



**A brief comparative history of economic regionalism in
the North Italian macro-region and Catalonia**

GEORGE HENRY NEWTH

Anno I, n. I, giugno 2014

ISSN.2284-086



1. Introduction.

Over the past three decades a major new fault line has emerged in European politics, reflecting the fragility of the nation-state. This has manifested itself in calls for various demands of autonomy – and in some cases outright secession – from autonomist and regionalist parties in direct conflict with a Europe of the “Nation-States”, which in their view has been denying them their right to self-determination. Amongst this “Europe of the Regions” lie the *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) of Catalonia and the Northern League (*Lega Nord*) of (North) Italy¹. Looking at these two movements a strange paradox emerges. On the one hand, contemporary studies of the *Lega Nord* have tended to ignore, overlook, or view as simply rhetorical the role of historical regional tensions in the emergence of regionalist fervour. On the other hand, regionalist sentiment in Catalonia has, instead, been strongly linked to past socio-economic events in their peninsulas². What this article seeks to add to the existing literature is an interpretation of the *Lega Nord* as the re-emergence of historical tensions which manifested themselves during two economic booms in Lombardy and Piedmont respectively. The fact that these economic booms happened in the same periods in Catalonia (late 19th Century and mid-20th Century) proves particularly illuminating as we see an “economic regionalism” emerge in both regions involving an exacerbation of pre-existing hostilities towards the central state and the South in each peninsula. However, further to similarities in the economic history between the two regions the article will also look at differences which lie in cultural and linguistic claims for self-determination and the different manifestations and expressions of autonomy. The article seeks to add two elements to existing literature on the *Lega Nord* and the Northern Questions:

i. What are the historical origins of regionalism in the north Italian macro-region?

The *Lega Nord* has been put into many political categories which in many ways has helped our understanding of a constantly changing and evolving political organization³. On the other hand, however, existing studies tend to guard their categorization of the *Lega Nord* too jealously, and not delve deep enough into Italian history which holds a long tradition of regional fragmentation and division. Those studies which *do* take Italian history into account when looking at the *Lega Nord* tend to focus too much on how the party manipulates and re-interprets history for its own political ends

¹ For an analysis of the concept of a Europe of the nation state and a Europe of the regions please see P. WAGSTAFF *Regions, Nations and Identities*, in “Regionalism in the European Union”, Exeter, Intellect, 1999, pp.4-7.

² Please see D. CONVERSI, *The Basques, The Catalans and Spain: Alternative routes to Nationalist Mobilisation*, Nevada, University of Nevada Press, 1997; J. LLOBERA, *Foundations of National Identity: From Catalonia to Europe (New directions in anthropology)*, New York, Berghen Books, 2005.

³ For a comprehensive review of the definitions of the *Lega Nord* including the strengths and weaknesses of each definition please see A. CENTO BULL, M. GILBERT, *The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian politics*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2001. See also A. ZASLOVE, *The Reinvention of the European Radical Right: Populism, Regionalism and the Lega Nord*, Montreal-Kingston, McGill-Queens Press, 2011.

rather than how the history of North Italy itself has impacted on regionalist sentiment in areas where the Lega Nord gained consensus⁴. As is duly noted by Cento Bull & Gilbert

Many Lega voters knew precisely what they wanted in the early 1990s (less bureaucracy and immigration, lower taxes, greater decision making autonomy, more equitable division of resources between North and South) and rightly or wrongly came to the conclusion that the Lega was the most appropriate tool to achieve these goals⁵.

This study hopes to uncover the historical precedents for such demands. Catalonia provides a perfect model for comparison due to holding many historical parallels but also differences with Lombardy, Piedmont and the Veneto.

ii. What are the similarities and differences between the economic regionalism of Piedmont, Lombardy, Veneto and Catalonia?

The principal reason for making a comparison between this macro-region and Catalonia rather than other wealthy regions of Europe lies in the fact that during the 19th Century

in the south of Europe [...] south of Paris and of the Alps, the industrial revolution took place in two areas only: Lombardy and Catalonia. Naturally, this created a very distinct type of society within the whole of Spain⁶.

Not only this, but in the 1950s and 1960s both Piedmont and Catalonia experienced an economic boom known in both countries as an ‘economic miracle’. Whilst Lombardy and Piedmont will be compared historically with Catalonia in terms of *economic* regionalism in the Italian and Iberian peninsula, the Veneto, having added itself to the economic Macro-region in more recent times on the basis of a different economic model renders a comparison with Catalonia in the 19th century and mid-20th century more complex and less illuminating in economic terms⁷. However, due to the fact that this region has a unique history of culture and language, I will make reference to the Veneto when comparing the more cultural and linguistic aspects of this region with those of Catalan nationalism which have re-emerged in the recent calls for secession in Catalonia and the Veneto.

⁴ For two examples of such an analysis of the Lega Nord and history please see D. ALBERTAZZI, *Back to our roots or self-confessed manipulation? The uses of the past in the Lega Nord's positing of Padania*, in “National Identities”, Vol.8, Number 1, March 2006, pp. 21-41; M. HUYSSSEUNE, *Modernity and Secession: The Social Sciences and the Political discourse of the Lega Nord in Italy*. New York, Berghahn Books, 2006.

⁵ A. CENTO BULL, M. GILBERT, *The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian politics* cit., p. 49.

⁶ Discorso di J. PUJOL, in D. KLEINER-LIEBAU, *Migration and the Construction of National Identity in Spain*, Madrid, Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2009, p.180.

⁷ A. BAGNASCO, *Tre Italie. La problematica territoriale dello sviluppo italiano*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1977.

2. Methodology.

This article draws to a large extent upon existing secondary literature on regional histories of Italy and Spain. However, the study is of a cross-disciplinary nature and further to historical literature and incorporates material from disciplines ranging from political sciences to immigration studies. I have also taken advantage of the online archives of *La Stampa*, to analyse the origins of the Lega Nord during the 1950s and 1960s in Piedmont⁸. For further research on Catalonia I have carried out research using the vast online newspaper and journal archive of *Biblioteca Virtual de Prensa Histórica*⁹. For more contemporary sources regarding the Veneto and Catalonia I have referred to the online Catalan language edition of Barcelona newspaper *El Periodico*, Lega Nord party newspaper *La Padania* and Venetian nationalist newspaper *vicenzapiù*¹⁰.

2.1 Key political concepts and actors.

i. The CiU:

In terms of this study, the most relevant political organization in Catalonia is the 'Convergència i Unió' (CiU) which was formed "as an alliance between two moderate Catalan nationalist parties, Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya and Unió Democràtica de Catalunya (UDC)" in 1978¹¹. The importance of the CiU lies in the fact that "within two years it became the governing party in Catalonia's autonomous institutions (known as the Generalitat of Catalonia)"¹². A key figure in Catalan regionalism has always been Jordi Pujol whose "strong leadership [...] exercised from the presidency of the Generalitat, also favoured the presidentialisation of CiU"¹³. Today the CiU, under the leadership of Artur Mas and, taking advantage of the climate of secession and autonomy which is currently embracing Europe, have demanded a referendum on independence from the Spanish state.

ii. Catalonia:

A key writer on Catalan nationalism, Monserrat Guibernau has noted that

Fundamental to the history of Catalan nationalism is the fact that Catalonia became a nation without a state only after a long period from the ninth century up to 1714 during which it enjoyed its own political institutions and laws¹⁴.

⁸ www.archiviolaStampa.it

⁹ <http://prensahistorica.mcu.es/es/estaticos/contenido.cmd?pagina=estaticos/presentacion>

¹⁰ <http://www.elperiodico.cat/ca>

<http://www.lapadania.net/>

<http://www.vicenzapiu.com/>

¹¹ A. BARRIO, O. BARBERA, *Convergència i Unió*, in *From Protest to Power: Autonomist Parties and the challenges of Representation*, Edited by A. Elias and F. Tronconi, Vienna, Braumuller, 2011, p. 75.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ *Ivi*, p. 85.

¹⁴ M. GUIBERNAU, *Nations without States – Political communities in a Global Age*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1999, p. 38.

Since the fall of the centralising Francoist government and the 1979 Statute of Autonomy, many of these aforementioned institutions and laws have been re-established. However – and this is a vital point in terms of economic regionalism – “the Autonomous Communities were granted significant control over spending, but the central state retained effective control of their financing” and the central state is, therefore, still in effective control of collecting and levying taxes¹⁵. Principally bordered by France and Andorra to the north, the Mediterranean Sea to the east, and the Spanish regions of Aragon and the Valencian Community to west and south respectively, Catalonia is made up of four provinces: (the capital) Barcelona, Girona, Lleida, and Tarragona.

iii. The Lega Nord:

The 1980s oversaw a period of de-industrialization that brought to an end the period of what Diamanti has highlighted as the “Grande Nord” (Great North) and placed the North in a state of extreme economic flux, seeing the emergence of a “questione settentrionale” (Northern Question) which reignited the debates surrounding the North/South divide¹⁶. Economic pressures were compounded by two political crises; firstly, the collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989 had a destabilizing effect in Italy’s “bipartismo imperfetto” which had, since the establishment of the First Italian Republic, consisted of a polarization between the DC and the PCI with the latter permanently excluded from government. Secondly, in the early 1990s, the uncovering of a corruption scandal which came to be known as Tangentopoli saw a wave of electoral reform sweep away the identity and consensus of the traditional parties of the First Italian Republic. A political organization which benefited greatly from this changing face in Italian and European politics was a loose federation of Northern “Leagues” (anti-political, and autonomist organizations later to become one party under the banner of Lega Nord) under the leadership of the charismatic Umberto Bossi began campaigning for greater regional autonomy for the Northern regions of Italy from what they saw and portrayed in their political propaganda as a corrupt and inefficient central Roman government biased toward the South. On September 15 1996 following a radicalization of policy from autonomy to secessionism the Lega Nord in Venice held a declaration of, albeit unofficial, “independence” of their north Italian state of “Padania”. The fact that the Lega Nord was originally an alliance between Lega Lombarda, Liga Veneta and Union Piemonteise is highly significant in terms of the Macro-Region. Although the Lega Lombarda under Bossi was to become the driving force of the Lega Nord, Piedmont was originally the most powerful partner in this coalition. In addition, as shall become clear later in this article, the notion of Padania had strong roots in Piedmont. At the same time Liga Veneta focused initially on the promotion of Venetian language and culture and

¹⁵ A. SMITH, P. HEYWOOD, *Regional Government in France and Spain, 2000*, <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/spp/publications/unit-publications/64.pdf>. Accessed on 28/05/2014.

¹⁶ I. DIAMANTI, *Bianco, Rosso, Verde e Azzurro: Mappe e colori dell’Italiana politica*, Milano, Il Mulino, 2003, pp. 57-65.

Venice's history as an independent republic, something which was problematic for the idea of a homogenous "North Italian" state¹⁷.

iv. Where and what is Padania?

Although the Lega Nord claims that Padania represents North Italy, a solid historical precedent for Northern *regions* let alone a homogenous northern *nation* has been called into question in recent studies¹⁸. Research carried out by Marco Meriggi focuses in part on the invention of tradition which helped create a regional identity in the northern "Macro-region" in the decades leading up to the Risorgimento¹⁹. Such research should be borne in mind when reading the Lega Nord ideologue Gilberto Oneto's claims of "northern Italy as a natural political unit whose formal constitution as a state has been prevented only by accidents of history and the malevolence of the Italian political class"²⁰. Such a claim is typical of "nations without a state" "[requiring] the existence of some intellectuals prepared to build up a nationalist discourse different from and often opposed to that of the state"²¹. It should also be noted, however, that Oneto is drawing heavily upon existing historiographical debate surrounding the Risorgimento²². The idea of Italy being born by "accident", holds great significance in this historiographical debate and is advocated by a "revisionist" school of thought which contains historians who essentially "stress the 'accidental character' of national unification and see it as only one possible outcome among many"²³. A key proponent of this interpretation was Denis Mack Smith who challenged Liberal historians who argue that the scale of the "liberal achievement of the Risorgimento was truly impressive" and Marxist historians who "tend to emphasize the potential for revolutionary change in the Risorgimento and the differences between moderates and democrats"²⁴. Instead "Mack Smith [...] depicted the achievement of unification as a series of mistakes and expediencies [and] placed himself firmly in the Risorgimento as failure camp"²⁵. Mack Smith is consequently one of the most quoted historians in the works of Gilberto Oneto who has been keen to claim a historical precedent for the macro-region of the North, often quoting Cavour's plan for a

¹⁷ "La Lega Lombarda paradossalmente non viene dalla Lombardia. Il 31 Maggio 1978 nasce il Movimento per la rinascita piemontese di Roberto Gremmo che pubblica *Arnassita piemoneisa*, organo di stampa al quale quattro anni più tardi viene allegato in (forse 'il') foglio 'Lombardia Autonomista' [...] Rispetto agli altri gruppi autonomisti, la Lega autonomista Lombarda è un fratello minore", G. PASSALACQUA, *Il Vento della Padania: Storia della Lega Nord 1984-2000*, Milano, Mondadori, 2009, p. 15. For more information on the unique history of the Liga Veneta please see I. DIAMANTI, P. ALLUM, *The Autonomous Leagues in the Veneto*, in *Italian Regionalism*, Edited by C. Levy, Oxford, Berg, pp. 151-170.

¹⁸ M. MERIGGI, *Breve storia dell'Italia settentrionale dall'Ottocento a oggi*, Roma, Donzelli, 1996, p. 11.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ A. CENTO BULL, M. GILBERT, *The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian Politics* cit., p. 116.

²¹ M. GUIBERNAU, *Nations without States – Political communities in a Global Age* cit., p. 90.

²² Please see G. ONETO, *L'invenzione della Padania: La rinascita della Comunità più antica dell'Europa*, Bergamo, Foedus, 1997.

²³ L. RIALI, *The Italian Risorgimento: State, Society and National Unification*, New York, Routledge, p. 21.

²⁴ Ivi, p.3.

²⁵ Ivi, p.5. For a key work of revisionist historiography please see D. MACK SMITH, *The Making of Italy 1796-1866*, MacMillan Press 1968. For key Marxist historiography on the Risorgimento please see A. GRAMSCI, *Il Risorgimento*, London 1971; F. DELLA PERUTA, *I democratici e la rivoluzione italiana*, Milano 1958. For Liberal historiography please see R. ROMEO, *Dal Piemonte sabauda all'Italia liberale*, Torino, Einaudi, 1964; B. CROCE, *History of Italy – 1871-1915*, Russell & Russell 1963.

Kingdom of Upper Italy²⁶. *Padania* was seen as a solution to the accident of unification by Lega Nord ideologue, Gianfranco Miglio who held a vision of restructuring Italy into three macro-regions North, Centre and South with the North being “composed of Lombardy, Piedmont, Liguria, Emilia Romagna, Tuscany and the Veneto”²⁷.

One of the most significant uses of the word “Padania” was that by *Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Piemontese* (MARP), which eventually mutated into a movement called *Libera Padania* in 1972²⁸. The emergence of MARP is something which I will expand upon later in the article. For now, what is important is to note the use of the term *Padania* emerged long before being adopted by the Lega Nord and has been used by writers such as Gianni Brera²⁹. Whilst Damian Tambini claims that *Padania* “exists, as a project and as a recognizable pronoun in at least some of the ways that Italy existed in the mid-19th Century when it was dismissed by Metternich as a ‘mere geographical expression’”³⁰ it is important to remember that in actual fact a poll “carried out in January 1998 on behalf of the magazine *liMes*, found that 68.9% of interviewed Northerners regarded secession as ‘unacceptable or disastrous’”³¹. Due to its controversial nature, therefore, I will refrain from using the term “Padania” in this article. What will, instead, prove useful as tools in this comparative study are the regions, which in the discourse of the Lega Nord, form the “macro-region” of the North: Lombardy, Piedmont and the Veneto. Only by treating them separately, however, can we make any valid comparison with Catalonia.

3. Economic Regionalism.

Put simply, the relative economic success in the past decades of the “richer” regions of Europe has “fuelled political demands for more powers and autonomy from the central state”³². This “economic regionalism” has played a key role in the emergence of new political movements (the Lega Nord) whilst also reinforcing already existing claims for self-determination of regions such as those of “Catalonia (Spain), Baden Wurttemberg (Germany), Lombardy (Italy) and Rhone Alps (France) [which] came

²⁶ Mack Smith writes that “the valley of the Po, the Romagna, and the Legations would form a kingdom of Upper Italy under the House of Savoy. Rome and its immediate surroundings would be left to the Pope. The rest of the Papal States. Together with Tuscany, would form a kingdom of central Italy. The Neapolitan frontier would be left unchanged. These four Italian states would form a confederation on the pattern of the German Bund, the presidency of which would be given to the Pope to console him for losing the best part of his estates”. D. MACK SMITH, *The Making of Italy 1796-1866* cit., p. 240.

²⁷ A. CENTO BULL, M. GILBERT, *The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian Politics* cit., p. 23.

²⁸ G. ONETO, *Strana Unità. Risorgimento: buono, inutile o dannoso?*, Rimini, Il Cerchio, 2012, p. 22.

²⁹ G. BRERA, *Storia dei Lombardi*, Milano, Baldini & Castoldi, 1993.

³⁰ D. TAMBINI, *Nationalism in Italian politics: the stories of the Northern League, 1980-2000*, in “European politics”, 3, 2001, p. 150. Oneto has been keen to use this as an example for a precedent for Padania in his writings to give historical legitimacy for a unified homogenous northern state. For more information please see G. ONETO, *Strana Unità. Risorgimento: buono, inutile o dannoso?* cit.

³¹ I. DIAMANTI, *La Tentazione del Nord: Meno Italia e meno Europa*, in “liMes”, 1, 1998, pp. 151-162.

³² P. VAN HOUTEN, *Economic Regionalism in federal and hybrid systems of government*, in *Routledge Handbook of Regionalism and Federalism*, Edited by J. Loughlin, J. Kincaid, W. Swenden, London, Routledge, 2013, p. 145.

together in the late 1980s to form the Four Motors of Europe, a lobby group that represents these wealthy and economically strong regions”³³. Carol Ruzza claims that such regionalist sentiment as that espoused by the Lega Nord is an example of a new regionalism due to the fact that it has “an added ingredient beyond the reaction against a form of internal colonialism by a centralized state [...] the sense of grievance of a relatively rich region”³⁴. This type of regionalism can hardly be claimed to be “new”; Christopher Seton-Watson stated that by the time of the 1890s and most notably in Lombardy

regionalist sentiment had changed in character since 1870. *Ancien regime* separatism, founded on sentimental attachment to the old historical divisions, had vanished and been replaced by a new regionalism of a predominantly economic nature³⁵.

A form of regionalism spurred on by economic factors was, therefore, not as new as has been claimed in recent studies.

3.1 Europe of the Regions.

Part of the reason for the emergence of groups such as the Four Motors of Europe has been the active role of the European Union in the promotion of the region through organizations such as “Committee of the Regions” which “has [...] by eroding the autonomy of individual Member States, brought regional factors to the forefront”³⁶. The newly founded role of the region means that “the state is no longer the only source of ultimate authority” and due to “new opportunities created by global economic changes for regional economies [...] old frontiers no longer make sense”³⁷. West European separatist nationalisms are today in favour of bypassing their national governments by appealing directly to Brussels as “regions”³⁸. However, just as Eric Hobsbawm has observed the collapse of the Soviet Bloc in 1989 and the “explosion of separatism in 1988-92” as the “unfinished business” of the temporary break up of Tsarist Russia in 1918-22 so the emergence of regional tensions in North Italy and Catalonia must be seen as the unfinished business of regional tensions and stereotypes which date back to the 1800s³⁹.

3.2 Key stereotypical polarities.

The issue of stereotypes is the result of a complex discourse of the European nature of the North and the African/Oriental nature of the south. Charles Montesquieu, when writing about Italy compared it

³³ T.W. GOLD, *The Lega Nord and Contemporary politics in Italy*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p. 7.

³⁴ C. RUZZA, *Language and Nationalism in Italy: Language as a Weak Marker of Identity*, in *Language and Nationalism in Europe*, Edited by S. Barbour and C. Carmichael, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 179.

³⁵ C. SETON-WATSON, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism 1870-1925*, London, Methuen & Co ltd, 1967, p. 186.

³⁶ J. LOUGHLIN, *Representing Regions in Europe: The Committee of the Regions*, in *The Regional Dimension of the European Union: Towards a Third Level in Europe*, Edited by C. Jeffery, London-Portland, Frank Cass, 1997, p. 148.

³⁷ E. HEPBURN, *Degrees of Independence: SNP Thinking in an International Context* in *The Modern SNP, From Protest to Power*, Edited by G. Hassan, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009, p. 200.

³⁸ E. HOBSBAWM, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780 – Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 185.

³⁹ Ivi, pp. 163-165.

with the otherness of Spain by stating that “being, along with Spain, one of the main components of southern Europe, it has affinities with Asia”⁴⁰. The French writer identified features that “distinguish northerners from southerners, emphasizing in particular the contrast between industriousness and laziness, love of freedom and an inclination towards servitude”⁴¹. “Industrious” “civilized” and “freedom loving” and the South being “idle” “backward” and “dependent” are the stereotypes stated by Dickie⁴² and such a series of mutually conflicting stereotypes are mirrored in the Catalan case. Hargreaves has noted that “Catalans are supposed to have a liking for hard work, to be frugal and efficient, to possess a certain genius for innovation”⁴³. Castilians “in contrast [to Catalans] are held to be inclined to over-indulge their emotions, to live for the moment, to be prone to indolence and to have a morbid, effete side to their character and a taste for oppressing and exploiting people”⁴⁴ whilst also being “arrogant and lazy, unwilling to dirty their hands with work”⁴⁵. In the Spanish peninsula, “industrialization was largely concentrated in three regions – Asturias, and especially the Basque country and Catalonia – in contrast, the political core of the country, Madrid, remained relatively underdeveloped”⁴⁶. Similarly, in Italy, “Italian industry [...] until the end of the century [...] was confined to the regions of Piedmont, Liguria, and Lombardy”⁴⁷. In both countries, this proved to be of great detriment to the South whose industry lagged behind the North. Whilst the north of each peninsula was seen as following a European model, the south was seen as increasingly African or Oriental. Both Spain and Italy were home to racist literature in the 19th century which must be read as part of a wider European discourse of racialism which was owed to

the triumphs of Western Europe’s ascendant nineteenth-century powers (France, Germany and England) [which] became the *prima facie* evidence of their Nordic racial superiority, just as Spain’s exhaustion and Italian impotence were the results of a predominantly Latin inferiority⁴⁸.

In 1806, Creuzé de Lesser wrote “Europe ends at Naples and ends badly. Calabria, Sicily and all the rest belong to Africa”⁴⁹. A similar description was made of Spain by Pompeu Gener who stated that “the

⁴⁰ N. MOE, *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question*, California, California University Press, p. 26.

⁴¹ Ivi, p. 25.

⁴² For a full analysis of such stereotypes, please see J. DICKIE, *Darkest Italy: the nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno*, New York, St. Martins Press, 1999. See also A. NICEFORO, *L’Italia barbara contemporanea. Studi e appunti*, Milano-Palermo, Sandron, 1998.

⁴³ J. HARGREAVES, *Freedom for Catalonia? Catalan Nationalism, Spanish Identity and the Barcelona Olympic Games*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 22.

⁴⁴ Ivi, p. 23.

⁴⁵ D. GILMOUR, *Cities of Spain*, London, Pimlico, 1992, p. 138.

⁴⁶ J. DEL RIO LUELO, A. WILLIAMS, *Regionalism in Iberia*, in *Regionalism in the European Union*, Edited by Peter Wagstaff, Exeter, Intellect, 1999, pp. 167-188 and p. 173.

⁴⁷ C. DUGGAN, *A concise history of Italy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 151.

⁴⁸ W. A. DOUGLASS, *Sabino’s sin: racism and the founding of Basque nationalism*, in *Ethnonationalism in the Contemporary World*, Edited by D. Conversi, London, Routledge, 2004, p. 98.

⁴⁹ G. GRIBAUDI, *Images of the South: The Mezzogiorno as seen by Insiders and Outsiders*, in *The New History of the Italian South*, Edited by R. Lumley and J. Morris, Exeter, Exeter University Press, p. 87.

Northern, Gothic character of Catalonia was opposed to the Arab and Berber nature of Castile”⁵⁰. Gener’s embracement of this discourse was mirrored by Alfredo Niceforo – one of a number of influential Italian writers on racial anthropology in the later 19th and early 20th century – who stated that “the inhabitants of southern Italy originally descended from Africans”⁵¹. Niceforo was a student of controversial criminologist Cesare Lombroso, who “was convinced that [...] the enduring reality of regional divisions [was] fostered through [...] race”⁵².

In both the cases of North Italy and Catalonia there was a growing frustration with the modus operandi of the central governments in Rome and Madrid. In Spain “two dynastic parties, the Conservatives and Liberals, monopolized power and rotated in office [...] with the results of the elections decided in advance in a process of negotiation between the minister of the interior and the *caciques*”⁵³. The blurring of party lines in Italy from the 1880s onwards, known as “transformismo” mirrored this experience and in the mid to late 19th Century both Rome and Madrid were seen as “parasitic” “corrupt” and “dark”, “dirty” and “frivolous” whilst also being “unable to fulfil their roles as a political, economic and cultural capital”⁵⁴. Cruz sums it up well by stating that “Madrid, like Rome [...] has served as an archetype for the powerful and parasitic city, while Barcelona and Milan [...] stood for their industriousness and commercial activity”⁵⁵. As the 19th Century was entering its final decade, in Catalonia, the “elites [were] increasingly [...] hamstrung by an inefficient, backward, parasitical centre that did not recognize their region’s unique qualities or represent its interests”⁵⁶. Similarly, in Lombardy “continued progress now seemed threatened by the deadweight of the ‘medieval South and by a bureaucratic and (after the banking scandals) corrupt central government intent on high military spending and unrealistic dreams of national glory”⁵⁷. It is this issue of military adventurism in both Spain and Italy to which we now turn.

⁵⁰ D. CONVERSI, *The Basques, The Catalans and Spain: Alternative routes to Nationalist Mobilisation* cit., p. 193.

⁵¹ D. FORGACS, *Italy’s Margins: Social Exclusion and Nation Formation since 1861*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 103.

⁵² D. PICK, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder c.1848-c.1918*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 119.

⁵³ F.J. ROMERO SALVADO, A. SMITH, *The Agony of Spanish Liberalism and the Origins of Dictatorship: A European Framework*, in *The Agony of Spanish Liberalism, from Revolution to Dictatorship*, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 1913-1923, p. 3.

⁵⁴ For more information on the history of these definitions of Madrid and Rome please see C. SETON-WATSON, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism 1870-1925* cit.; D. GILMOUR, *Cities of Spain* cit.; S. JULIA, *Madrid Historia de Un Capital (Fiction, Poetry and Drama)*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 1994; A. CARRACIOLO, *Roma capitale dal Risorgimento alla crisi dello stato liberale*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1956.

⁵⁵ J. CRUZ, *Gentlemen, Bourgeois and Revolutionaries, Political Change and Cultural Persistence among the Spanish dominant groups 1750-1850*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 16.

⁵⁶ J. HARGREAVES, *Freedom for Catalonia? Catalan Nationalism, Spanish Identity and the Barcelona Olympic Games* cit., p. 27.

⁵⁷ C. DUGGAN, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796*, New York, Allen Lane, 2007, p. 649.

4. Case Study 1 – The economic regionalism of the 1890s.

The question of empire in 1896 in Italy and 1898 in Catalonia was causing both the Spanish and Italian government significant political difficulties and helped fan the flames of economic regionalism. The political crisis of Milan in 1896 which came to be known as *Lo Stato di Milano* saw the coming together of “Left, Right, industrialists and workers”⁵⁸ in a battle against Prime Minister, Francesco Crispi’s “fiscalism and bureaucratic centralism, militarism and colonialism”⁵⁹. Opposition to Crispi’s militarism was due to a fear that northern industry would eventually be brought to ruin by a central state led by a Sicilian that gave preference to the South whilst sacrificing the interests of the North in search of colonial expansion and led to “calls for federalism and even for outright secession becoming insistent”⁶⁰. There was a conviction in Lombardy that the Milanese had been sacrificed to pay for a large part the costs of Italian unification and therefore felt like the real victims of the new Italy⁶¹. The emergence of Catalan nationalism from the 1880s was also strongly linked to the belief that dynamic Catalonia was being “sacrificed” and held back by the backward Spanish state⁶². This was accelerated by what was referred to as “The Disaster”: a defeat in a short war with the USA in which Spain lost “its last overseas territories in the Pacific and the Carribean in 1898”⁶³. Almost two thirds of Catalan industrialists’ exports had gone to Cuba⁶⁴ and in the wake of the defeat the regime came to be seen as an impediment to modernization with calls being made for *Regeneracion*, which principally meant a demand for major institutional changes⁶⁵. Significantly, the Catalan strand of *Regeneracion* “was couched in regionalist terms” due to the fact that the “Cuban defeat appeared as the foreseeable outcome of years of faulty centralism by a putrescent corrupt administration”⁶⁶.

⁵⁸ A. LYTTELTON, *Shifting Identities: Nation, Region and City in Italian Regionalism*, Edited by C. Levy, Oxford, Berg, 1996, pp. 33-53 and p. 48.

⁵⁹ F. FONZI, *Crispi e lo stato di Milano*, Milano, Giuffrè, p. XXII.

⁶⁰ C. DUGGAN, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* cit., p. 345.

⁶¹ F. FONZI, *Crispi e lo stato di Milano* cit., p. XVI.

⁶² A. SMITH, *The Lliga Regionalista, The Catalan Right and the making of the Primo De Rivera Dictatorship, 1916-23*, in *The Agony of Spanish Liberalism from Revolution to Dictatorship, 1913-23*, Edited by F.J. Romero Salvado, A. Smith, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, p. 146.

⁶³ F.J. ROMERO SALVADO, A. SMITH, *The Agony of Spanish Liberalism and the Origins of Dictatorship: A European Framework* cit., p. 8.

⁶⁴ D. CONVERSI, *The Basques, The Catalans and Spain: Alternative routes to Nationalist Mobilisation* cit., p. 24.

⁶⁵ F.J. ROMERO SALVADO, A. SMITH, *The Agony of Spanish Liberalism and the Origins of Dictatorship: A European Framework* cit., p. 8; EL BIEN PUBLICO, *La Regeneracion o al Abismo!*, Wednesday 30th November, 1898, http://prensahistorica.mcu.es/clandestina/en/consulta/resultados_busqueda_restringida.cmd?busq_anyopublicacion=1898&idOrigen=2630&descrip_anyopublicacion=1898&tipoResultados=PAG

⁶⁶ D. CONVERSI, *The Basques, The Catalans and Spain: Alternative routes to Nationalist Mobilisation* cit., p. 26.

4.1 Similarities.

In 1908, there were Spanish concerns over Catalan “separatist demands” with one newspaper stating that “if they (the Catalans) choose evolution, we are saved, if it is revolution, then we are lost”⁶⁷. Evolution was by far the preferred choice of two figures who had become the leading voices of Catalan nationalism, Pi I Almirall and Prat de la Riba. Both were advancing the idea of a federalism which would favour Catalonia yet allow it to remain as part of the Spanish state. As has been noted by Llobera the idea of independent statehood for Catalonia “was not incompatible with the idea of a federation of Iberian states [...] it was important to find a formula to keep the unity of the Iberian peninsula”⁶⁸. Both Almirall and De La Riba by “excluding separatism” hoped “to resolve the Catalan problem within Spanish unity on the basis of autonomy and the characteristics of the Catalan people”⁶⁹. Although Lo Stato di Milano had seen increased calls for secessionism, in reality such ideas had an important earlier advocate in the Milanese Carlo Cattaneo whose ideas envisioned a “Swiss-like confederation of the different regions in Italy”⁷⁰. As has been noted by Mack Smith Cattaneo’s principal concern was to prevent too strong a concentration on national unity which would endanger “the individual freedoms which he placed before everything”⁷¹. The right of the individual to express the unique character attributed to their region, be it Catalonia or Lombardy, is a highly relevant similarity which is brought to light through comparisons between the two federalist discourses.

This unique character was claimed to have inspired the development of local industry and the desire to protect this industry was a key factor in the development and promotion of Catalan federalist thought of figures such as Pi I Margall who wished to “protect and modernize local industry in the midst of a traditional and largely agrarian Spanish state”⁷². As has been noted by Conversi, the Lliga Regionalista, as “the first fully fledged Catalanist political party was dominated by industrialist leaders”⁷³. Similarly, in Lombardy,

⁶⁷ *Despues de la lucha*, Thursday 24th December 1908, año XXXVII, n. 10, 692.
http://prensahistorica.mcu.es/ clandestina/en/consulta/resultados_ocr.cmd?posicion=1&formato_fechapublicacion=dd%2FMM%2Fyyyy&tipoResultados=NUM&forma=ficha&id=61. Accessed: 17/05/2014.

⁶⁸ J. LLOBERA, *Foundations of National Identity: From Catalonia to Europe* cit., p. 80.

⁶⁹ *Diario de noticias: eco imparcial de la opinión y de la prensa*, Año XLVI, n. 19027, June 13th 1923.
http://prensahistorica.mcu.es/es/consulta/resultados_busqueda_restringida.cmd?descrip_pertenece=La+correspondencia+de+Valencia++%3A+diario+de+noticias+%3A+eco+imparcial+de+la+opini%C3%B3n+y+de+la+prensa&busq_pertenece=La+correspondencia+de+Valencia++%3A+diario+de+noticias+%3A+eco+imparcial+de+la+opini%C3%B3n+y+de+la+prensa&idOrigen=139&tipoResultados=PAG. Accessed: 18/05/2014.

⁷⁰ T.W. GOLD, *The Lega Nord and Contemporary politics in Italy* cit., p. 25.

⁷¹ D. MACK SMITH, *The Making of Italy 1796-1866* cit., p. 341.

⁷² D. CONVERSI, *The Basques, The Catalans and Spain: Alternative routes to Nationalist Mobilization* cit., p. 26.

⁷³ *Ibidem*.

civic pride had been fuelled by the remarkable recent achievements of engineers and industrialists such as Giovan Battista Pirelli, Giulio Prinetti, and Giuseppe Colombo (Colombo had established the first central electricity generating plant in Europe in Milan in 1883)⁷⁴.

Indeed, Cattaneo gave expression to the industrious nature of Lombardy and a local community dedicated to promoting development and progress in Europe⁷⁵.

Cattaneo's Lombard-centric federalism found expression between 1836 and 1845 in the pages of *Annali universali di statistica*, *Il Politecnico*, and *Rivista europea* which spoke of a flourishing and hard-working bourgeois civilization in Lombardy which was the epicentre of "progress" and "civilization"⁷⁶. Cattaneo considered Piedmont as an aristocratic authoritarian, priest-ridden state which lagged behind Lombardy in culture, tolerance, and economic growth⁷⁷ and just as he was concerned not to let Piedmont oppress Lombard character and culture, "Prat was concerned with the degeneration of the Catalan character as a result of the oppressive nature of the Spanish state". Similar to the "progressive" and "civilized" nature of Lombards, Prat de La Riba praised the Catalans in "the *Compendi de la doctrina catalanista* published in 1894" for their "practical" and "utilitarian" spirit, the fact that they were inclined to "entreprenuerial activities"⁷⁸.

This civic pride was key in pressurizing the Spanish government to concede "a limited form of regional government to Catalonia in 1914 (the Mancomunitat)"⁷⁹ which

marked for the first time recognition of the distinct *personality* of Catalonia [...] the clear *superiority* of Catalan over Castilian in the basic elements of the modern state-bureaucracy and administration⁸⁰.

The Mancomunitat, therefore, can be seen to have served as a precursor for the modern re-establishment of the Generalitat de Catalunya and their aim to help "them reach the next logical step in Catalonia's political evolution: a statute of autonomy"⁸¹ Jordi Pujol of the CiU, furthermore, underlined the importance of the industrial and economic revolution of the nineteenth century in the development of Catalan identity as "Catalonia as economically more developed and more progressive than the rest of Spain and the Catalans as hard-working and serious"⁸². The role of economic regionalism in the civic pride as a historic precedent for the CiU is mirrored in the case of the Lega Nord. It was this civic pride which was a driving force in "the various opposition groups in Lombardy [which in 1896] could draw,

⁷⁴ C. DUGGAN, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* cit., p. 649.

⁷⁵ M. MERIGGI, *Breve storia dell'Italia settentrionale dall'Ottocento a oggi* cit., pp. 6-7.

⁷⁶ N. MOE, *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question* cit., pp. 110-111.

⁷⁷ D. MACK SMITH, *The Making of Italy 1796-1866* cit., p. 92.

⁷⁸ J. LLOBERA, *Foundations of National Identity: From Catalonia to Europe* cit., p. 80.

⁷⁹ J. HARGREAVES, *Freedom for Catalonia? Catalan Nationalism, Spanish Identity and the Barcelona Olympic Games* cit., p. 27.

⁸⁰ G. JENSEN, *Dangerous Neutrality. Spain, the Great War, and Modern Catalan Nationalism*, in *World War One and the Cultures of Modernity*, Edited by P. Mackaman, M. Mays, Mississippi, Mississippi University Press, 2007, p. 120.

⁸¹ Ivi, p. 170.

⁸² D. KLEINER-LIEBAU, *Migration and the Construction of National Identity in Spain* cit., p. 181.

particularly in Milan itself, on a growing autonomist current⁸³. This autonomist current reemerged during the 1980s under the Lega Nord flying the banner of “Roma Ladrona” (Rome the Thief) hoping to unite the different Northern regions in a single action of fiscal protest against a central state whose state machinery (the civil service, bureaucracy and government ministers) had become increasingly “Southernised”. Similarly, during the 1890s, Lombard identity was being “reformulated just at the time when the South, in the person of Crispi, for the first time became dominant in national politics”⁸⁴. Crispi also sparked a fear that “a change in the direction of the country’s politics would no longer respond to the interests or aspirations of Lombards”⁸⁵ just as in the 1980s when “middle classes in Lombardy [...] increasingly prone to a ‘fear of falling’ and insecurity born of economic uncertainty veered towards [...] the ‘chauvinism of prosperity’” and turned to the Lega Nord⁸⁶.

4.2 Differences.

However, in Italy any hope of federalism or autonomy providing a stable form of government, even at a local and limited level such as the Mancomunitat, had been effectively poisoned in 1848. After the uprising against Austria in Lombardy when King Charles Albert led the Piedmontese to Milan he turned his back on the patriots and appealed to the aristocracy and then signed a “armistice and [abandoned] Lombardy (without even consulting his ministers)”⁸⁷. The wars of 1848 and 1849 opened up distrust and “divisions [...] between different regions and neighbouring towns, between federalists and unitarists”⁸⁸. This lack of cohesion in the North was also evident following the fall of Crispi when the aforementioned coalition of Socialists, Liberals and Industrialists who had united against Crispi fell apart, thus halting any further push towards autonomy. In addition to the historical factors stated above, a further reason for this lack of unity can be highlighted through a comparison with Catalonia which had managed to foster a strong linguistic and cultural identity. Indeed one of the Mancomunitat’s aims was of “fostering the regional culture”⁸⁹. This had been given new impetus in the period of the *Renaixença* which began as a “literary movement during the 1830s and ‘40s” and “provided an ideal basis for the subsequent spread of nationalism”⁹⁰. The works produced during the *Renaixença* “constituted a solid base upon which political nationalism could draw its stable legitimacy” and meant that Catalanism as a political movement could “rely on a pre-existing definition of Catalan identity”⁹¹. This period allowed “the intellectual development of the ideas” in which “language emerges as the

⁸³ C. DUGGAN, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* cit., p. 649.

⁸⁴ A. LYTTTELTON, *Shifting Identities: Nation, Region and City* cit., pp. 48-49.

⁸⁵ F. FONZI, *Crispi e lo stato di Milano* cit., p. XVII.

⁸⁶ D. TAMBINI, *Nationalism in Italian politics: the stories of the Northern League, 1980-2000* cit., p. 30.

⁸⁷ C. DUGGAN, *A concise history of Italy* cit., pp. 113-114.

⁸⁸ D. MACK SMITH, *The Making of Italy 1796-1866* cit., p. 163.

⁸⁹ S. PAYNE, *A History of Spain and Portugal*, Wisconsin, Wisconsin University Press, 1973, p. 606.

⁹⁰ D. CONVERSI, *The Basques, The Catalans and Spain: Alternative routes to Nationalist Mobilisation* cit., p. 13.

⁹¹ Ivi, p. 16.

central issue around which the Catalans based their claims to a separate identity”⁹² including “the promotion of their own language, particularly through literature and other cultural activities and through the education system”⁹³. Although Catalan nationalism was to take the course of federalism, in the wake of the Disaster, anti-Castilian, anti-Flamenco and essentially separatist expressions were given extra force by the use of Catalan language and customs. In 1899, at a meeting of Catalan nationalists much reference was made to the *Renaixença* when advocating secession from a Spanish state which had different cultures and customs, reference was also made to the separate flag and national anthem⁹⁴. Whereas historians in Lombardy, Piedmont and Venice began writing histories of their regions which each narrated the “civic virtue” of the region and a tradition tied to territorial belonging, there was in reality little emphasis on literature, music or art, nor were there any important national markers of identity such as a separate national anthem⁹⁵. Most importantly, the emphasis was on each separate region rather than a homogenous “macro-region”. Therefore, while a strong linguistic and cultural element helped the Catalan’s claims, the lack of it in Lombardy was an impediment to Lombard claims for autonomy.

5. Case Study 2 – Economic miracles and internal migration.

5.1 Similarities.

The economic miracle of the 1950s and 1960s in both Spain and Italy was to mirror the industrialization which took place in the 19th century in both countries in a number of ways. Firstly, in its geographical location: the development of industry was once again “massively uneven” and “geographically limited” in both countries with the Spanish miracle being “concentrated in the three traditional industrial regions, together with Madrid”⁹⁶ and the Italian boom being limited to “the north-west and parts of the north-east and the Centre”⁹⁷. In both countries the South, which “was left almost untouched” remained “relatively undeveloped and figured amongst the poorest regions in Europe”⁹⁸. A huge pattern of migration into the industrial region of Piedmont and Catalonia saw in Italy “hundreds of thousands of peasants, many of them from the South, [poured] into the northern cities”⁹⁹ and

⁹² C. MAR-MOLINERO, *The Iberian Peninsula: Conflicting Linguistic Nationalisms in Language and Nationalism in Europe*, Edited by S. Barbour, C. Carmichael, 2000, pp. 83-105.

⁹³ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁴ *Los Catalanistas*, Año XXVIII. N. 7970. Friday 29th September 1899.

http://prensahistorica.mcu.es/es/consulta/resultados_busqueda_restringida.cmd?descrip_pertenece=El+bien+p%C3%BAblico&busq_pertenece=El+bien+p%C3%BAblico&idOrigen=1947&tipoResultados=PAG. Accessed: 17/05/2014.

⁹⁵ M. MERIGGI, *Breve storia dell'Italia settentrionale dall'Ottocento a oggi* cit., p. 11.

⁹⁶ J. DEL RIO LUELO, A. WILLIAMS, *Regionalism in Iberia*, in *Regionalism in the European Union* cit., p. 173.

⁹⁷ C. DUGGAN, *A concise history of Italy* cit., p. 264.

⁹⁸ J. DEL RIO LUELO, A. WILLIAMS, *Regionalism in Iberia* cit., p. 173.

⁹⁹ C. DUGGAN, *A concise history of Ital*, cit., p. 264.

similarly in Spain a “large-scale migration from the poorer regions of Spain to the more prosperous ones”¹⁰⁰. This led to “a revival of nationalism and regionalism” in Catalonia¹⁰¹ but also in Piedmont.

The establishment of the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno in Italy in spite of having the intention to close the gap between North and South, by providing funds to the South was actually to turn the South into a financial chasm¹⁰². The Cassa generated great opposition from the Piedmontese electorate in the 1950s due to the fear that it represented a “double burden” on their shoulders through having “to pay the highest taxes for the South as well as extra money for the inclusion of southerners in ‘their’ cities”¹⁰³. In Catalonia, there was “resentment [...] that they had to subsidize the poorer regions”¹⁰⁴ as government hand-outs meant that agriculture “became a net recipient of capital from the rest of the economy [limiting] public financial help in the other sectors”¹⁰⁵. Hostility to migration was partly due to racism in both cases. Internal migrants in North Italy were “often called *Marocchini* (Moroccans)”¹⁰⁶. As has been noted by Foot, “the racialization of the southern immigrants in particular – their *Otherness*, their *Outsiderness* – went very deep. This was also the level of language, of accent, of appearance”¹⁰⁷. In Catalonia, the immigrants from the South were viewed as “distant geographically, culturally, and linguistically”¹⁰⁸ and Hargreaves notes that “*xarnego* [...] is sometimes applied to working-class immigrants from the south of Spain, with something like the connotations of the term ‘nigger’”¹⁰⁹.

5.2 Differences.

Responses to the “southern invasion” (as internal migration was portrayed in both cases) were, however, very different. Just as Catalonia had seen the formation of the Lliga Regionalista at the turn of the century, the Piedmontese electorate were to find regionalist expression in a new political grouping called Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Piemontese (hereby referred to as MARP) which became the fifth largest political force in Piedmont in 1956¹¹⁰ by calling for “regional autonomy, a tactic

¹⁰⁰ J. DEL RIO LUELO, A. WILLIAMS, *Regionalism in Iberia* cit., p. 173.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰² A. CENTO BULL, M. GILBERT, *The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian Politics* cit., p. 14.

¹⁰³ E. CAPUSSOTTI, *Nordisti contro Sudisti. Internal Migration and Racism in Turin, Europe: 1950s and 1960s*, in “Italian Culture”, 28, n. 2, (2010), pp.121-38. <http://www.uninomade.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Nordisti-contro-Sudisti.-Internal-Migration-and-Racism-in-Turin-Europe-1950s-and-1960s.pdf>, p.7.

¹⁰⁴ J. DEL RIO LUELO, A. WILLIAMS, *Regionalism in Iberia in Regionalism in the European Union* cit., p. 173.

¹⁰⁵ S. LIEBERMAN, *The Contemporary Spanish Economy: A Historical Perspective*, London, Routledge, 2006, p. 95.

¹⁰⁶ G. PARATI, *Migration Italy: The Art of Talking Back in a Destination Culture*, Toronto, Toronto University Press, p. 144.

¹⁰⁷ J. FOOT, *Milan Since the Miracle*, Oxford, Berg, 2001, p. 39.

¹⁰⁸ A. ASTOR, *Context and Conflict: Unpacking the sources of opposition to mosques in Catalonia*, in “Revista Catalana de Sociologia”, 28, p. 52.

¹⁰⁹ J. HARGREAVES, *Freedom for Catalonia? Catalan Nationalism, Spanish Identity and the Barcelona Olympic Games* cit., p. 23.

¹¹⁰ *Il MARP. Chi sono e cosa vogliono*, Friday 1 June 1956.

http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,2/articleid,0059_01_1956_0127_0002_14019902/. Accessed: 05/02/2014.

designed to keep in Piedmont the taxes sent to the central state”¹¹¹ and adopting a fiercely anti-southern stance; a defining electoral slogan of MARP in 1959 was “Fuori Napoli da Torino”¹¹².

Just like MARP the Lega Nord in the 1980s gained considerable political consensus by claiming that “the North and its citizens are penalized by a corrupt and wasteful central state that is biased towards the south of Italy and southern Italians”.

Additionally, MARP saw itself as the pinnacle of “European modernity: progress and development” as opposed to “backwardness and underdevelopment” on the side of the South¹¹³.

Echoes can be heard again here if we see listen to the Lega Nord slogan of “più lontano da Roma, più vicino all’Europa” during the 1980s and 1990s and especially Bossi’s comments following the 1992 elections¹¹⁴. In 1958 MARP became *Movimento per l’Autonomia Regioni Padane*, thus signifying the emergence of a notion of Padania as a homogenous Northern region¹¹⁵. The adoption of a notion of “Padania” can be seen to be a precursor to the declaration in 1996 of a nation of this name by the Lega (Bossi was later to claim that MARP was the “Father of the Lega”) as the autonomist groups which allied themselves to MARP came from the very areas from where the Lega Nord was to draw electoral support¹¹⁶.

Catalonia, on the other hand, in spite of having more reason to consider what was labelled as “the pacific invasion” (migration from the Andalusia, Extremadura, Murcia and other southern regions) as part of a military conquest in the context of the Franco dictatorship¹¹⁷, responded quite differently. Regionalist sentiment survived due to “the stubborn efforts of a relatively small number of dedicated members of the intelligentsia”¹¹⁸ such as the “number of books [which] were published addressing the implication of immigration for Catalonia and the effects it could have on Catalan identity. For instance ‘Els Altres Catalans’ by Francisco Candel published 1964 or ‘Els no Catalans I nosaltres’ by Manuel Cruells published in 1965, initiated a public debate about how to handle Castilian-speaking immigration”¹¹⁹. The main debate surrounded Candel placing more emphasis on the interbreeding of

¹¹¹ E. CAPUSSOTTI, *Nordisti contro Sudisti. Internal Migration and Racism in Turin, Europe: 1950s and 1960s* cit., p. 8.

¹¹² *Ibidem*.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁴ “Umberto Bossi argued, after his party’s success in the 1992 general election: ‘The North has chosen federalism and Europe, the South has chosen Africa and Fascism’” J. DICKIE, *Darkest Italy: the nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno* cit., p. 145.

¹¹⁵ *Il Marp diventa Padano per presentarsi alle elezioni*, Monday 24th February 1958.

http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,2/articleid,1580_02_1958_0047A_0002_23556259/ Accessed: 05/02/2014.

¹¹⁶ G. SANGIORGIO, *Il MARP degli anni 50 Padre della Lega*, in “La Stampa”, Tuesday 12 April 1994. http://www.archiviolaStampa.it/component/option,com_lastampa/task,search/mod,libera/action,viewer/Itemid,3/page,40/articleid,0734_01_1994_0098_0038_17660078/. Accessed: 01/02/2014.

¹¹⁷ A. ASTOR, *Context and Conflict: Unpacking the sources of opposition to mosques in Catalonia* cit.

¹¹⁸ J. HARGREAVES, *Freedom for Catalonia? Catalan Nationalism, Spanish Identity and the Barcelona Olympic Games* cit., p. 29.

¹¹⁹ D. KLEINER-LIEBAU, *Migration and the Construction of National Identity in Spain* cit., p. 98.

cultures and “being himself the son of migrants [advocating] respect for the immigrants’ own values”¹²⁰. On the other hand, “Manuel Cruells accused Candel of underrating the importance of learning Catalan and questioned the ability of the immigrants to make new roots in Catalonia”¹²¹. This debate shows the importance of the immigration of the economic miracle in the Catalan regionalist discourse. It is a centrality which has been reinforced by the fact that Candel’s book was held in high esteem by CiU’s Jordi Pujol, future leader of the Generalitat. Just as Pujol had noted the industrialization of the 19th Century as important in the development of Catalan regionalism, so he did with the economic miracle and immigration by remembering in a speech in 2004, the problems and risks the migration movements of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s “Who can deny that it brought serious problems? [...] We remember the mental shock that this situation represented to us”¹²². Pujol who essentially praised Candel’s book also emphasized, according to the nationalist ideology he represented, the importance of a community of interests:

Our central problem is immigration and, hence, integration. The basic objective is to build up a community valid for all Catalans. And I would add that by Catalan I mean everybody who lives and works in Catalonia, and who makes Catalonia his/her home and country, with which he/she incorporates and identifies¹²³.

This idea of a “community of interests” was later to be adopted by Umberto Bossi between 1987-1990 with Lombardy in particular being portrayed as “People of producers”¹²⁴. However, it is the Veneto rather than by Lombardy which has most imitated Catalonia in terms of its use of language and culture in a regionalist discourse. This shall be explored to a greater extent below. Firstly, let us look briefly at concessions of autonomy.

6. Catalonia and the Veneto – The age of secession.

In spite of Catalans being denied the same democratic rights as the Piedmontese during this period they were to obtain greater autonomy after the death of Franco with the awarding of Statutes of Autonomy in 1979, due to which

Spain is now divided politically into seventeen Autonomous Communities, all with delegated powers of a greater or lesser magnitude. The Catalans, Basques and Galicians were the first to receive the Statutes of Autonomy, but eventually the entire state has been organized in this way¹²⁵.

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹²¹ *Ibidem*.

¹²² J. PUJOL, cited in D.KLEINER-LIEBAU, *Migration and the Construction of National Identity in Spain* cit., p. 199.

¹²³ J. PUJOL, *La immigració, problema i esperança*, Barcelona, Nova Terra, 1966.

¹²⁴ A. CENTO BULL, M. GILBERT, *The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian Politics* cit., p. 60.

¹²⁵ C. MAR-MOLINERO, *The Iberian Peninsula: Conflicting Linguistic Nationalisms*, in *Language and Nationalism in Europe* cit., p. 98.

In contrast, The Italian form of regionalism implemented in the post-war period “is not federalism [...] few powers are devolved, there are virtually no areas of ‘exclusive’ legislative power and financial autonomy is extremely modest”¹²⁶. The constitution of 1948 “provided for the establishment of 20 regions” with 15 of these having to wait until 1970 to see any provisions implemented. The five others, namely Sicily, Sardinia, Valle d’Aosta and Trentino Alto Adige and Friuli-Venezia-Giulia were to enjoy “special Statute” due to “specific political reasons”¹²⁷. The exclusion of the Veneto from the special statute is particularly relevant due to its unique literary and cultural history. Indeed,

throughout the early to mid-1980s, the Liga Veneta led by Franco Rochetta argued that if other regions have been given special status on the basis of ethnicity, the Veneto – with its long-standing history as an independent republic and distinctive local dialect – should also be granted such a distinction¹²⁸.

What is of importance here is that where Piedmont and Lombardy were particularly important in the development of an economic regionalism in the late 19th Century and mid 20th Century, what has given particular force to Venetian nationalism is its ethnic nationalism based around a culture and identity. According to Ettore Beggiano, former member of the Veneto regional council, Jordi Pujol rejected any comparison between Catalonia and “Padania” and he has instead maintained that the only part of the Italian state which could be compared with Catalonia was the Veneto “for its history and culture”. Pujol is even alleged to have gone so far as to say that Catalonia “should learn from the Veneto”¹²⁹.

In another article by Venetian nationalist Roberto Ciambetti entitled *Veneto Nazione, come la Catalunya*, Venetian dialect is used deliberately to show affinity with the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Catalans. In addition and perhaps even more significantly, Ciambetti states that the annexation of Venice by the newly formed Italian state in 1866 and the following “swindle plebiscite”¹³⁰ which confirmed the annexation happened at the same time when the Catalan *Renaissance* was in full swing. Ciambetti implies that had it not been for this annexation, then a similar cultural and linguistic renaissance could have taken place in the Veneto¹³¹.

The recent European economic crisis has given extra impetus to a recent push for a referendum on independence in Catalonia. This has been imitated by the Veneto and has been widely reported in the Catalan press. The fact that the title of one article which covers this development in *El Periodico* is “La

¹²⁶ D. HINE, *Federalism, Regionalism and the Unitary State: Contemporary Regional Pressures in Historical Perspective*, in *Italian Regionalism*, Edited by C. Levy, Oxford, Berg, p. 113.

¹²⁷ A. BULL, *Regionalism in Italy*, in *Regionalism in the European Union*, Edited by P. Wagstaff, Oxford, Intellect, p. 143.

¹²⁸ I. DIAMANTI, P. ALLUM, *The Autonomous Leagues in the Veneto* cit., p. 181.

¹²⁹ E. BEGGIATO, *Per il Veneto l'esempio della Catalunya, lo sostiene Ettore Beggiano*, in “vicenzapiù”, Wednesday 28th November 2012.

<http://www.vicenzapiu.com/leggi/per-il-veneto-lesempio-della-catalunya-lo-sostiene-ettore-beggiano>.

Accessed:17/05/2014.

¹³⁰ I. DIAMANTI, P. ALLUM, *The Autonomous Leagues in the Veneto* cit., p. 160.

¹³¹ R. CIAMBETTI, *Veneto Nazione, come la Catalunya*, in “vicenzapiù”, Friday 13th August 2010. <http://www.vicenzapiu.com/leggi/ciambettiveneto-nazionecome-la-catalunya>. Accessed: 16/05/2014.

via Catalan per al Veneto” is highly significant as it signals towards how the Liga Veneta and other Venetian nationalists are attempting to borrow from the Catalan discourse. The historical claims of the Veneto to independence are noted clearly in the article:

La serenissima Repubblica di Venezia, which lasted 1,100 years, dominated the Mediterranean part of the nineteenth century and ended in the hands of the French, Napoleon could be reborn¹³².

El Periodico, in a separate article also reported Lega Nord-Liga Veneta governor of the Veneto, Luca Zaia as stating he thought of referendum and thus “independence as a cultural movement, such as Catalonia or Scotland”¹³³. The Lega Nord’s mouthpiece “La Padania” has also been keen to report on comparisons between the Veneto and Catalonia to claim it as part of the broader struggle for “Padania”. Speaking of the recent defeat of the CiU’s call for a referendum, Liga Veneta-Lega Nord Euro MP, Lorenzo Fontana is reported as stating that “we have the same impetus and same determination as the Catalans. Catalonia will soon be free and the Veneto will follow it”¹³⁴.

7. Conclusion.

In this article I have shown, with references to two parallel economic booms in Catalonia and the North Italian “Macro-region”, the origins of many of the aspects of northern regionalism present in the Lega Nord discourse. A comparative aspect with Catalonia has helped to highlight these origins as part of a wider discourse of economic regionalism present in affluent regions. In the case of the 19th Century, the economic regionalism which was present in both Catalonia and Lombardy was given extra force by the centre-periphery tensions as a result of industrialization. As both central governments failed to reach the objectives of their respective colonial endeavours in the final decade of the 19th century, regionalism in the north of Spain and Italy, inspired by the industrial progress which was polarized by the backward nature of the central state, boiled over. The Catalans found political expression through the Lliga regionalista and the Mancomunitat. On the other hand, the Lombards, despite agitating for autonomy and secession, had to make do with the political scalp of their longstanding foe, Francesco Crispi and the continuation of the unitary state. Ultimately, the Catalans achieved a first step towards local government due to the pressure from industrialists finding a voice in a more defined cultural and linguistic heritage which had not been as successfully invented in Lombardy.

¹³² *La via Catalana per al Venetó*, Thursday 20th March 2014, <http://www.elperiodico.cat/ca/noticias/internacional/via-catalana-per-veneto-3202363>. Accessed: 10/05/2014.

¹³³ *El governador del Veneto inicia un referendun independentista i el compara amb Catalunya*, Monday 17th March 2014. <http://www.elperiodico.cat/ca/noticias/politica/governador-venecia-inicia-referendun-independentista-compara-amb-catalunya-3194944>. Accessed: 10/05/2014.

¹³⁴ *La Corte di Madrid blocca la Catalogna. La Lega: L'autodeterminazione non si tocca*, Thursday 27th March 2014. http://www.lapadania.net/articoli/la_corte_di_madrid_blocca_la_catalogna_lega_13668.php. Accessed: 15/05/2014.

The second case study revealed that this time it was the Piedmontese who found their political-regional voice through “the Father of the Lega”: MARP. However, the pattern essentially remained the same. Once again the cultural and linguistic history behind Catalan regionalism gave force to a resistance to the linguistic invasion of Castilians into Catalonia and was a key feature in the concession of autonomy following the death of Franco, whereas in Piedmont the calls for autonomy in throughout the 1950s and 1960s fell on deaf ears. The very notion of a united homogenous north, however, was indeed born in Piedmont and Bossi was right in calling MARP the father of the Lega especially when we consider that the one constant in the Lega Nord’s discourse has been the struggle for greater autonomy for the North of Italy, MARP’s move from Piedmontese to Padano marked the establishment of the imagined community of “Padania” which has proved fundamental to its political project. The key role of Piedmont in this construction of a North Italian identity is something which deserves further study. What we can conclude from this study is that although the Lega Nord’s demands rooted in strong economic regionalism have clear historical precedent in Italy, the lack of cultural and linguistic claims has acted as a great impediment to demands for any real autonomy. This assertion can be reinforced by the fact that the Veneto, with its history as an independent republic and strong literary tradition has been more readily recognized by Catalan nationalists, who, in contrast have rejected a notion of “Padania”. This study, therefore, whilst highlighting the origins of northern regionalism, by doing so has also argued against the existence of Padania as a territorial entity as it is the individual regions rather than a homogenous North which stand up to comparison with other affluent European regions such as Catalonia.