Walden and Zhukov 2020). We rely on different research techniques and traditions to provide mechanistic evidence of how local communities form, preserve, and activate collective memories irrespective of family ties and formal institutions. In a second contribution, by showing that experiences of wartime resistance can serve as powerful referents for creating and preserving collective memories that can be mobilized to shape political outcomes, we advance this scholarship beyond a common 'violent bias' in war studies (Arjona and Castilla 2022; for some exceptions see Costalli and Ruggeri 2018; Fontana et al. 2021; Rizkallah 2016). Finally, by focusing on contemporary grassroots political processes and less institutionalized politics, we join recent studies (e.g., Arias and Calle 2021–22; Lazarev 2019; Osorio et al. 2021) in shifting attention away from the dominant focus on the persistent effects of wartime experiences on electoral and party politics.

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Our study provides new evidence that past wartime events shape contemporary political behaviours and offers novel insights into how local communities can preserve and transmit collective memories to keep legacies alive and activate these memories to alter political outcomes. As such, our work provides further evidence that symbolic politics can have real, non-symbolic political consequences (Balcells et al. 2021; Rozenas and Vlasenko 2022; Villamil and Balcells 2021).

2 Wartime political legacies

Prior research has explored how exposure to violence affects the social and political attitudes of combatants and war survivors (Bauer et al. 2016; Blattman 2009; Gilligan et al. 2014; Voors et al. 2012). Recent studies have also demonstrated that war can have traceable long-term political effects on both the demand and supply sides of the electoral market (Costalli and Ruggeri 2015a, 2018; Fontana et al. 2021; Fouka and Voth 2022; Rozenas et al. 2017; Villamil 2020). For example, Western Ukrainian communities exposed to Soviet violence during the 1940s were less likely to vote for pro-Russian parties six decades later (Rozenas et al. 2017), and residents of Greek prefectures that suffered massacres by occupying German forces during World War II more strongly supported anti-German parties during the 2009 debt crisis (Fouka and Voth 2022). Wartime victimization can lead to the rejection of the political identities, ideas, and institutions associated with the perpetrator (Balcells 2012; Fontana et al. 2021; Fouka and Voth 2022; Lupu and Peisakhin 2017; Rozenas et al. 2017).

This work has made great strides in improving our understanding of the long-term effects of war. However, its focus has been narrow in two important respects. First, reflecting a more general bias toward violence in war studies (Arjona and Castilla 2022), much of the work on historical legacies has focused on the persistent effects of past victimization (e.g., Balcells 2012; Fouka and Voth 2022; Rozenas and Zhukov 2019; Rozenas et al. 2017; Villamil 2020; Zhukov and Talibova 2018). With few exceptions (Arias and Calle 2021–22; Costalli and Ruggeri 2015a, 2018; Fontana et al. 2021; Osorio et al. 2021), whether (and how) other wartime dynamics can have long-lasting political effects have been largely overlooked. Second, most of this work has concentrated on electoral and party politics. Few scholars have looked beyond the ballot box (e.g., Arias and Calle 2021–22; Lazarev 2019; Osorio et al. 2021), so we know less about how wartime experiences shape grassroots and less institutionalized politics over the long term. We help broaden the focus of this body of work by examining the long-term effects of armed resistance on a grassroots political campaign to pass a bill banning fascist propaganda.

Research on the long-term effects of war experiences, and historical legacies more generally, has also explored how legacies are transmitted. Such legacies have been found to be transmitted via family socialization (Lupu and Peisakhin 2017; Nunn and Wantchekon 2011; Voigtländer and Voth 2012), community composition (Charnysh and Peisakhin 2022), peer and neighbour effects (Cho et al. 2006), educational and religious institutions (Wittenberg 2006), and political entrepreneurs (Costalli and Ruggeri 2015a). Moreover, scholars have identified multiple conditions under which the past can affect the present, including the presence of clandestine networks (Villamil 2020), the absence of credible threats of retribution (Rozenas and Zhukov 2019), the degree to which collective memory is institutionalized, and the extent to which present events resemble the past (Fouka and Voth 2022).

Yet, how legacies persist over long periods of time, despite many changes, remains a central theoretical and empirical puzzle in both the general literature on historical legacies and the strand focusing on wartime legacies. There is no consensus regarding what transmits, maintains, and aggregates historical legacies (Balcells and Solomon 2020; Davenport et al. 2019; Simpser et al. 2018; Walden and Zhukov 2020). This is partly because, notwithstanding the remarkable progress that has been made in identifying and estimating the effects of the past on the present, these studies rarely aim to trace the processes that link past experiences to contemporary outcomes within specific cases. Advancing our understanding
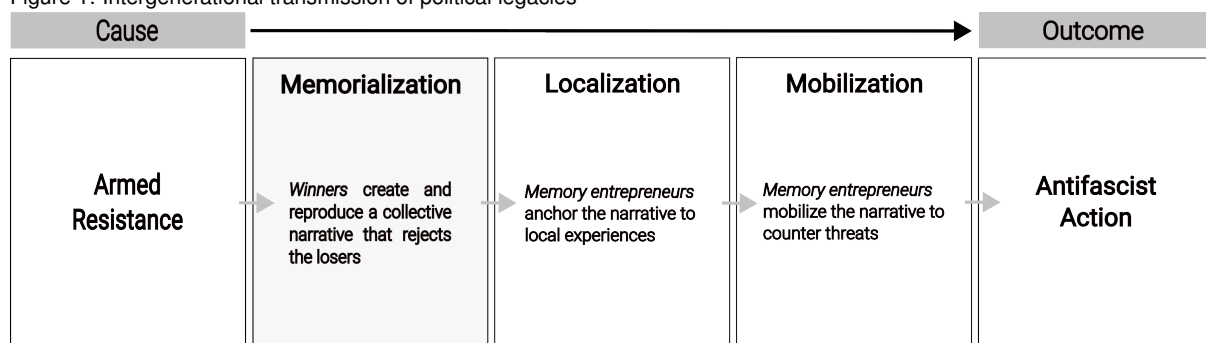
of *how* legacies are transmitted requires new research strategies to complement those typically used in the quantitative literature on the long-term legacies of war. We advance current debates on legacy transmission by carefully theorizing a process of community-based intergenerational transmission and using recent advancements in process tracing to provide detailed within-case qualitative evidence of how transmission operates.

3   Wartime legacies and the process of intergenerational transmission

How can past experiences of armed resistance affect current political attitudes and behaviour? We argue that people who live in areas that historically resisted external threats during war are likely to uphold political preferences that align with those of the resistance and to reject the identities, ideologies, and institutions the resisters fought against. These areas constitute particularly favourable environments for the persistence of historical legacies because they can rely on physically and socially proximate referents to preserve and mobilize collective memories.[1] Collective memories structure a community's understanding of the past and help orient those within it. As such, memories feed collective identities, which in turn inform behaviours (Antze and Lambek 1996; Eyerman 2001, 2004; Fouka and Voth 2022; Shamir and Arian 1999).

For collective memories to link the past and present, they must survive generational changes and reach beyond those who directly or indirectly experienced it. We contend that this is achieved through a three-step community-based transmission process: memorialization, localization, and mobilization (Figure 1).[2] *Memorialization* is the process of publicly creating and preserving memories of a historically defining experience or event (Jelin 2007). To forge collective memories, actors we call 'memory entrepreneurs' recall past events to promote a particular interpretation of the past, amplifying some actions and events and countering others, and legitimizing some actors while disavowing and condemning others. As such, memorialization draws attention to specific wartime experiences to reorient thinking about past experiences and the actors involved.

Figure 1: Intergenerational transmission of political legacies

Cause				Outcome
Armed Resistance	**Memorialization** *Winners create and reproduce a collective narrative that rejects the losers*	**Localization** *Memory entrepreneurs anchor the narrative to local experiences*	**Mobilization** *Memory entrepreneurs mobilize the narrative to counter threats*	**Antifascist Action**

Source: authors' compilation.

Physical spaces contain information about the past. Therefore, the most common manifestation of memorialization is physical (Villamil and Balcells 2021). Symbolic memorial landscapes (in the form of monuments, statues, engraved plaques, and street and square names) can shape how people value, iden-

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[1] We follow Halwachs' (1992) classical understanding of collective memory as a social group's shared, mutually acknowledged history reinforced via commemoration.

[2] Walden and Zhukov (2020) distinguish between persistence mechanisms (which focus on the durability of effects *within* directly exposed individuals) and transmission mechanisms (which concentrate on effects *across* individuals). See also Charnysh (2015).

tify with, and debate the past (Crampton 2001; Johnson 1995; Rozenas and Vlasenko 2022; Villamil and Balcells 2021). These 'sites of memory' (Nora 1989: 7) are particularly effective at preserving collective memories because they make memory visible for all residents and become a permanent part of public life for all members of a community regardless of their personal or family ties to the war. Yet, memorialization also has experiential manifestations such as ceremonies, commemorations, demonstrations, rituals, and festivals. These symbolic practices complement physical memorialization as they allow targeting specific segments of the population and actively involve community members in forming and preserving collective memories.

Together, physical and experiential memorialization project collective memories onto a shared social and political landscape and institutionalize them. Institutionalized collective narratives that have been made concrete in permanent symbols and reinforced through regular interactive practices are more likely to resonate with individuals who did not live through the events being memorialized (Balcells et al. 2021; Hamber et al. 2010). Memorialization is thus a vital vehicle for intergenerational transmission.

Yet, for these collective memories to more effectively shape identities and guide behaviour, they need to be *localized*. Narratives of past foundational events are commonly generic, formed and promoted by national-level memory entrepreneurs (usually the winners of the war). Local memory entrepreneurs use local referents—such as battles won, brave leaders, or key spaces—to make these generic collective narratives more easily relatable and accessible to communities. By localizing memorialization efforts, memory entrepreneurs leverage the social and physical proximity of the memorialized experience to increase resonance and strengthen self-identification.

Even when localized collective memories effectively forge collective identities and shape political preferences, they do not automatically translate into political action. Therefore, the final step in the process is *mobilization*. The same local memory entrepreneurs who embedded collective narratives locally help translate the political identities and preferences forged by such narratives into concrete political action. Rather than convincing people of the importance of specific political ideas and values, mobilization chiefly consists of alerting people to existing threats and facilitating political action—such as demonstrating and voting—to counter the work of 'revisionist' agents or potential threats to the values, identities, and institutions upheld by the collective narratives in question.

While local memory entrepreneurs could try to mobilize collective memories at any time, it is easier to do so when the present circumstances resemble and recall past experiences—what Fouka and Voth (2022) call the 'associativeness of memory'. The more that people associate current threats with the values, norms, and ideals evoked by collective memories, the more salient the past will be in their minds, and the more likely they are to be mobilized into political action. Association increases the salience of the past, making it more likely to influence behaviour (Fouka and Voth 2022; Rozenas and Vlasenko 2022).

Memory entrepreneurs are individual or collective actors deeply invested in preserving, transmitting, and activating collective memories. They are the crucial entities behind memorialization, localization, and mobilization. While not necessarily professional politicians operating in the electoral arena, their role resembles that of 'political entrepreneurs' in electoral and party politics (Costalli and Ruggeri 2015a; De Vries and Hobolt 2020; Tavits 2013). Not only do they mobilize people into political action when collective narratives (or the ideals and values they uphold) are under threat, they also constantly work to increase the salience of specific issues and ensure that collective memories are used as a lens through which to interpret and react to contemporary politics. While memory entrepreneurs can be individuals, collective actors such as civic associations tend to play a more decisive role in the process (see Villamil 2020; Wittenberg 2006) since they are more likely to engage over the long term, and more likely to cut across existing local divisions, and have more influence within communities.

4   The case of Italy

4.1   Partisan resistance during the Italian civil war and its post-war legacies

Italy's withdrawal from World War II in September 1943 and the signing of the Armistice of Cassibile with the Allied forces triggered the Germans to invade the country to prevent the Allies' advance from the south. Germany rapidly defeated the Italian forces, freed Benito Mussolini, occupied northern and central Italy, and established the Italian Social Republic (*Repubblica Sociale Italiana*, RSI), the last incarnation of the Italian fascist state. This led to a bloody civil war that lasted from September 1943 to May 1945, and inflicted 117,000 battle-related deaths (Istituto Centrale di Statistica 1957) and killed 10,000 civilians (Dondi 1999: 23).[3]

The occupation and establishment of the RSI triggered fierce resistance among various sectors of the Italian population. The National Liberation Committee (*Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale*, CLN) organized partisan resistance bands, which reached 100,000–300,000 fighters by the end of the war (Bocca 1995: 493–94; Corni 2000: 178; Rochat 1975). While most partisans fought in communist brigades, the resistance movement also had important Catholic and liberal components (Bocca 1995; De Rosa 1998; Pavone 1994: 250–303; Valiani et al. 1971; Vecchio 2022: ch. 5–8).[4]

Partisan resistance played a fundamental role in the country's liberation from Nazi Germany and the RSI, which led to the establishment of the new democratic republic—enshrined in political myth as 'the "child" of the resistance' Corni (2000: 180). Virtually all the main political parties represented in the first democratically elected parliament had participated in the resistance movement. As in other European countries, the importance of partisan resistance in Italy rests in its practical contribution to the liberation as much as its role in national reconstruction (Lagrou 1999). Partisan resistance became a foundational narrative for national identity building. It offered a redemptive device to re-establish a positive image of the Italian people after almost 20 years of widespread acquiescence to the fascist regime (Gentile 2011), and to build a narrative to consolidate the democratic ideals espoused and fiercely defended by the Resistance.

Partisan veterans, particularly from the communist brigades, transformed the experience of wartime resistance into a collective narrative to be transmitted to future generations. This narrative involved praising the partisans' contribution to the country's liberation and rejecting the identity, ideas, norms, and institutions of Fascism. To forge a collective national memory of resistance, this narrative was quickly materialized in marches, plaques, monuments, and streets and squares names throughout the country (Gentile 2011). Medals of military gallantry were awarded to towns that contributed significantly to the Resistance, and Historical Institutes of Resistance were created to collect, conserve, and study it. The 25 April became a national holiday to commemorate the Liberation.

These commemoration efforts institutionalized the collective memory of the Italian Resistance at the national level. Recent research has shown that collective memory is more likely to influence present-day behaviour if it has been institutionalized (Fouka and Voth 2022). Our paper complements these findings by showing that these national-level forms of memorialization, even if highly institutionalized, are more powerful when anchored to concrete local experiences.

Figure 2: Signatures for the Anti-fascist Law in Italian municipalities, March 2021
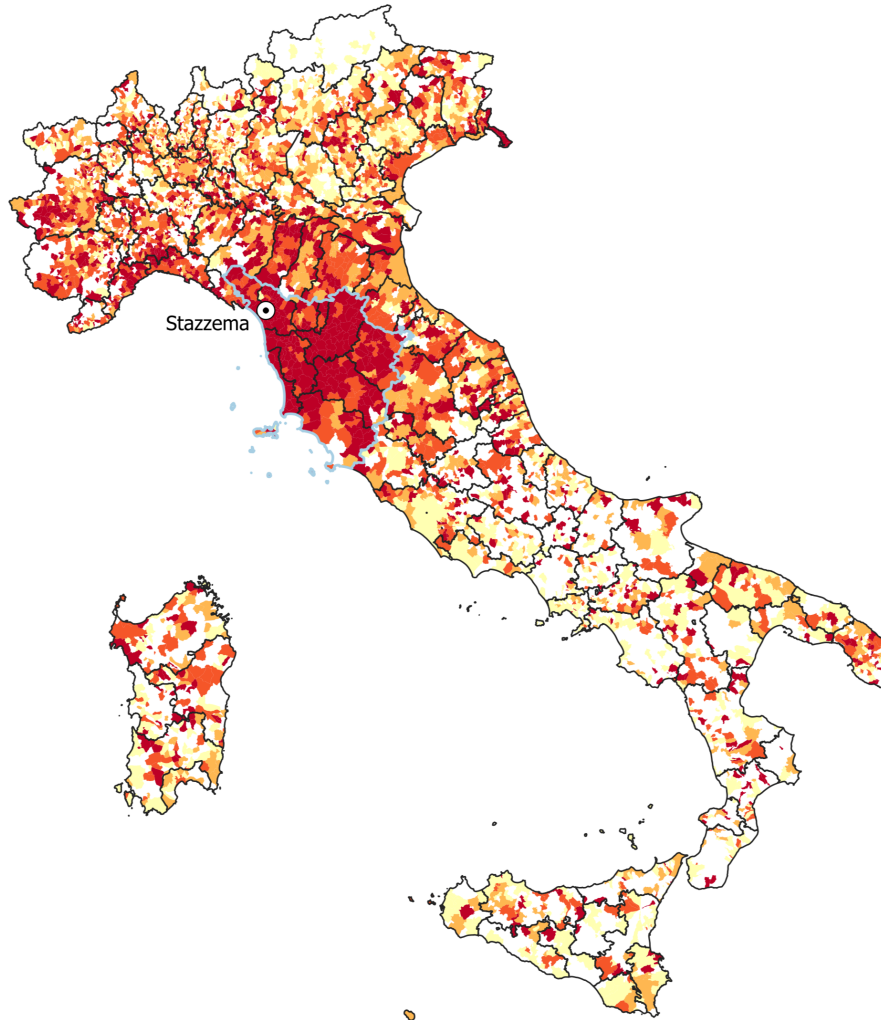
Note: the darker–lighter gradient filling indicates quintiles of the distribution of the proportion of signatures over the municipal population. Darker colour indicates a higher proportion. Black lines indicate 2021 provincial borders. The white circle indicates the Tuscan municipality of Stazzema, whose mayor initiated the campaign, and the light blue line highlights Toscana's regional borders.

Source: authors' compilation.

4.2   The Anti-fascist Law campaign, 2020–21

In 2020, in response to increasing support for far-right parties and movements, including openly neo-Nazi or neo-fascist organizations, the mayor of Sant'Anna di Stazzema, a town in the Toscana region, launched a bottom-up popular legislative initiative (*legge di iniziativa popolare*) to ban neo-Nazi and neo-fascist propaganda (known as the Anti-fascist Law).[5] For this type of initiative to be discussed in Parliament, at least 50,000 signatures from registered voters must be collected. Between 19 October 2020 and 31 March 2021, registered voters from the entire country could sign in support of the initiative at their local town hall or, in some cases, at stands organized by campaign promoters. Even though the campaign was launched amid strict COVID-related restrictions, supporters could not sign online.

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[3] For an analysis of victimization patterns during the Italian civil war, see Costalli et al. (2020).

[4] In our data, 56 per cent of the municipalities that participated in the Resistance had at least one partisan band linked to the Communist Party (see Appendix Table A1).

[5] In August 1944, in an operation against the Italian Resistance, Stazzema experienced one of the worst massacres perpetrated by the Nazi–Fascist forces, killing about 560 local villagers, including more than 100 children.

Although some local chapters of the National Association of Italian Partisans (*Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d'Italia*, ANPI) helped collecting signatures, the Association was not officially involved in the campaign.[6] Yet the campaign still managed to collect 240,000 signatures nationwide (Figure 2 maps their distribution across Italian municipalities). We exploit this fine-grained, contemporary measure of anti-fascist mobilization to study the local legacies of the Resistance movement.

5 Research design

We adopt an integrative multi-method research design (Seawright 2016) that combines the statistical analysis of geo-localized cross-municipal data and in-depth within-case analysis based on original qualitative data collected during fieldwork. The statistical analysis first establishes a robust association between the local presence of partisan bands in the 1940s and current anti-fascist preferences at the municipal level and casts doubt on important alternative explanations. Then, the case study traces the process underlying this association, offering within-case evidence of the presence and operation of the theorized process of transmission and activation.

5.1 Quantitative component

Our statistical analysis examines how local historical experiences of partisan resistance explain spatial variation in contemporary anti-fascist preferences. We measure anti-fascist preferences using the number of signatures per municipality in the 2020–21 Anti-fascist Law campaign. The count of signatures, which we obtained from the campaign promoters, gives us a unique opportunity to assess the strength of anti-fascist preferences across Italian municipalities using a behavioural measure other than electoral politics, which originated in a grassroots campaign. Our main explanatory variable measures the presence of organized armed resistance.[7] We digitalized maps from Baldissara (2000) and created a dataset indicating which Italian municipalities hosted partisan bands between 8 September 1943 and 25 April 1945 (see Figure 3).[8]

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[6] The ANPI is the official association of Italian partisans. It was founded in 1944.Since 2006, it has opened its membership to any citizen who self-declares as an anti-fascist in an attempt to continue its memory work into the future despite the gradual demise of partisan veterans. As of 2021, the ANPI had 636 branches and 137,140 members.

[7] This includes organized partisan bands, regardless of their political inclinations. It excludes sporadic episodes of resistance. Although such episodes, like the spontaneous uprising against German occupying forces in September 1943 known as the Four Days of Naples, played an important role in the country's liberation, the presence of organized partisan bands better captures the phenomena we are interested in.

[8] Baldissara (2000) is the most complete historical source on the geographic distribution of partisan resistance in the country; it has been used in previous research on the topic (Costalli and Ruggeri 2015a,b, 2018; Fontana et al. 2021). The size of the bands varies from a few dozen individuals to several hundred. No systematic data is available on the number of partisans affiliated with each band. We compile our data using the 2021 municipal borders, when the data used to create our dependent variable was collected. For more details, see Appendix Section A1. We thank Stefano Costalli and Andrea Ruggeri for providing us with their data and offering advice on improving and complementing the dataset.

Figure 3: Distribution of partisan bands, 1943–45

Note: municipalities in red hosted at least one partisan band during the civil war. Black lines indicate 2021 provincial borders.
Source: authors' compilation based on data from Baldissara (2000).

Given that our data for the dependent variable has a marked right-skewed distribution and large dispersion, we estimate variants of a negative binomial model (Cameron and Trivedi 2013), with the following conditional expectation for the signature count:[9]

$$\mathbb{E}(Signatures_{m,p}|Resistance_m, X'_m) = \exp(\alpha + \beta Resistance_m + X'_m \gamma + \mu_p)$$

where m denotes the municipality and p the province. The term $Signatures_{m,p}$ represents the number of signatures collected in the municipality. The binary variable $Resistance_m$ captures the presence of at least one partisan band. X'_m is a vector of municipal-level controls, and α a constant and μ_p province fixed effects.[10]

Since our hypothesized community-based process of transmission of political legacies is less likely to unfold in large urban areas, we exclude municipalities with a population over 25,000 (roughly 5 per

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[9] We report estimates of this model for ease of interpretation in terms of percentage change in the expected number of signatures. Yet, we obtain similar results using a linear model and an inverse hyperbolic sine transformation with our dependent variable as the signatures rate over the municipal population (Bellemare and Wichman 2020). See Appendix Table A5.

[10] Appendix Table A4 reports equivalent results of an alternative specification that substitutes province fixed effects with latitude and longitude to more flexibly control for geographic location while exploiting the variation in signatures at the national level.

cent of the total). We also exclude the five regions where formal resistance bands did not emerge as these areas were liberated by the Allies early or even before the civil war started: the southern regions of Calabria, Campania, Molise, Puglia, Sicilia, and the island of Sardegna.[11] The results remain robust when we do not apply these restrictions (see Appendix Table A6).

Our baseline model includes in the vector X'_m a number of control variables measured close to the date of signature collection. These contemporary controls allow us to adjust our estimates for several competing explanations. However, using contemporary controls could introduce bias into our estimates if the presence of partisan bands during the civil war also affected our control variables (Montgomery et al. 2018; Rosenbaum 1984). For example, the association between local partisan resistance and anti-fascist preferences could mask pre-existing ideological differences among municipalities. To address this possibility, we substitute controls in vector X'_m with a set of variables accounting for municipality characteristics *before* the civil war, using data from Acemoglu et al. (2022).[12] Since municipal boundaries have changed significantly over the last century, we recalculate pre-war variables to reflect today's municipality structure (see Appendix Section A2 for more on this procedure). We discuss both sets of control variables in more detail in Section 6 (for descriptive statistics, see Appendix Tables A2 and A3). Finally, as an additional robustness check, we use three different matching techniques (inverse probability weighting, nearest-neighbour matching, and entropy balancing) to obtain a more comparable set of municipalities with and without resistance bands.

We also cast doubt on four main alternative explanations. First, we address the possibility suggested by campaign organizers that large numbers of signatures resulted from personal and direct contacts between the campaign organizers and local actors by running models that exclude the Toscana region (where the campaign started) and control for the distance to Stazzema (the municipality that initiated the campaign). Second, given that COVID restrictions may have affected signature rates, we run additional models controlling for COVID intensity at the provincial level. Third, we account for the possibility that the observed relationship between past resistance and current support for the Anti-fascist Law may be driven by left-wing preferences from before the war by including the 1919 vote shares for the communists and socialists (taken, again, from Acemoglu et al. 2022) in our models including pre-war controls, and by disaggregating the effect of partisan presence according to the ideological affiliation of the band (socialist and communist vs other bands). Lastly, we further examine our contention that wartime experiences other than violence can generate long-lasting legacies by including measures of Nazi–Fascist violence between 1943 and 1945: total episodes of violence and the number of victims by type (partisan vs civilian casualties). We use data from the *Atlas of Nazist and Fascist Massacres in Italy*, the most complete historical source on Nazi–Fascist violence in Italy during this time.[13]

5.2 Qualitative component

Our study uses qualitative methods at two different stages. First, before conducting the statistical analysis, in December 2021, we conducted fieldwork in Stazzema. Our main goal was to validate our outcome measure by better understanding the process behind the campaign, how the proposal was promoted, and the key actors behind it. We interviewed the mayor of Stazzema and other key local actors involved in the initiative.

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[11] Partisan resistance was organized almost exclusively in the northern and central regions. An exception is Basilicata, where local partisans constituted the free Republic of Maschito for a short period of time before the Liberation (Baldissara 2000).

[12] These data significantly reduce missing values relative to other traditionally used sources. Still, the number of missing values remains high: it ranges from 2,914 to 3,467 out of a total of 7,903 observations, depending on the pre-war year we use (1913, 1919, 1924, 1921). Therefore, we use our model with contemporary controls as our baseline.

[13] The atlas was created in 2016 by the ANPI and the National Institute for the History of the Liberation Movement in Italy. We provide more details on this additional analysis in the Results section.

The second stage, which took place after the statistical analysis, sought to trace the empirical finger-prints of the proposed community-based transmission process to ascertain whether its constitutive parts were present and operated as we hypothesized. In April 2022, we conducted a detailed examination of a small, semi-rural, hilly town in the Emilia-Romagna region. We used three main data collection methods: direct observation, semi-structured interviews with key informants, and examination of local and community-kept archives, including textual and audiovisual documents.[14] As our focus was on processes and mechanisms, we selected a case where we had good reasons to believe the theorized process was present, following guidelines from two different research traditions: nested analysis (Lieberman 2005; Seawright and Gerring 2008) and process tracing (Beach and Pedersen 2018).[15]

First, following guidelines for appropriate case selection for tracing causal mechanisms (Beach and Pedersen 2018), we searched for a municipality where resistance bands were locally active in 1943–45 and a large number of signatures for the Anti-fascist Law were collected. From the population of municipalities that met these criteria, we looked for a case where pre-fieldwork information indicated that basic requisite contextual conditions for the hypothesized process to unfold were present. We sought evidence that (a) the municipality was in the 'national memory map'—for example, the Italian government had recognized its role in the Liberation and (b) the 'usual suspects' engaged in memory work in Italy were present in the municipality—for example, local chapters of ANPI and Italian Recreative and Cultural Association (*Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana*, ARCI).[16] We excluded municipalities in Toscana because, during our first round of fieldwork in Stazzema, campaign organizers indicated that they had relied on personal and direct contact with local actors to collect signatures—a different path from the one we theorized.[17]

Second, following guidelines for nested analysis (Lieberman 2005; Seawright and Gerring 2008), we used the results from our regression analysis to identify a case that exemplified the stable, cross-case association that we found in our statistical analysis. We looked for an 'on-lier' case—a case close to the regression curve estimated by our main model that minimized residuals (Lieberman 2005: 444; Seawright and Gerring 2008: 89). To do so, we normalized the residuals from our negative binomial regression using Anscombe's (1948) formula and restricted the universe of potential cases to those in the smallest decile of the residuals' distribution.

Figure 4 maps the universe of cases for our selection. It plots all municipalities outside of Toscana with a population under 25,000 that had active resistance bands in 1943–45. It also situates our selected case, Corvorano, in relation to other potential cases in terms of residuals and the number of signatures as a proportion of the municipal population.

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[14] To protect the identities of our informants and town residents, we use pseudonyms for places and people. All interviewees signed an informed consent form before the interview; afterwards, they restated that we could use the information shared. All interviews were conducted *in situ* in April 2022, recorded and transcribed verbatim. We reference them as 'Interviews' and provide an ID number and the interviewee's profile (i.e. leader of a civic association, mayor, etc.). Documents retrieved from local and community archives are cited as 'Archival Material', with a keyword for the cited document. Finally, direct observations and informal conversations are referenced as 'Field Notes'.

[15] While these traditions might not be compatible with each other for some research objectives, they are when it comes to tracing a previously hypothesized process within a case.

[16] ARCI is an association traditionally linked to the left that is particularly active in anti-fascist memory work. In 2019, ARCI had 4,450 local chapters across the country.

[17] This might explain the strong support for the campaign we observe in Toscana in places with past experience of resistance *and* in areas where local partisan bands were not present (Figure 2). We further explore this possible confounder when discussing the robustness of our quantitative results.

Figure 4: Potential cases by proximity to the regression curve and signature rate
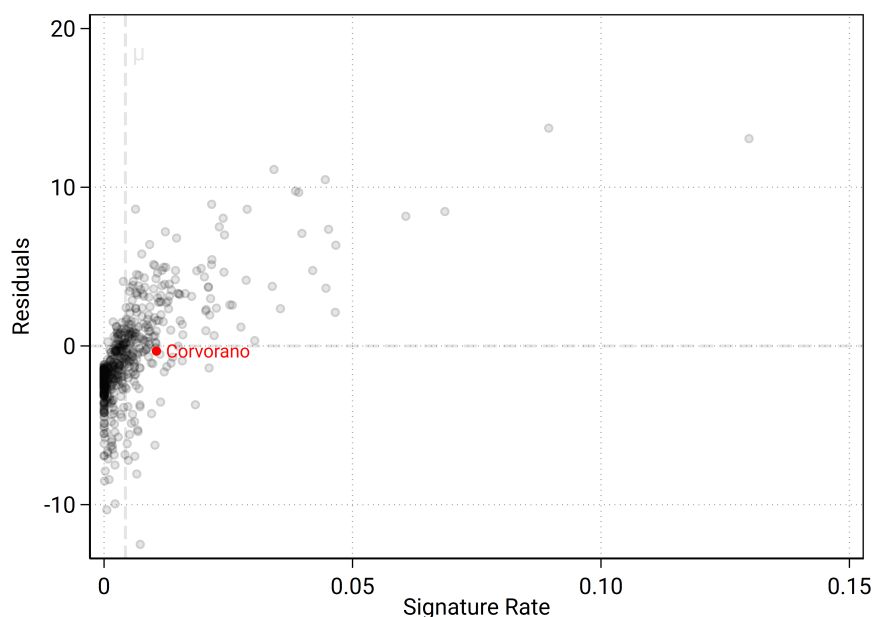
Note: dots indicate municipalities. The dashed line indicates the mean rate (μ) of signatures over total municipal population.
Source: authors' compilation.

6 Assessing the statistical association: partisan resistance and anti-fascist preferences

Our statistical analysis consistently shows that municipalities with partisan bands during the civil war more strongly supported the 2020–21 anti-fascist campaign. This is consistent with our argument that past wartime experiences of armed resistance can leave long-lasting legacies that can shape political attitudes and behaviour. Figure 5 displays the estimated regression coefficient for our baseline negative binomial model.[18] The estimated coefficient of 0.33 indicates a 39 per cent increase in the expected number of signatures in support of the campaign in municipalities that experienced armed resistance during the civil war.

This baseline model includes province fixed effects and relevant contemporary controls.[19] We account for urban–rural differences by controlling for population size (2021) and population density (2021). We control for demographic, social, and economic characteristics that correlate with political orientation, such as the share of the population over 65 (2011), employed in the manual and agricultural sectors (2001), university educated (2011), and unemployed (2011). We also include a control for the share of the population with broadband internet access (2012), as this is a relevant channel of information about the campaign. Finally, we control for the percentage of mountainous terrain in the municipality, which may have facilitated armed mobilization during the civil war (Fearon and Laitin 2003) and may correlate with current political attitudes.

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[18] Column 6 of Appendix Table A4 reports the full regression results.

[19] In Appendix Table A4, we test the robustness of our estimates to model specification by progressively adding controls to our model.

Figure 5: Presence of partisan bands in 1943–45 and anti-fascist preferences today, adjusting for contemporary controls
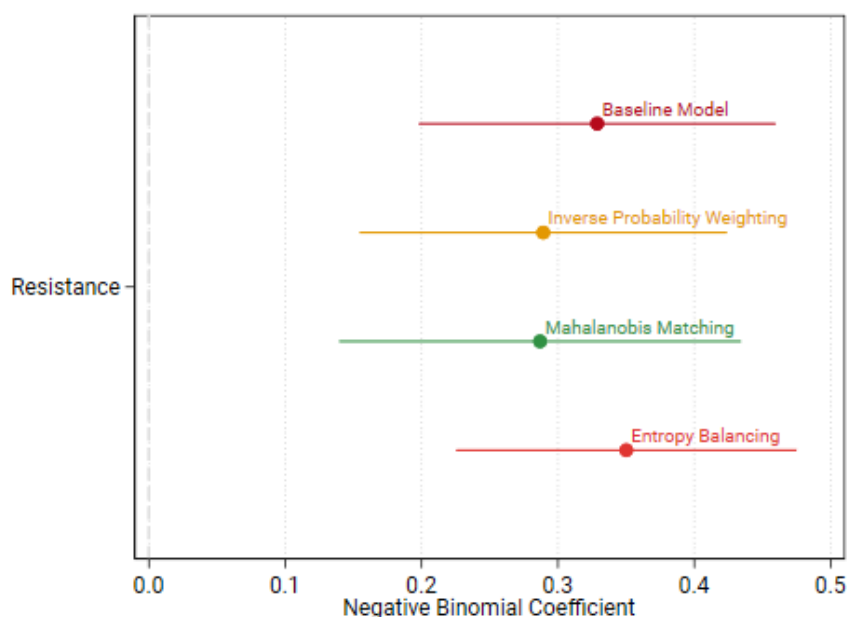
Note: coefficient estimates (dots) and relative confidence intervals (lines) from negative binomial regressions. Standard errors are clustered at the province level (N = 5,330).

Source: authors' compilation.

To probe the robustness of this association, we run additional tests with different model specifications. To improve the comparability between municipalities with and without resistance bands during the civil war, we replicate our analysis on rebalanced samples of matched municipalities on several observable characteristics. We employ three alternative matching techniques—inverse probability weighting, nearest-neighbour matching, and entropy balancing. The results of these analyses yield results consistent with our baseline model in Figure 5 (for more details on this procedure, see Appendix Section A7).

7 Casting doubt on competing explanations

7.1 COVID and direct contacts

The Anti-fascist Law campaign was launched in the middle of the second wave of the COVID pandemic. As the virus did not affect the entire Italian territory equally or simultaneously, the severity and timing of fear of contagion, uncertainty and movement restrictions varied across regions and municipalities, which could have driven support for the campaign. The province fixed effects in our baseline model likely capture patterns created by contagion and policy restrictions. However, as an additional check we run tests with *region* fixed effects and model province-level COVID severity. The results of these models are consistent with our baseline estimates (see Appendix Section A6).

To account for the possibility that the large number of signatures from Toscana could be attributed to personal connections, as suggested by campaign organizers in Stazzema, we run variants of our baseline model that (1) exclude all municipalities in Toscana and (2) control for the distance between Stazzema

and other municipalities (to proxy for the strength of personal contacts). The results are also equivalent to our baseline model (see Appendix Table A9).[20]

7.2   Pre-war factors and ideology

The local presence of partisan resistance is not random. Since local characteristics that shaped the emergence of resistance in 1943–45 may be correlated with observable and unobservable factors that could contribute to contemporary anti-fascist preferences, we run a variant of our baseline model controlling for relevant pre-war factors (Figure 6). While the magnitude of the effect of resistance bands is reduced, the coefficient remains large, positive, and statistically significant. The estimated coefficient of 0.22 implies a 25 per cent increase in the expected number of signatures.[21]

Figure 6: Presence of partisan bands in 1943–45 and Anti-fascist preferences today, adjusting for pre-war controls
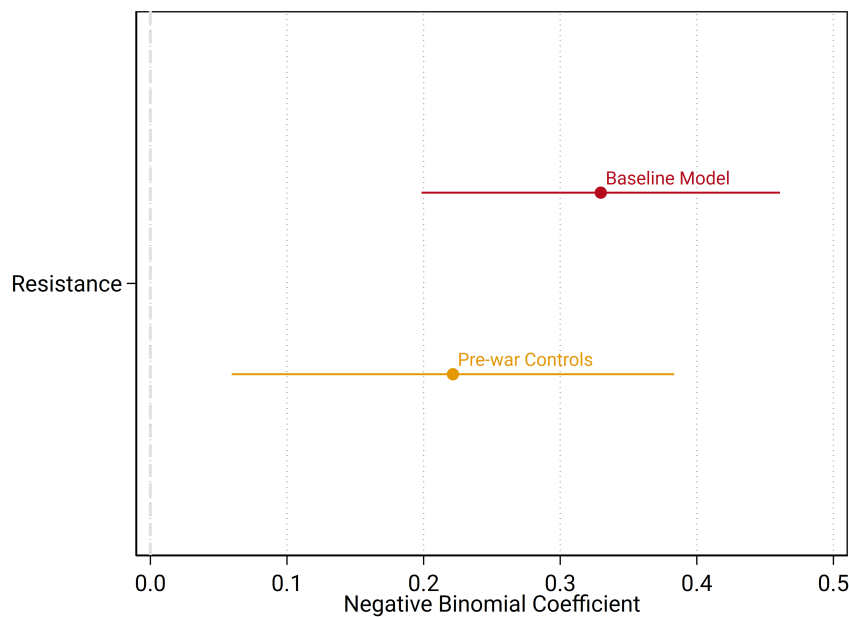
Note: coefficient estimates (dots) and relative confidence intervals (lines) from negative binomial regressions. Standard errors are clustered at the province level. The pre-war model (N = 3,831) includes pre-war controls.

Source: authors' compilation.

The results from this model address the concern that the findings from our baseline model could be driven by bias induced by using controls measured *after* the civil war (Montgomery et al. 2018; Rosenbaum 1984). This new model maintains controls for population size and mountainous terrain from the baseline model, but substitutes other contemporary controls for a set of pre-war controls that account for socioeconomic characteristics that could correlate with pre-war political orientations—the share of (1) day labourers, sharecroppers, and industrial workers in 1921; (2) the population under age 6; and (3) the population that was literate in 1911.[22]

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[20] We also explored the explanatory power of this alternative explanation qualitatively in two ways. First, before going to Corvorano, we asked campaign organizers in Stazzema if they had any useful contacts there to share with us. They had none. Second, while in Corvorano, we reconstructed how the news of the signature campaign had arrived in the municipality and confirmed that campaign promoters in Corvorano had no direct contact with organizers in Stazzema.

[21] Column 2 of Appendix Table A7 reports the full regression results.

[22] The merging procedure we use to adapt pre-war controls to today's municipal structure allows us to include controls calculated as population percentages. Therefore we only include the current population size. Excluding today's population from the pre-war model yields consistent results.

Local support for communism is one of the main predictors of partisan mobilization during the civil war (Costalli and Ruggeri 2015b) and the communists were the leading political force organizing armed resistance against the Nazi–Fascists (Pavone 1994). Moreover, the Communist Party created stronger organizations and had a better electoral performance in post-war elections in areas where partisan bands were active (Costalli and Ruggeri 2018; Fontana et al. 2021). Therefore, it is plausible that stronger anti-fascist preferences in municipalities with partisan bands reflect pre-war ideological preferences. To address this competing account, we control for the share of votes for the Socialist Party in 1919, which then included what later became the Communist Party. Our results show that the effect of resistance is independent of pre-war local support for socialism/communism. [23]

To cast further doubt on this alternative explanation, we re-run our model disaggregating partisan resistance by ideology into two binary variables. The first takes a value of 1 for municipalities that hosted at least one band linked to the Communist/Socialist bloc and 0 for those with no bands or bands not affiliated with the Communist/Socialist bloc (e.g. Brigate Fiamme Verdi, Brigate del Popolo, Brigate Giustizia e Libertà; see De Luna 2021; De Rosa 1998; Pavone 1994: 280–303; Vecchio 2022: ch. 5–8). The second variable takes a value of 1 for municipalities that hosted at least one band *not* affiliated with the Communist/Socialist bloc and 0 for those with no bands or bands affiliated with the Communist/Socialist bloc.[24] While we find a stronger effect for bands linked to the Communist/Socialist bloc using both binary measures, the effect is not statistically different from that of bands with other ideological orientations (Figure 7). Overall, these results support our core contention that local experiences of resistance can shape contemporary anti-fascist preferences independently of pre-war ideological orientations.

7.3   Nazi–Fascist violence

A consistent finding in the historical legacies of war literature is that exposure to violence has long-lasting effects on political preferences and behaviours. The organizers of the Anti-fascist Law campaign in Stazzema, who expected greater support from the victims of violence during the civil war, shared this view.[25] While we do not challenge the claim that victimization leaves consequential political legacies, we contend that armed mobilization can impact current anti-fascist preferences *independently of levels of violence*.

Resistance and violence often overlap. Disentangling them fully requires a different research design and goes beyond the scope of this paper. Yet, we begin addressing this issue by integrating data on Nazi–Fascist violence into our analyses in two steps. First, we run an additional model that includes a binary measure of municipalities in which Nazi–Fascist forces killed residents during 1943–45. Second, we run separate models estimating the effect of casualties on our dependent variable, using a continuous variable indicating the number of Nazi–Fascist victims disaggregated by civilian vs partisan.

Our findings reaffirm that experiences of resistance are an important force shaping current political preferences. When we include a binary measure of the level of Nazi–Fascist violence in each municipality, the coefficient associated with partisan resistance remains stable. Although the difference is not statistically significant, the effect is larger than that of violence (Figure 8a). This indicates that partisan resistance is associated with stronger present-day support for anti-fascist initiatives *independently of historical levels of violence*. Moreover, while the results of these additional tests shows that violence indeed

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[23] We use the 1919 elections because then the Socialist Party enjoyed the strongest support. In a robustness check, we also examine vote shares in 1913, 1921, and 1924. The shares for 1921 and 1924 also include the votes of the breakaway Communist and Unitary Socialist parties. The 1924 election was the last one held under Fascism, yet high levels of violence plagued it. These results are consistent (Table A7).

[24] Appendix Table A1 reports the descriptive statistics.

[25] Field Notes. Conversation with campaign organizers in Stazzema, December 2021.

leaves legacies, we found that what mainly drives the effect of violence on support for the campaign is violence against *partisans* (Figure 8b). This further stresses the significance of resistance itself.

Figure 7: Statistical association between past local presence of partisan resistance and anti-fascist preferences today by political leaning of local partisan bands
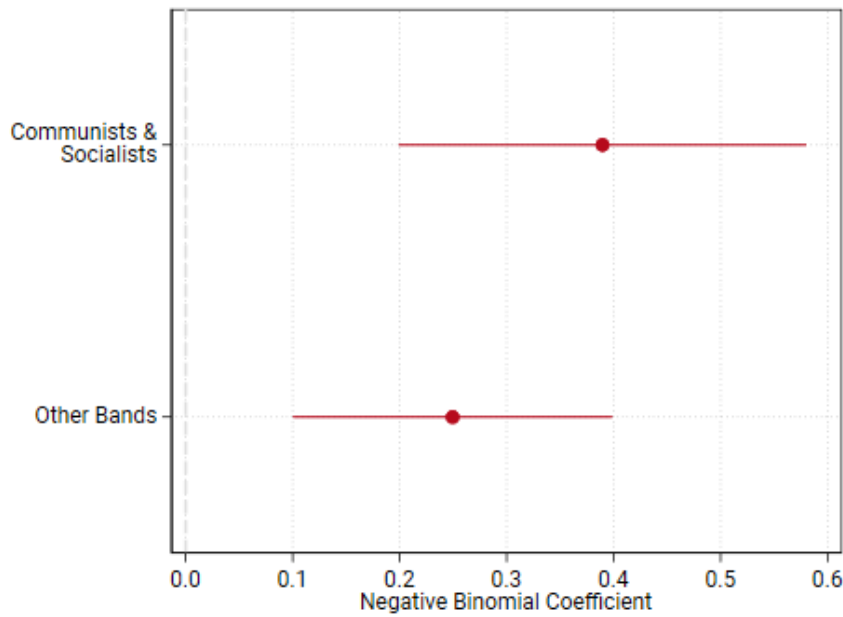
Note: coefficient estimates (dots) and relative confidence intervals (lines) from negative binomial regression. Standard errors are clustered at the province level. Control variables and sample restrictions reflect those applied in the baseline model of Figure 5.

Source: authors' compilation.

Figure 8: Anti-fascist preferences and Nazi–Fascist violence
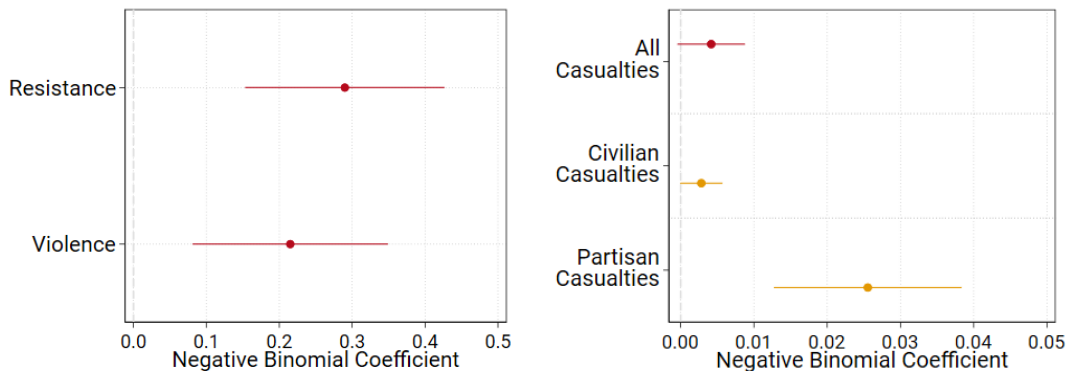
(a) Partisan presence and violence
(b) Identity of casualties

Note: coefficient estimates (dots) and relative confidence intervals (lines) from negative binomial regressions. Standard errors are clustered at the province level. Control variables and sample restrictions reflect those applied in the baseline model.

Source: authors' compilation.

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Exploring the long-term effects of resistance, as well as other war dynamics, is important because the legacies of different wartime are likely to operate differently. For example, unlike violence, memories of resistance do not revolve around victimization, and are thus not shaped by the dynamics of trauma. As such, besides leading to the rejection of the identities of the perpetrator (Balcells 2012), they can also forge political identities and mobilize political action by stressing the political values, ideals, and norms defended by those who resisted.

8   Tracing the process: keeping the memory alive in Corvorano

Our statistical analysis shows that support for the Anti-fascist Law in 2020–21 was stronger in Italian municipalities where partisan bands operated during the civil war. This association supports the first part of our argument: wartime experiences other than violence leave legacies that can shape contemporary political outcomes beyond electoral and party politics. In this section, we build on the description from Section 4 of how the winners of the civil war memorialized partisan resistance at the national level to examine, in the case of Corvorano, the other two steps of the intergenerational transmission process theorized above. We offer evidence of *how* local memory entrepreneurs *localize* and *mobilize* collective memories to transmit these legacies across generations and shape current political action.

Corvorano is a municipality in northern Italy. Most of its territory is rural and sparsely inhabited; almost half its 10,000 inhabitants live or work in the town centre. During the war, several of its residents actively participated in the partisan movement. A few days after the civil war began, residents with a variety of political beliefs formed a local section of the CLN.[26] Others soon organized a partisan band that quickly evolved into a battalion of the Garibaldi Brigades—leading actors in the Resistance that were aligned with the Communist Party.

Three battalion commanders were natives of Corvorano, and at least 15 partisan bases—peasant houses used as shelters, meeting points, and storage for arms and supplies—were established in the municipality.[27] Many others supported the partisans: peasants provided shelter and survival goods, children served as dispatch riders, and women organized sabotage operations.[28] A resident explained, 'the local band was very much attached to the territory and the partisans were very close to residents'.[29] When the Allies arrived in Corvorano in April 1945, the partisans had already liberated the municipality. In recognition of its contribution to the Liberation and officially institutionalizing collective memory, in the early 1990s the Italian government awarded the municipality one of the country's most significant commemorations of gallantry, the *Medaglia di Bronzo al Valor Militare*.

Corvorano's immediate post-war politics showcased its partisan and anti-fascist identity. The first two mayors, one nominated by the CLN and the other elected, were communists with links to the resistance movement. In the June 1946 referendum, over 85 per cent of Corvorano residents voted in favour of the republic and against the monarchy, the institution which had legitimized the rise of Fascism (the national percentage was 54 per cent).[30] The memory of partisan resistance and this anti-fascist identity remains central to Corvorano's politics. In April 2021, support for the Anti-fascist Law campaign was roughly twice the national average.

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[26] Archival Material.

[27] Archival Material. *Il Valore*

[28] Archival Material. *Dai Monti*.

[29] Interview 1. Memoriae's founding member and director.

[30] Archival material.

Observational, archival, and testimonial data reveal that the community's persistent efforts to preserve the collective memory of the Resistance and anchor it to its local experience have been crucial to transmitting this legacy across multiple generations. We found vast evidence that an active network of local memory entrepreneurs with multiple political leanings championed localized physical and experiential memorialization involving residents from different generations, and mobilized residents to support the Anti-fascist Law.

8.1 Anchoring collective narratives locally

We arrived in Corvorano in April 2022, just before Liberation Day. Residents had just inaugurated a Memory Garden commemorating local members of the Resistance and were preparing a community lunch to celebrate the 77th anniversary of the Liberation and a tour of local partisans' tombstones. Given the occasion, it was no surprise that multiple efforts to memorialize resistance were underway. Yet it quickly became clear that these efforts went above and beyond Liberation Day. For some residents, it is an almost permanent endeavour. As a former mayor of Corvorano explained, 'if [memory work] is not constantly fed, it gets lost'.[31] Evidence of *localized* memorialization dates back to at least the 1970s. A former cultural adviser asserted that paying attention to 'the local memories that contribute to building the story of our territory' is crucial for effective memory work [32] This work entails physical as well as experiential memorialization, which we discuss in turn.

Physical memorialization

Corvorano's public spaces are repositories and amplifiers of memory. The road we took to the City Hall—Corvorano's main artery—is named Street of the Fallen of Grand Avenue (*Via Caduti di Via Grande*); several other urban and rural streets also recall the Resistance and Liberation.[33] A section of the central cemetery is devoted to partisans, and the main square features a large monument depicting a mother holding her son fallen in the country's fight for liberation. And a plaque by the entrance to City Hall read: 'Imperishable glory to the heroes fallen for the freedom of the fatherland'—a reference to casualties among the partisans rather than soldiers in the regular army.

While many Italian towns have streets and squares named after well-known anti-fascists or with generic names related to the partisan resistance and the country's liberation, like Via Giacomo Matteotti and Piazza della Libertà, Corvorano is different in this regard. In the mid-1970s, on the 30th anniversary of the Liberation, a multi-party commission was created in Corvorano to change street names to commemorate the partisans. While everyone favoured the initiative, the nature and extent of it—what memory scholars call the 'scaling of memory' (Alderman 2003)—was contested. The Christian Democratic minority pressed to keep it generic, as many other places in Italy had done, while the communists and socialists proposed to dedicate a street to every fallen partisan from Corvorano. The latter proposal eventually prevailed, and 37 street names were changed. They now combine generic references to the resistance movement with localized recollections of the municipality's contribution to it, such as the names of local partisans or the local brigade.

Official documents from the time assert that the actors behind this initiative were aware of the significance of naming streets to keep the memory of the Resistance alive: 'Streets are part of the identity of a municipality because they host past and present events that contribute to creating the community's

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[31] Interview 2. Former mayor.

[32] Archival Material. *Le Strade*.

[33] The second part of the street name refers to a particular group of martyrs. We changed it to prevent the identification of the town.

collective memory. Streets are, consequently, places of memory par excellence.'[34] The testimonial data suggests they also were mindful of the importance of anchoring the project in the municipality's specific experience. Without being prompted, Francesco, the head of Memoriae—one the most active cultural associations doing memory work in Corvorano—explained that 'using the names of local heroes ... makes it all more real, closer to the people, easier to relate to ... New generations might not know who these people are, but they would ask, and we can tell the story.'[35] While assessing the impact of physical memorialization is beyond the scope of this paper, archival data shows that residents of different ages explicitly acknowledge its importance. Referring to monuments, plaques, and tombstones, Corvorano's school students stressed in the mid-1990s that '... as long as time will not consume the stones themselves, these names and dates [of the partisan resistance] will not be cancelled from our memories'.[36]

Experiential memorialization

Experiential memorialization allows people to learn about and identify with the past by actively participating in memory making. Unlike its physical counterpart, it offers the opportunity to target and actively involve people from multiple generations and different walks of life. Memory entrepreneurs in Corvorano worry that the more temporally distant the experience of resistance, the less the public will identify with it. Experiential memorialization initiatives have allowed them to deliberately involve a diverse set of residents, targeting younger generations in particular.

The local school has perhaps been *the* central space for experiential memorialization in Corvorano. University professors have been regularly invited since the late 1970s to give talks about the Resistance to students, and several movies about the Resistance have been screened for them, including *The Man Who Will Come* (*L'uomo che verra*) in 2009 and 2010.[37] Gloria, who has run Corvorano's local library for decades, described these experiences as 'key moments of mutual recognition' between kids and the older generation who fought for Liberation and considers them essential to 'make sure that the word "memory" doesn't only evoke a tombstone'.[38]

These events have encouraged teachers and students to dig deeper into the *local* history of resistance. On the 50th anniversary of the Liberation in 1994, for example, a group of teachers and students consulted secondary sources and interviewed local survivors to map the most significant local events and places of Corvorano's partisan resistance and Nazi–Fascist violence. These activities are crucial for localizing and transmitting collective memories. Not only did City Hall officially sanction these memory-making efforts by distributing print-outs of the findings to all residents,[39] but students noted that the project allowed them 'to learn about the facts and the people that enable us to conquer the freedom and the democratic way of living on which we all live now'.[40]

Experiential memorialization initiatives in Corvorano have deliberately sought to reach different segments of the population. With no probing, the current cultural adviser to the mayor's office stressed that 'memory work makes sense if we amplify and diversify the public [...] if we use different instruments,

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[34] Archival Material. *Le Strade*.

[35] Field Notes. Conversation with Francesco.

[36] Archival Material. *Il Valore*.

[37] Field Notes. Conversation with ANPI directive. The film, directed by Giorgio Diritti, tells the story of daily life involving Nazi violence and partisan resistance from the perspective of an eight-year-old rural girl.

[38] Interview 3. Director of the municipal library.

[39] We obtained a copy from the local archive, which was a valuable and unique source of information.

[40] Archival Material. *Il Valore*.

like arts, and learn how to speak the language of different people, we can get more and more people onboard'.[41] Consistent with these claims, several memory initiatives have been linked to various cultural and sports activities. For example, memory entrepreneurs have partnered with the local chapter of the Italian Alpine Club (*Club Alpino Italiano*, CAI) to rehabilitate old partisan paths and organize hikes for residents and visitors. Similarly, they have collaborated with a local cycling club to organize rides through the territory using partisan tombstones as itinerary markers.

Many similar initiatives have been organized—some of which were designed to be permanent; some were ongoing during our fieldwork.[42] As with physical memorialization, assessing the impact of these initiatives is beyond the scope of this paper. Yet, testimonies from those involved in experiential memorialization suggest that these experiences have helped socialize younger generations and less politicized residents into the narrative of the Resistance and the values it upholds.

8.2 Mobilizing collective memories

The percentage of signatures collected in support of the Anti-fascist Law campaign in Corvorano was more than double the national average despite three key obstacles. First, signatures were only collected in the main urban centre of a sparsely populated municipality with poor connections to rural areas. Second, Corvorano's population is divided into those who grew up in the municipality and those who more recently moved there and use it as a commuter town. The latter are less involved in the town's life, identify less with it, and seldom participate in initiatives or support this type of campaign.[43] Finally, COVID mobility restrictions were particularly stringent in the municipality.

Strong support for the Anti-fascist Law campaign can be at least partly attributed to the latency of collective memories of resistance and the mobilizing efforts of local memory entrepreneurs. While City Hall endorsed the campaign,[44] mobilization was undertaken from the bottom up. Memoriae and ANPI set up a tent by the main supermarket entrance to inform residents about the campaign and collect signatures. This strategy likely helped them obtain more signatures for two reasons. First, information about the campaign was not widespread (especially offline). Therefore, raising awareness of the campaign's existence was important. Moreover, having Memoriae and ANPI disseminate information made apparent the association between what was at stake and the Resistance, something that has been found to strengthen the impact of collective memories on present behaviour (Fouka and Voth 2022). Second, accessing signature forms was not easy, especially during the COVID pandemic. In many other municipalities, people could only sign at City Hall. Thus having access to the forms at the supermarket likely made a difference, especially since grocery shopping was one of the few activities not fully suspended during the lockdowns.

However, memory entrepreneurs stress that they did not *convince* people to sign: 'people signed because they are anti-fascists, not because someone told them to do so';[45] people felt a strong ideological connection to the campaign.[46] A former mayor of Corvorano insisted that these signatures are only the 'tip of the iceberg'. To him, support for this campaign reflects the values sown by the partisans that many in the territory still defend.[47] While these actors might have reasons to aggrandize their role in

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[41] Interview 5. Mayor and cultural adviser; Interview 6. Cultural adviser

[42] Interview 4. Mayor.

[43] Interview 3. Director of the municipal library.

[44] Interview 4. Mayor.

[45] Field Notes. Conversation with former mayor.

[46] Interview 7. ANPI's former president.

[47] Interview 2. Former mayor.

the campaign's outcome, the evidence we collected strongly suggests that underlying those signatures are decades of hard work to preserve the memory of the Resistance, as well as a concrete effort to activate these memories when they come under threat. This successful effort to mobilize support for the Anti-fascist Law campaign is a testament to the fact that, as Corvorano's cultural adviser explained, 'memory is not only to remember what happened in the territory but also not to forget what we have to fight against in the present'.[48]

8.3   Memory entrepreneurs

Corvorano has an extraordinarily active and well-organized network of memory entrepreneurs composed of cultural and civic associations with various political leanings. ANPI, as expected, is a critical node, working to preserve and promote the memory of resistance since the war's aftermath.[49] While the ANPI is represented throughout the country, Corvorano's local chapter, with about 80 active members, is particularly active. Its president from the early 2000s explained that while presiding over the ANPI elsewhere may involve organizing 2–3 activities per year, in Corvorano there are activities almost every month.[50]

Memoriae, created in 2004 and headquartered in the town's ARCI has been involved in almost every memory-related activity organized in the municipality since its creation. These include projects such as the Memory Garden and producing a wealth of documentary material, including leaflets, books, and DVDs. While ANPI is largely a political association with solid links to the Communist Party, Memoriae is a cultural centre for social aggregation. Most of its founding members and directors are decisively left wing, yet they try to remain independent from party organizations. They believe this gives them more flexibility in their work and allows them to involve residents from different walks of life.[51] Like several memory entrepreneurs in Corvorano, Memoriae stresses that what unites them is not a party or leader but an unwavering anti-fascist sentiment.

While some local memory entrepreneurs are relatively recent, an older resident reminded us that memory work 'has deeper roots', and that the current associations are 'building on work that was already there'. When we asked about these roots, he referred to the work of the ANPI and the Communist Party.[52] Memoriae thus represents the institutionalization of many local initiatives that date back to at least the 1970s. Yet, it did not emerge from the ranks of the ANPI or the Communist Party. Many interviewees identified a grassroots local radio station as a foundational antecedent of Memoriae and many other associations during memory work. The station operated from 1977 to 1981 from a house that served as a partisan base during the war. While those involved acknowledge that they were not fully aware of the importance of preserving collective memory at that time, and the radio's attention to it was mostly limited to 25 April, some programmes investigated Corvorano's partisan history.[53] These interviewees described the radio as a seed of a 'civic commitment' and noted that 'in a partisan territory ... [this commitment] is naturally related to that past'.[54]

These actors lead so memory-making initiatives that in 2016 Corvorano's municipal administration established a Memory Table to coordinate and align its projects with those of the network. Many of these

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[48] Field Notes. Conversation with Corvorano's cultural adviser.

[49] Interview 1. Memoriae's founding member and director.

[50] Interview 7. ANPI's former president.

[51] Interview 8. Memoriae's founding member.

[52] Interview 2. Former mayor.

[53] Interview 1. Memoriae's founding member and president; Interview 8. Memoriae's founding member.

[54] Interview 1. Memoriae's founding member and president; Interview 8. Memoriae's founding member.

associations have worked closely with municipal administrations, regardless of which party is in power, and several individual memory entrepreneurs have moved between local government and civic associations.[55] Yet, this does not make their work 'institutional', let alone co-opted by the local government. On the contrary, their strong standing within the community has allowed them to influence the administration's memory agenda. At the time the fieldwork was conducted, there were some political differences and tensions between the local administration and key memory entrepreneurs. Still, the mayor recognized that 'these associations are vital for the administration; they are Corvorano's active citizenship and a channel of contact with ordinary citizens'.

Corvorano is a prime example of community-based transmission. Unlike other contexts in which transmission has been primarily channelled via family ties (Acharya et al. 2018; Lupu and Peisakhin 2017) or where the community has been important for transmission because it amplifies the family's influence (Charnysh and Peisakhin 2022), Corvorano offers evidence that community-based transmission can be independent of family ties. To our surprise, none of the critical memory entrepreneurs in Corvorano had family links with partisans. Their involvement in memory work came from what they refer to as a 'civic commitment'. However, they recognize that having partisan families in the area makes it fertile for memorialization, and they have involved these families in memory-making activities.[56] For example, students in the 1990s interviewed partisans and their relatives to reconstruct the local history of resistance, and the CAI worked with them to rehabilitate old partisan trails. Moreover, memory entrepreneurs stress that conversations with partisans were crucial to translate the 'national narrative' of Resistance and Liberation into a localized collective memory of what happened in the territory.[57] Yet, the preservation and transmission of collective memory in Corvorano have not depended on direct personal or family experience of past resistance.

9 Conclusion

Do wartime experiences other than violence leave long-lasting political legacies? Can collective memories of armed resistance shape people's political attitudes and be activated to incite current political action beyond the ballot box? We have explored these questions in the context of Italy, investigating whether (and how) local experiences of partisan resistance against Nazi–Fascist forces during the country's civil war (1943–45) help explain support for a recent anti-fascist grassroots legislative campaign.

We contend that the political legacies of wartime resistance survive over time, are passed down from generation to generation, and affect contemporary political outcomes via a process of community-based intergenerational transmission of collective memories. This process consists of three crucial activities advanced by both national and local memory entrepreneurs: (1) forming a national-level collective narrative of the resistance experience that upholds the political identities of the resisters (*memorialization*); (2) anchoring this generic narrative in the concrete experiences of local communities to increase resonance and preserve memory over time locally (*localization*); and (3) activating these collective memories and translating them into political action when the narratives of the resistance or the values they uphold are under threat (*mobilization*).

Our statistical analyses consistently demonstrated that residents of areas where partisan bands operated more strongly supported a contemporary anti-fascist campaign. Our findings also suggest that the asso-

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[55] Interview 8. Memoriae's founding member.

[56] Interview 8. Memoriae's founding member.

[57] Interview 3. Director of the municipal library; Interview 7. ANPI's former president; Field notes. Conversation with ANPI directive.

ciation is not driven by pre-war factors such as ideological preferences, and that the effect is independent of Fascist and Nazi violence. Our qualitative analysis offered within-case evidence of the workings of the transmission process. Our detailed analysis of Corvorano, a municipality with resistance bands during the war and strong support for the campaign in 2020–21, illustrates how a local community has painstakingly sustained collective narratives across generations and activated them to counter current neo-fascist threats.

This study builds on a growing body of work examining the long-lasting effects of wartime experiences on peacetime politics, making three core contributions to this literature. First, it advances the study of transmission mechanisms. Scholars of political legacies have identified multiple variables and conditions, ranging from family socialization to clandestine networks, that sustain transmission or enable persistence. We took a different approach and theorized a *process* of community-based intergenerational transmission and offered detailed qualitative evidence of how it operates within a purposively selected case. We hope this effort illustrates the benefits of integrating different approaches to the study of causal relationships. Our findings second recent work stressing that the social context matters significantly in the persistence of legacies and their subsequent impact on political outcomes (Villamil 2020). Moreover, contributing to a long-standing debate on the role of family and community in persistence (Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman 1981; Charnysh and Peisakhin 2022), our results suggest that communities can transmit legacies across generations and activate them even in the absence of family ties or widespread parental socialization. Recent research has shown that collective memory is more likely to influence present-day behaviour if it has been institutionalized by the state (Fouka and Voth 2022). Our study shows that local communities have a role to play in this institutionalization and that collective memories, even if highly institutionalized, are more powerful when anchored to concrete local experiences.

In a second contribution, we join a small group of recent studies (Balcells and Villamil 2023; Barceló 2021; Lazarev 2019; Osorio et al. 2021) that shift away from the dominant focus on wartime effects on electoral and party politics. By concentrating on mobilization for a grassroots legislative campaign to ban anti-fascist propaganda, we show that wartime experiences can have political effects beyond the ballot box. This is particularly important for the case of Italy, where recent studies have shown that while the civil war had important legacies for electoral politics and party organization, these have progressively faded away with the disappearance of the Communist Party in the late 1980s (Costalli and Ruggeri 2018; Fontana et al. 2021). Our study indicates that the war's legacies have outlived the existence of the Communist Party, and that they do not fully depend on ideological commitments to communism and socialism. Local areas that hosted both communist and non-communist partisan bands still hold anti-fascist preferences, and local actors with and without links to communism continuously work to preserve the memory of the resistance and find alternative ways to give it political expression.

Finally, we expand the study of the long-term effects of war by examining the legacies of wartime experiences other than violence. Our analyses confirm that experiences of resistance can also leave long-lasting legacies (Costalli and Ruggeri 2018; Fontana et al. 2021; Osorio et al. 2021). Our main statistical analysis displays a robust association between local resistance and contemporary anti-fascist preferences, while additional tests suggest that this effect is independent of fascist violence. Furthermore, this analysis shows that violence has a stronger effect when it targeted members of the Resistance. Moreover, our qualitative analysis reveals how local experiences of resistance can be a powerful source for the formation and transmission of collective memories. These other sources should be further explored, as they likely operate differently than violence. The legacies of resistance do not necessarily depend on trauma, and not only promote the rejection of the perpetrators' political identities; they also actively promote the identities of the resisters.

Historical events can affect political behaviour even decades later. In addition to their immediate consequences, they offer referents for collective memory formation and long-term transmission. These

memories, in turn, can be activated and translated into political action. Importantly, this activation need not be confined to electoral politics. The Italian case illustrates how local communities can preserve collective memories of anti-fascist resistance and effectively mobilize them when its legacy seems threatened.

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Appendix

A1   Coding of partisan band variables

The *Historical Atlas of the Italian Resistance* by Baldissara (2000) is the most complete historical source on the geographic distribution of the Italian partisan resistance. It contains 14 detailed maps of the local presence of partisan bands during the full period of the civil war across three main phases: (1) from the beginning of the war in autumn 1943 to spring 1944; (2) summer 1944; and (3) from autumn 1944 to the end of the war in spring 1945. The maps report the location of each partisan band, the area where the band operated, and its political organization of reference (e.g. the Italian Communist Party).

From this information, we created three variables indicating the number of partisan bands active in each municipality in the three phases of the civil war (which we call 1943, 1944, 1945 for simplicity). If a municipality was included in the operation area of a band, we code this municipality as having an active partisan band. In the analysis, we use one binary indicator that summarizes this information taking value 1 when a municipality had at least one active partisan band between 1943 and 1945 and 0 otherwise. The first four rows of Table A1 report the proportion of municipalities having at least one partisan band active in the phases of the war and the binary variable that we use in our analysis.

Table A1: Descriptive statistics of partisan band variables

	Mean	SD	Min	Max	*N*
Bands 1943	0.030	0.171	0	1	7,903
Bands 1944	0.083	0.276	0	1	7,903
Bands 1945	0.027	0.163	0	1	7,903
Bands total	0.112	0.316	0	1	7,903
Communist bands	0.063	0.243	0	1	7,903
Socialist bands	0.003	0.053	0	1	7,903

Source: authors' compilation based on data from Baldissara (2000).

Partisan bands arouse from differentiated local experiences. Most often they were organized by the political forces that were re-emerging after the collapse of the Fascist regime and inherited the cultures and identities of the pre-Fascist parties. The Communist Party was the political force that mostly contributed to the Resistance, organizing its bands under the name of Brigate Garibaldi. Other parties organized their bands such as the bands named after Giacomo Matteotti linked to the Socialist Party, the Brigate Fiamme Verdi and the Brigate del Popolo linked to the newborn Christian Democracy. Other times partisan bands had no clear link with political parties and coordinated at the local level. In our coding, we code also the political affiliation of each band. The last two rows of Table A1 report the proportion of municipalities that had at least one band affiliated to the Communist Party and that of municipalities that had at least one band affiliated with the Socialist Party. We use this information to run our additional tests on the role of pre-war ideology.

A2   Pre-war controls and municipality structure

The administrative structure in Italy changed over the years. In 1921, the year of reference of our pre-war covariates, there were 9,195 Italian municipalities. In 2021, the year of reference for our signature data, there were 7,904. To adjust our estimates for pre-war control, we adapt the pre-war variables to the 2021 municipality structure. We apply the following (illustrative) procedures:

1. If the municipality does not experience changes, we report the pre-war value as it is.
2. If municipality A changes name to B, we use the value of A for municipality B.

3. If municipality A is fused with municipality B into a new municipality C, we weight the values of A and B by their population and use this imputed value for C.
4. If municipality A is disaggregated into new municipalities B and C, we use the value of A for both B and C.

A3   Descriptive statistics

Table A2: Descriptive statistics of main variables and baseline controls

	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	*N*
Signatures	30.62	140.86	0.00	5,915.00	7,903
Resistance	0.11	0.32	0	1	7,903
Population size	7,498.11	42,075.96	29.00	2,783,809.00	7,903
Population density	306.80	645.95	0.92	12,224.41	7,640
Older than 65	22.77	5.79	5.49	61.96	7,640
Unemployment	9.55	5.26	1.19	36.19	7,777
Manual workers	0.09	0.12	0.00	2.26	7,639
Agricultural workers	0.03	0.03	0.00	0.38	7,639
University graduates	0.07	0.03	0.01	0.29	7,776
Broadband internet	0.34	0.42	0.00	1.00	7,640
Mountainous terrain	26.40	36.50	0.00	100.00	7,903

Source: authors' compilation.

Table A3: Descriptive statistics of pre-war controls

	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	*N*
Day labourers	0.22	0.12	0.01	0.68	4,989
Sharecroppers	0.05	0.07	0.00	0.42	4,989
Industrial workers	0.11	0.19	0.00	3.54	4,989
Literacy 1911	0.73	0.20	0.10	1.00	4,989
Younger than 6	0.16	0.03	0.05	0.93	4,989
Socialist vote 1919	0.31	0.27	0.00	1.00	4,989

Source: authors' compilation.

A4   Baseline model and robustness to model specification

Table A4 reports estimates for our baseline model progressively adding controls. Column 6 corresponds to the baseline specification reported in Figure 5.

We explore the same relationship modelling our depending variable as the rate of signatures over the municipal population, which we examine using the following linear model:

$$\text{arcsinh}\left(\frac{Signatures_m}{Population_m \cdot r}\right) = \alpha + \beta Resistance_m + X'_m\delta + \mu_p + \varepsilon_m$$

where α is a constant, ε_m is an error term, and all the other terms on the right-hand side of the equation reflect those of the negative binomial model. The left-hand side of the equation is an inverse hyperbolic sine transformation, which approximates the natural logarithm of the signature rate and allows retaining zero-valued observations (Bellemare and Wichman 2020). We express municipal population (*Population$_m$*) in 100,000 (the constant r in the equation) to deal with the small size of the signature rates. Results from the linear model mirror the negative binomial results. We report results from this alternative modelling strategy in Table A5, where we also report results for model variants including controls for latitude and longitude instead of province fixed effects.

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Table A4: Estimated coefficients for baseline negative binomial model of municipal signature number

	(1) Signatures	(2) Signatures	(3) Signatures	(4) Signatures	(5) Signatures	(6) Signatures
Resistance	0.567***	0.215***	0.326***	0.312***	0.310***	0.330***
	(0.111)	(0.063)	(0.063)	(0.065)	(0.063)	(0.067)
Population size		0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
		(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Population density		0.000*	0.000*	0.000	0.000	0.000
		(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Older than 65			−0.047***	−0.045***	−0.032***	−0.029**
			(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
University graduates			8.301***	7.601***	6.964***	6.721***
			(1.215)	(1.318)	(1.259)	(1.294)
Unemployment				−0.079*	−0.065*	−0.066*
				(0.032)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Manual workers				0.095	−0.045	−0.109
				(0.249)	(0.296)	(0.302)
Agricultural workers				−6.678***	−5.130***	−5.597***
				(1.284)	(1.203)	(1.342)
Broadband internet					−0.657***	−0.638***
					(0.095)	(0.100)
Mountainous terrain						−0.002
						(0.001)
Constant	2.966***	1.775***	2.371***	3.144***	3.037***	3.079***
	(0.021)	(0.059)	(0.238)	(0.407)	(0.402)	(0.400)
Province FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
N	5,554	5,375	5,348	5,330	5,330	5,330

Note: clustered standard errors at the province level in parentheses. Sample restricted to municipalities with population below 25,000 and regions that experienced partisan resistance. $^{+}$ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Source: authors' compilation.

Finally, we test the robustness of our results to including regions that did not experience partisan resistance and municipalities with population larger than 25,000. In Table A6 we reproduce results controlling for latitude and longitude or province fixed effects and adding all regions and municipalities. In columns 5 and 6 we have to drop municipalities above 100,000 inhabitants (0.56 of the total) to achieve convergence.

Table A5: Estimated coefficients based on negative binomial and linear model of IHS transformed signature rate

	(1) Neg. bin.	(2) IHS	(3) Neg. bin.	(4) IHS
Resistance	0.486***	0.671***	0.330***	0.262*
	(0.082)	(0.124)	(0.067)	(0.107)
Baseline controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Latitude & longitude	✓	✓		
Province FE			✓	✓
N	5,330	5,330	5,330	5,329

Note: standard errors in parentheses (robust SE in columns 1 and 2; clustered at the province level in columns 3 and 4). Sample restricted to municipalities with population below 25,000 and regions that experienced partisan resistance. $^+ p < 0.10$, $^* p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$, $^{***} p < 0.001$.

Source: authors' compilation.

Table A6: Estimated coefficients based on negative binomial and linear model of IHS transformed signature rate including all municipalities and all regions

	(1) Signatures	(2) Signatures	(3) Signatures	(4) Signatures	(5) Signatures	(6) Signatures
Resistance	0.543***	0.624***	0.747***	0.312***	0.450***	0.442***
	(0.078)	(0.079)	(0.076)	(0.065)	(0.065)	(0.062)
Latitude and longitude	✓	✓	✓			
Province FE				✓	✓	✓
All regions	✓		✓			
All municipalities				✓		✓
Baseline controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
N	7,144	5,563	7,532	7,144	5,533	7,489

Note: clustered standard errors at the province level in parentheses. Columns 5 and 6 restrict the sample to municipalities below 100,000 to achieve convergence. $^+ p < 0.10$, $^* p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$, $^{***} p < 0.001$.

Source: authors' compilation.

A5 Estimates with pre-war controls and pre-war ideology

Table A7 reports estimates adjusted using control variables measured before the civil war. Column 2 corresponds to the estimates reported in Figure 6. The other columns test the robustness of our estimates to the use of measures of support for socialism other than vote in 1919. Column 1 uses vote for socialists in 1913, the last election before World War I. Column 3 uses vote share for socialists in 1921, the first election after the war, when socialists and communists where still united and obtained the largest support. Column 4 uses the vote share in 1924, held when the Fascists were already in power and the last one held until the fall of the regime. Vote shares in 1913 and 1919 correspond to votes for the Socialist Party, those in 1921 and 1924 include votes include also the Communist and the Unitary Socialist Party.

Table A7: Estimated coefficients from negative binomial model with pre-war controls

	(1) Signatures	(2) Signatures	(3) Signatures	(4) Signatures
Resistance	0.239**	0.221**	0.213*	0.219**
	(0.083)	(0.083)	(0.086)	(0.081)
Population size	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Socialist vote	0.256	0.755***	0.727***	1.517***
	(0.201)	(0.174)	(0.201)	(0.223)
Day labourers	−1.225*	−1.342**	−1.596***	−1.173*
	(0.502)	(0.513)	(0.481)	(0.474)
Sharecroppers	0.893	1.181	1.564^{+}	0.680
	(1.029)	(1.032)	(0.924)	(1.015)
Industrial workers	0.729***	0.653***	0.651***	0.622***
	(0.174)	(0.169)	(0.176)	(0.158)
Literacy 1911	−0.165	−0.031	−0.135	−0.156
	(0.504)	(0.508)	(0.512)	(0.492)
Younger than 6	1.011	1.085	0.527	0.622
	(1.239)	(1.295)	(1.241)	(1.180)
Mountainous terrain	−0.005**	−0.004*	−0.004**	−0.005**
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Constant	2.099***	1.671***	1.958***	1.947***
	(0.477)	(0.473)	(0.479)	(0.486)
Socialist vote	1,913	1,919	1,921	1,924
Province FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
N	3,831	3,831	3,595	3,831

Note: clustered standard errors at the province level in parentheses. Sample restricted to municipalities with population below 25,000 and regions that experienced partisan resistance. $^{+}$ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.
Source: authors' compilation.

A6 COVID pandemic

We test the robustness of our results to the intensity of the COVID pandemic using daily data on the number of cases at the province level provided by Italian health authorities. In Table A8, we report results based on measures of pandemic intensity during the two relevant pandemic waves: (1) from the beginning of the pandemic on 24 February 2020 to 3 May 2020 and (2) from 19 October 2020 to the end of the signature campaign on 31 March 2021. We compute two alternative measures: (1) the mean number of cases during the wave and (2) the maximum number of cases during the wave. All the measures are expressed as incidence rates (i.e. number of cases over total population). We report results using an independent variable for each wave and also adding an interaction between the two. We also run alternative specifications which we do not report here, where we calculate the mean and maximum number of cases considering the entire pandemic period instead of separate wave measures and obtain equivalent results. The models use region fixed effects rather than province ones because pandemic intensity is measured at the province level.

Table A8: Estimated coefficients from negative binomial model with controls for COVID pandemic intensity

	(1) Signatures	(2) Signatures	(3) Signatures	(4) Signatures
Resistance	0.332***	0.339***	0.332***	0.334***
	(0.066)	(0.065)	(0.066)	(0.065)
COVID cases	Mean	Mean	Max.	Max.
Wave interaction		✓		✓
Baseline controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Region FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
N	5,330	5,330	5,330	5,330

Note: clustered standard errors at the province level in parentheses. Sample restricted to municipalities with population below 25,000 and regions that experienced partisan resistance. $^+ p < 0.10$, $^* p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$, $^{***} p < 0.001$.
Source: authors' compilation.

A7   Matching

We test the robustness of our estimates to selection over observables by adjusting our sample through different weighting and matching techniques. We use three robust techniques adopted in the literature: (1) inverse probability weighting (IPW) on the propensity score; (2) nearest-neighbour Mahalanobis distance matching (MDM); and (3) entropy balance (EB). To obtain common support in the IPW, we trim the top and bottom 5 per cent of the propensity score. The logit model that we use to estimate the propensity score for the IPW allows us to incorporate province fixed effects at the weighting phase. For MDM and EB, we substitute province fixed effects with latitude and longitude in the matching phase. All the models that we estimate after weighting and matching reflect the baseline specification described in Section 5.

A8   Campaign organizers' networks

Table A9: Estimated coefficients from negative binomial model accounting for campaign organizers' networks

	(1) Signatures	(2) Signatures
Resistance	0.325***	0.328***
	(0.069)	(0.068)
Distance to Stazzema	✓	
Exclude Toscana		✓
Baseline controls	✓	✓
Province FE	✓	✓
N	5,330	5,092

Note: clustered standard errors at the province level in parentheses. Sample restricted to municipalities with population below 25,000 and regions that experienced partisan resistance. $^+ p < 0.10$, $^* p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$, $^{***} p < 0.001$.
Source: authors' compilation.