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**The Evolution of Italian Populism in the Context of the Partitocrazia
Problem (1946–2022)**

Specialty 5.6.2. General History

Annotation

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Scientific relevance. Italy is at the forefront of populism. In no other Western country has anti-politics been as prominently represented as in Italy. Populism here, unlike in any other liberal democracies, is not a phenomenon of today, but a phenomenon that has a long history and its own tradition, which began in the post-war period. During the Second Republic (1994–2000s), populism became the defining characteristic of the country's party-political system thanks to Silvio Berlusconi, media mogul and founder of the "Forza Italia!" (FI) party, regionalists from the "Northern League" (LN), fighters for the morality of politics from "Italy of Values" (IdV) led by ex-magistrate Di Pietro, and digital utopians of the Five-Star Movement (M5S). At the same time, the populism of the "Beautiful Country" can be viewed in the context of another Italian phenomenon—anti-party-political thought and practice. That is, a type of political thinking and action whose essence lies in the institutional critique of representative democracy through the condemnation of political parties that built their own regime in the country—partitocracy (*partitocrazia*). The concept itself arose in the 1940s, however, the problems attributed to the regime of party omnipotence can be found at the very foundation of Italy as a unified state and continue to be found to this day, when this anti-partitocratic critique, it would seem, should be in the mainstream thanks to the successes of populists. In this sense, a historical analysis of the anti-party ideas of populist parties and how they attempt to build an alternative to the partitocratic order is relevant, as it will allow for a better understanding of the problems of liberal democracies in which populism flourishes.

Historiography. The literature on the topic of the dissertation can be divided into four large blocks. Speaking of the first group—general theoretical works on populism—we note that countless works on the topic can be found here¹. At present, three approaches to the study of this phenomenon have emerged, similar in defining populism by a Manichean vision of society fundamentally divided into a corrupt elite and an uncorrupted people. The ideational interpretative design understands populism as an ideology². The primary focus in studies of this kind is placed on rhetoric, programmatic statements, and party literature, which are analyzed predominantly using qualitative methods and content analysis³.

¹ Basic overview can be found here: Gidron N., Bonikowski B. Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda // Weatherhead Center for International Affairs Working Paper Series. – 2013. – №13-0004. – 38 p.

² See: Mudde C. The Populist Zeitgeist // Government and Opposition. – 2004. – №4. – P. 543–544, Populism in Europe and the Americas / Mudde C. and Rovira Kaltwasser C. (eds.). – 2012. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. – 274 p.

³ Gidron N., Bonikowski B. Op. cit. P. 7.

The second approach to studying populism is a discursive one. Here, populism is seen as something between rhetoric and ideology⁴. Populism is not viewed as a defining characteristic, but rather as a feature of a particular actor, introducing degrees of populist saturation. The discursive approach emphasizes quantitative methods of analysis, and its units are texts and speeches rather than political actors as such, in the totality of their actions and thoughts.

The third approach examines populism as a political strategy. This approach typically focuses on one of three aspects: political choice, political organization, and forms of mobilization⁵. The primary method here is comparative analysis within a historical perspective, using parties, social movements, leaders, and institutions as the unit of analysis.

Regarding the second group of literature—works on Italy's party-political system and the phenomenon of partocracy in Italian history—two stages can be distinguished, roughly corresponding chronologically to the First and Second Republics. The first to study the problem of excessive party power in Italy were the philosopher N. Bobbio and the legal scholar G. Maranini in the second half of the 1940s⁶. Their research in this context focused primarily on the importance of intra-party democracy and the influence of electoral law on the democratic nature of the political process, setting a trend for the following decades, complemented by the research of G. Sartori and other political scientists who attempted to construct theoretical models of the country's party-political system⁷. Only towards the end of the First Republic did works appear that attempted to systematically identify the origins of Italy's "pain points" over a long historical period and using significant empirical data: P. Sciopola's *La Repubblica dei partiti*⁸ and S. Lanaro's *Storia dell'Italia repubblicana*⁹, published in 1991 and 1992, respectively. Sciopola, a political historian, believed that the Republic rested on three pillars: a proportional parliamentary system, the delineation of parties' spheres of influence, and the

⁴ Hawkins K. A. Is Chávez Populist?: Measuring Populist Discourse in Comparative Perspective // *Comparative Political Studies*. – 2009. – №8. – P. 1040–1067.

⁵ See: Weyland K. Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics // *Comparative Politics*. – 2001. – №34(1). – P. 1–22; Pappas Takis S. Populism emergent: A framework for analyzing its contexts, mechanics, and causes // *EUI Working Papers Rscas*. URL: <https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/20114> (дата обращения: 16.03.2023); Jansen R. S. Populist Mobilization: A New Theoretical Approach to Populism // *Sociological Theory*. – 2011. – №29(2). – P. 75–96.

⁶ Bobbio N. *Tra due repubbliche. Alle origini della democrazia italiana*. – Roma: Donzelli, 1996. – P. 47–71; Maranini G. *Miti e realtà della democrazia*. – Roma: Edizioni di Comunità, 1958. – 522 p.

⁷ Somogyi et al. *Il Parlamento italiano 1946–1963*. – Una ricerca diretta da Giovanni Sartori. – Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1963. – 386 p; Sartori G. *Parties and Party Systems*. – ECPR Press, 2005. – 368 p; Boisson A. S. M. *La partitocrazia italiana* // *Rivista Di Studi Politici Internazionali*. – 1972. – №39(4). – P. 573–590; LaPalombara J. *Partitocrazia* // *The Wilson Quarterly*. – 1988. – №12(2). – P. 98–117.

⁸ Scoppola P. *La Repubblica dei partiti. Profilo storico della democrazia in Italia (1945-1990)*. – Bologna: Il Mulino, 1991. – 449 p.

⁹ Lanaro S. *Storia dell'Italia repubblicana. Dalla fine della guerra agli anni Novanta*. Venezia: Marsilio, 1992. – 566 p.

Christian Democratic Party's leadership in the political system—these factors that shaped the post-war partyocracy. Lanaro, however, transcends purely political boundaries and ambitiously approaches the republican period within a broader context—one that encompasses political, economic, cultural, and mental history. The historian attributes Italy's misfortunes to a political class incapable of acting for the common good, represented by mainstream parties that reflected the general political culture of backwardness, paternalism, and clientelism that had developed in Italy.

The collapse of the First Republic in the early 1990s sparked a surge in publications on the topic. Significantly, the very concept of *partitocrazia* began to be analyzed¹⁰. The 1990s and 2000s were marked by a significant revision of older research on the topic of interest to us. Thus, in 1992, the sociologist F. Barbano published an article criticizing older political science approaches associated with the names of N. Bobbio, G. Sartori, and others for the inability of their explanatory concepts to explain the expansion of party power and their collapse in the early 1990s¹¹. By focusing too much on attempts to characterize the political system, identify its vulnerabilities, and construct ludicrous theoretical constructs, the previous generation, according to Barbano, deviated from empiricism and ignored the political actors themselves, the parties, and the real, rather than theoretical, institutional environment.

Among the new generation of authors, Mauro Calise stands out, having analyzed the *partitocrazia* as an independent type of political regime and identified five specific and consistent characteristics of it¹². Calise also attempted to resolve a contradiction that should have been seemingly obvious but had remained unaddressed: if the *partitocrazia* was so strong that it occupied power and public space, then why was it so weak in the early 1990s? Calise offered two interpretations. The first was that parties as such had degenerated due to corruption and were therefore no longer able to adequately resist the democratic wave¹³. The second—more relevant—was that nothing significant had changed in Italian politics: the *partitocrazia* of mass parties had been replaced by a "media party"—those who, instead of the mass associations of industrial society, control the communication

¹⁰ See: Pasquino G. *Partitocrazia // La politica italiana. dizionario critico (1945-95) / a cura di Gianfranco Pasquino.* – Roma: Laterza, 1995. – P. 341–355; Cotta M. *Partitocracy: Parties and their Critics in Italian Political Life // The Oxford Handbook of Italian Politics / Jones E., Pasquino G. (eds).* – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. – P. 41–52.

¹¹ Barbano F. «Sistema o democrazia dei partiti?» // *Quaderni di Sociologia.* – 1992. – №3. – P. 79–90. – DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/qds.6603>.

¹² Calise M. *The Italian Particracy: Beyond President and Parliament // Political Science Quarterly.* – 1994. – №109(3). – P. 441–460. – DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2152613>; Calise M. *Dopo la partitocrazia.* – Torino: Einaudi, 1994. – 178 p.

¹³ *The Italian Particracy: Beyond President and Parliament.* P. 460.

channels of post-industrial society. In general, subsequent research followed the path laid by M. Calise¹⁴. In Russian-language historiography, the problem of partocracy has not been explored at all. A telling fact: in a monograph analyzing Russian historiography on Italian history from 1945 to 2011, the term is used only twice, without any explanation¹⁵. Specific works on partocracy in Russian-language Italian studies simply do not exist, and the term itself is used sporadically and only in relation to the First Republic¹⁶.

Regarding the third group—work on Italian populism in general—it is quite extensive, with both chronologically limited studies¹⁷ and extensive ones covering the entirety of the Republic¹⁸. There are also works devoted to the relationship between populism and *antipartitocrazismo*¹⁹, but there is no separate, detailed study on this topic. This is partly because populism is often interpreted narrowly—by actors of the Second Republic—which creates a gap between the anti-politics of the present and the past, making it difficult to explain the persistence of populism in Italian life.

We now turn to the fourth group—literature on individual populist actors. For a long time, studies of the Common Man's Front (FUQ) associated it exclusively with post- and neo-fascism²⁰. Only in the 1970s did work emerge that took a more true-to-history approach on the FUQ²¹, and by and large, historian S. Setta's 1975 monograph remains the most comprehensive attempt to study the Front²². Thus, the

¹⁴ See: Cotta M., Verzichelli L. Italy: Sunset of a Partitocracy // Party and Government / Blondel, J., Cotta, M. (eds). – London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996. – P. 180–201. – DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-24788-2_10; Corduwener P. Institutionalizing the democratic party-state: political parties as 'public utilities' in Italy and West Germany, 1945–75 // European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire. – 2017. – №25(1). – P. 105–108. – DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2017.1301394>; Ragazzoni D. "Particracy": The pre-populist critique of parties and its implications // Multiple Populisms: Italy as Democracy's Mirror (1st ed.) / Blokker P., Anselmi M. (eds.). – London: Routledge. – 2019. – P. 86–106.

¹⁵ Gavrilova S. M. Politicheskaya istoriya sovremennoj Italii (1945–2011) v trudah rossijskikh uchenyh. – Moskva: IVI RAN, 2013. – P. 56, 137.

¹⁶ See: Holodkovskij K. G. Partii: krizis ili zakat? // Politicheskie instituty na rubezhe tysyacheletij. XX–XXI v. / pod red. K. G. Holodkovskogo. – Dubna: Feniks+, 2001. – P. 61–81; Lyubin V. P. Socialisty v istorii Italii: ISP i ee nasledniki. – Moskva, 2007. – P. 257, 410, 428; Maslova E. A. Transformaciya partijno-politicheskoy sistemy Italii // Sovremennaya Evropa. – 2021. – №102(2). – P. 112.

¹⁷ Biorcio R. I populismi in Italia // La Rivista delle Politiche Sociali. – 2012. – №1. – P. 1–14; Alekseenkova E. S. Politicheskij process v sovremennoj Italii: antipolitika i populizm epohi Vtoroj respubliki. – Moskva: In-t Evropy RAN, 2023. – 218 p.

¹⁸ Orsina G. La democrazia del narcisismo: breve storia dell'antipolitica. – Venezia: Marsilo, 2018. – 183 p; Tarchi M. Italia populista. Dal qualunquismo a Beppe Grillo. – Bologna: il Mulino, 2018. – 384 p.

¹⁹ See chapters in: Multiple Populisms: Italy as Democracy's Mirror (1st ed.) / Blokker P., Anselmi M. (eds.). – London: Routledge. – 2019. – 270 p.

²⁰ See: Giovana M. Le nuove camicie nere. – Torino: Edizioni dell'Albero, 1966. – 135 p.; Santarelli E. Fascismo e neofascismo. Studi e problemi di ricerca. – Roma: Editore Riuniti, 1974. – 323 p.

²¹ Pallotta G. Il qualunquismo e l'avventura di Guglielmo Giannini // Milano: Bompiani, 1972. – 180 p.; Setta S. L'uomo qualunque 1944/1948. – Bari: Latera, 1975. – 342 p.

²² For the more recent studies see: Lomartire Maria C. Il qualunquista: Guglielmo Giannini e l'antipolitica. – Milano: Mondadori, 2008. – 185 p.; Cocco M. Who's John Doe? The Roots of Qualunquismo and the Populistic Protest of the Middle Class in Postwar Italy // Populism: A Historiographic Category? / ed. by Chiara C. and Moroni S. – Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018. – P. 79–86; Corduwener P. Challenging Parties and Anti-Fascism

anti-partocratic aspect of the FUQ's ideas and activities has not yet been adequately explored. In the case of the Radical Party (PR), we see a fairly large number of general overviews of the movement's activities²³. There are works devoted to both the party's organizational structure²⁴ and its ideology (including its *antipartitocrazismo* aspect)²⁵, but these are characterized by chronological fragmentation. L. Bonfreschi's 2021 monograph is indicative here, offering the best overview yet of the RP's activities, also containing separate sections on the RP's opposition to the *partitocrazia*²⁶. However, Bonfreschi focuses on this issue only from 1979 to 1986, which seems somewhat limited to us, as the monopoly of parties in public life had been a concern for the "radicals" even before the 1970s. Accordingly, we have not yet found a comprehensive picture of the Radicals' evolution in relation to their opposition to the *partitocrazia*.

Let's turn to works on the Second Republic, beginning with the Northern League. It's worth noting that there are quite a few studies examining the League's populism itself—both ideologically²⁷ and how this populism manifests itself²⁸. Much less attention has been paid to the evolution of the party's organizational structure and discursive practices²⁹. Returning to the topic of the dissertation, it's worth noting that the authors touched on issues of party governance in relation to the activities and views of the Northern League only tangentially and did not examine them separately.

Regarding Silvio Berlusconi, we can immediately conclude that countless works of varying quality have been written about him. We should also immediately

in the Name of Democracy: The Fronte dell'Uomo Qualunque and its Impact on Italy's Republic // Contemporary European History. – 2017. – №26. – P. 69–84.

²³ See: Hanning J. The Italian radical party and the 'new politics' // West European Politics. – 1981. – №4. – P. 267–281; Panebianco A. The Italian Radicals: New Wine in an Old Bottle // When Parties Fail: Emerging Alternative Organizations / ed. by Lawson K., Merkl P. – Princeton University Press, 1988. – P. 110–136.

²⁴ See: Gusso M. Il Partito radicale. Organizzazione e leadership. – Padova: Cleup, 1982. – 246 p.; Radaelli C. M., Dossi S. Four Funerals and a Party? The Political Repertoire of the Nonviolent Radical Party // Bulletin of Italian Politics. – 2012. – №4(1). P. 63–83.

²⁵ See: Gusso M. Partitocrazia e anomalia carismatica radicale // Periodico: Il ponte Anno. – 1984. – №40. – P. 55–67; Bonfreschi L. Against parties? The Radicals between anti-partitocracy and reform, 1979–87 // Journal of Modern Italian Studies. – 2023. – №28(2). – P. 159–175.

²⁶ Bonfreschi L. Un'idea di libertà. Il Partito radicale nella storia d'Italia. (1962–1988). – Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2021. – 459 p.

²⁷ See: Vyalkov I. A. Liga Severa: Proekty otdeleniya Severa ot YUga (obzor) // Sovremennaya Italiya. – 2004. №1. – P. 108–121; Sigachev M. I. Mezhdru regionalizmom i panital'yanskim nacionalizmom: pravyy populizm Ligi Severa // Istoriya i sovremennost'. – 2020. – №37(3). – P. 42–62.

²⁸ Savchenko N. M. Liga Severa v politicheskoy sisteme Italii (1990-e gg.) // Vestnik Polockogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. – 2008. – №7. – P. 75–84; Woods D. The Crisis of Center-Periphery Integration in Italy and the Rise of Regional Populism: The Lombard League // Comparative Politics. – №27(2). – 1995. – P. 187–203; Cento Bull A., Gilbert M. The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian Politics. – Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001. – 204 p.

²⁹ See: Albertazzi D. 'Back to our roots' or self-confessed manipulation? The uses of the past in the Lega Nord's positing of Padania // National Identities. – 2006. – №8(1). – P. 21–39; Albertazzi D. Going, going, ... not quite gone yet? 'Bossi's Lega' and the survival of the mass party // Contemporary Italian Politics. – 2016. – №8(2). – P. 115–130.

note that there are no studies as such on Berlusconi's relationship with the party system. However, there are general works: both papers³⁰ and monographs³¹. There are numerous works that not only describe the former prime minister's activities at the time but also assess Berlusconi's influence on Italy: both in the form of papers³² and monographs³³. A considerable number of works have been written on party-political dynamics and their development under Berlusconi, examining the activities of Berlusconi's parties themselves³⁴ and the entire political system³⁵.

Italy of Values, on the other hand, hasn't received much attention even in international scholarship due to the party's limited influence and its rapid eclipse by the Five-Star Movement. In the literature on Italian populism, the IdV is often mentioned in passing, without much attention³⁶. Other works are limited in scope, serving as brief overviews of its activities³⁷, although there are some books about Di Pietro, which, however, are more political biographies than academic monographs³⁸.

We conclude this review with works on the Five-Star Movement. Many articles analyze the Movement as a whole³⁹. The Movement's Euroscepticism has been thoroughly examined in literature⁴⁰, including Russian one. Due attention has been given to the e-democracy of the Five-Star Movement⁴¹, and there is also work

³⁰ See: Fabbrini S. The rise and fall of Silvio Berlusconi: Personalization of politics and its limits // *Comp Eur Polit.* – 2013. – №11. – P. 153–171. Donovan M. Berlusconi, strong government and the Italian state // *Journal of Modern Italian Studies.* – 2003. – №8(2). – P. 231–248.

³¹ Among others: Ginsborg P. Silvio Berlusconi Television, Power and Patrimony. – London and New York: Verso, 2004. – 192 p.; Newell J. Silvio Berlusconi: A Study in Failure. – Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018. – 248 p.

³² See: Bickerton C. J., Accetti C. I. Democracy Without Parties? Italy After Berlusconi // *The Political Quarterly.* – 2014. – №85. – P. 23–28; Donovan M. Berlusconi's impact and legacy: Political parties and the party system // *Modern Italy.* – 2015. – №20(1). – P. 11–24.

³³ Andrews G. Not a Normal Country: Italy After Berlusconi. – London and Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2005. – 208 p.

³⁴ McDonnell D. Silvio Berlusconi's Personal Parties: From Forza Italia to the Popolo Della Libertà // *Political Studies.* – 2013. – №61. – P. 217–233.

³⁵ Vercesi M. Party, coalition, premiership: the role of Silvio Berlusconi in coalition dynamics and its determinants // *Contemporary Italian Politics.* – 2013. – №5(3). – P. 292–308.

³⁶ See: Nicolò C. On political fragmentation: stay in or stay out? The role of small parties in the Italian centre-left // *Journal of Modern Italian Studies.* – 2008. – №13(3). – P. 388–404; Pacini M. Public funding of political parties in Italy // *Modern Italy.* – 2009. – №14(2). – P. 183–202.

³⁷ Newell James L. Magistrates Going Into Politics Antonio Di Pietro and Italy of Values // *The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Italy: History, politics, society / Mammone A., Parini E. G., Veltri G. (Eds.).* – Routledge, 2015. – P. 215–225. Braghiroli S., Verzichelli L., Bull D. Condemned to Ineffectiveness? The PD and IdV between Opposition and Coalition Strategies // *Italian Politics.* – 2010. – №26. – P. 85–102.

³⁸ See: Giostra A. Il tribuno. Storia politica di Antonio Di Pietro. – Castelvecchi, 2009. – 466 p.;

Pisicchio P. L' Italia dei valori. Il post partito. – Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2008. – 120 p.

³⁹ See: Lyubin V. P. Beppe Grillo i «Dvizhenie pyati zvezd» kak fenomen ital'yanskoj politiki // *Italiya v nachale XXI veka.* – Moskva: IMEMO RAN, 2015. – P. 43–50; Mosca L. The Five Star Movement: Exception or Vanguard in Europe? // *The International Spectator.* – 2014. – №1. – P. 36–52; Varriale A. Institutionalized Populism: The «Strange Case» of the Italian Five Star Movement // *ECPS*, 2021. URL: <https://www.populismstudies.org/institutionalized-populism-the-strange-case-of-the-italian-five-star-movement/> (дата обращения: 10.06.2022).

⁴⁰ Maslova E. A. Evroskepticizm i populizm v Italii: primer «Dvizheniya pyati zvezd» // *Kontury global'nyh transformacij: politika, ekonomika, pravo.* – 2017. – №10(1). – P.141–157; Shibkova M. O. Ideologicheskij i strategicheskij evroskepticizm v politicheskoy zhizni Evrosoyuza // *Sravnitel'naya politika.* – 2019. – №4. – P. 13–24.

⁴¹ Among others see: Deseriis M. Direct Parliamentarianism: An Analysis of the Political Values Embedded in Rousseau, the «Operating System» of the Five Star Movement // *JeDEM – EJournal of EDemocracy and Open*

on the party's organizational development⁴². However, once again, the topic of the Five-Star Movement's anti-party discourse and practices remains unexplored in the literature, even though the Movement's early activities were conceptualized in terms of opposition to the *partitocrazia*.

The sources of the study can be divided into several groups and subgroups. The first group consists of official sources: legal documents (the 1947 Constitution, laws and bills primarily from 1994–2022), transcripts of meetings of the Consultative Assembly and the Constituent Assembly (1947–1948), as well as both chambers of the Republican Parliament (2014–2022), party charters and political programs of the populist movements studied, and internal party histories (PR, LN, IdV).

The second group of sources consists of journalism: political essays, manifestos, collections of speeches, individual recordings of public speeches, etc. This group can be divided into two subgroups: materials produced outside the populist camp (parliamentary reports by L. Franchetti and E. Faina, the collection *Transformation of Democracy* by V. Pareto, speeches by De Gasperi from the archive of the Bruno Kessler Foundation, the collected works of L. Sturzo, writings of R. Lucifero, etc.) and materials produced by populists themselves (the books *La Folla* and *Autodifesa* by G. Giannini, collections of speeches *Italia che ho in mente* and *Discorsi per la libertà* by S. Berlusconi, the magazine *Quaderni Padani* of LN, etc.). The third small group of sources consists of personal sources: the autobiography *La grande avventura dell'Uomo qualunque raccontata da G. Giannini*, published at the very end of Giannini's life, as well as Berlusconi's autobiography *Una storia italiana*, released for the 2001 parliamentary elections as an electoral panegyric program, glorifying the enterprise and success of its author in spite of the regime that existed in Italy until 1994.

The fourth group of sources includes media materials. Here, we immediately highlight the newspaper "The Simple Man" by Giuseppe Giannini, the founder of Italian populism. This group of media materials also includes mainstream media. Primarily, materials from the Italian newspapers *La Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera* from 1994 to 2022 were used, but materials from other major media outlets

Government. – 2017. – №2. – P. 47–67; Mosca L. Democratic vision and online participatory spaces in the Italian Movimento 5 Stelle // *Acta Politica*. – 2020. – №6. – P. 1–18.

⁴² See: Smirnova A. A. Formirovanie politicheskogo «Dvizheniya 5 zvezd» v Italii (2005-2013) // *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta*. – 2019. – №2. – S. 98–116; Tronconi F. Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement: Organisation, Communication and Ideology. – London: Routledge, 2015. – 254 p; Bordignon F., Ceccarini L. The five stars continue to shine: the consolidation of Grillo's «movement party» in Italy // *Contemporary Italian Politics*. – 2015. – №2. – P. 131–159; Bordignon F., Ceccarini L. Towards the 5 star party // *Contemporary Italian Politics*. – 2018. – №4. – P. 346–362.

were also included: among Italian ones, La Stampa, Il Sole 24 Ore, Il Giornale, Ansa, and others, and among foreign ones, Politico and The New York Times.

The fifth group includes electronic sources in the form of official blogs. For example, the study analyzed the personal blogs of Antonio Di Pietro (antoniodipietro.org), Beppe Grillo (beppegrillo.it), and the Five-Star Movement (ilblogdellestelle.it). The sixth group of sources includes informational and analytical data providing country-specific data on Italy as a whole: election results, sociological surveys, thematic reports from Transparency International (level of corruption perceptions in the country) and the World Bank (assessment of the quality of public administration), etc.

The **subject** of this dissertation is populism in the political system of the First and Second Italian Republics. The **object** is the evolution of the ideological views and organizational development of individual representatives of Italian populism in the context of their relationship to the country's party-political system.

The study examines the Common People's Front, the Radical Party, the Northern League, Silvio Berlusconi and his parties (Forza Italia! and Popolo della Libertà), Italy of Values, and the Five Star Movement. Parties such as the Italian Social Movement (MSI), the National Alliance (AN), and the Brothers of Italy (FdI) are excluded. This is because these projects are direct or indirect heirs of the National Fascist Party and therefore stem from a political philosophy and practice somewhat different from populism, requiring a separate, substantive analysis. This philosophy and practice offer an elitist vision of society rather than an egalitarian one, a society imposed from above by a unified, statist, and totalitarian *volonté générale*. That is, if we speak of populism academically as a phenomenon of pro-democratic anti-elitism, we should not associate it with fascism. Accordingly, we do not consider fascists and post-fascists from the PNF and MSI to be populists, and we classify AN and FdI as right-wing conservatives.

The **aim** of this study is to establish the interconnections, interdependencies, and mutual influences between the Italian institutional environment and Italian populism during the Republican period of modern Italian history (1946–2022) in the context of a critique of "partocracy." In accordance with this goal, the following **tasks** must be completed:

- To identify the objective preconditions for the development of a political system in Italy that made criticism of the party-political system a stable phenomenon in the country's public life.
- To establish, in the context of antagonism to the party-political system of Italy, the specifics of political ideas and organizational development

of the populist projects of the First Republic (1946–1994): the “Front of the Common Man” and the Radical Party.

- To identify, through a study of political views, experience of party building and state participation, what is new and what is continued in the anti-party mentality of the populists of the Second Republic (1994–2010): the Northern League, Silvio Berlusconi and the Italy of Values.
- To establish the political views, party evolution and governmental experience of the Five-Star Movement (2005–2022) as a reviver of the anti-party discourse of Italian populism during the Second Republic.

The geographic scope of the study naturally encompasses Italy and the Italian Peninsula.

The chronological framework spans the period from 1946, the year of the formal formation of the first populist party, the Common People's Front, and the establishment of the Republic in Italy, to 2022, when the Five Star Movement, which we examine last, passed the point of ideological and organizational no return.

The research's scientific novelty lies in the fact that for the first time in the academic literature, the phenomenon of Italian populism in both the First and Second Republics has been analyzed in a substantive and comprehensive manner through the prism of one of its defining characteristics—anti-party rule. For the first time, the history of Italian populism is presented within a broad historical and institutional context, which served as populism's primary source, its source of ideas, its archenemy, and its source of transformation. For the first time in the historiography of populism studies, the factors that historically made populism so characteristic and resilient in Italy have been systematically analyzed and established. For the first time in Russian historiography, the problem of partitocrazia in Italian political history is also being specifically examined, and, for the first time in Russian historiography, the "Front of the Common Man" and the Radical Party are being studied separately. In this regard, historical sources previously unstudied in Russian literature were analyzed—on the problem of partitocrazia (the works of R. Lucifero, L. Sturzo, P. Gentile, and others), on the FUQ (the essay *La Folla*, the newspaper *L'Uomo qualunque*) and the PR (internal party history, congress resolutions etc.).

The methodological framework of this work is based on an interdisciplinary approach. The works of Quentin Skinner and John Pocock of the Cambridge School of Intellectual History serve as a reference point⁴³. To study the political discourse and practices of the subjects under study, textual and discourse analysis are

⁴³ A theoretical analysis of the Cambridge School's methodology, as well as Skinner and Pocock's views on the method of intellectual history, are presented in the first chapters of the collection: Atanashev T., Velizhev M. *Kembridzhskaya shkola. Teoriya i praktika intellektual'noj istorii*. – Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2023. – 3. 7–190.

employed, drawing on an "integrative" approach to the study of populism—understood here as an ideology, a discourse, and a political strategy. The historical foundation of the methodological framework of the work consists of historical-comparative and historical-genetic methods. The historical-genetic method is necessary here to establish the conditions under which Italian populism emerged, as well as to determine its views on the political process at different stages of the country's development, and to trace the evolution and transformation of the political actors of interest. In turn, the historical-comparative method is applied in the dissertation to compare the individual experiences of individual political actors, identify patterns of development, and analyze the commonalities and particularities between them.

Thesis submitted for defense. 1. Weak governments and transformationism, statism and bureaucracy, clientelism through state patronage, the fusion of party(ies) with the state, the manipulation of electoral procedures, and corruption were not problems unique to the First Republic, with which partyocracy was associated. These problems, in one form or another, already existed in the "liberal" period after the Risorgimento. These problems were opposed by parties of a new type—mass parties of the left, Christian Democrats, and fascists. The latter, having seized power, attempted to merge the party with the state, while preserving many of the country's existing development problems. The mass anti-fascist parties, which filled the fascist vacuum and came to power after World War II, also only intensified the existing contradictions. The regime they established can truly be called partyocracy.

2. Given the above, the persistence of populism in Italian public life is not an anomaly, but a logical response to existing problems exacerbated by the post-war dominance of parties in public life. This response took the form not only of rhetorical criticism but also of a different kind of party practice. The populist "Front of the Common Man" was part of the anti-partitocratic trend, which was quite widespread in public discourse at the dawn of the Republic. The "Front" rightly drew attention to the fact that anti-fascist parties had assumed an excessively large, ethical-didactic role in post-war Italy—and with these positions, it made an important contribution to the anti-party intellectual tradition. But the underestimated importance of the "Front" also lay in the fact that, for the first time among regime critics, it attempted to build a party on a fundamentally different organizational foundation from the regime's mass parties—to overcome the partitocrazia, which comprised bureaucratized political structures, by creating an anti-party "crowd" movement. The Radical Party, however, maintained the persistence of anti-partitocratic ideas in Italian discourse, and with its fight for personal rights stripped away by the parties, it proved to be the heir to the anti-didactic Giannini. At the same time, the "radicals"

went even further than the "Front" and revolutionized political action by creating a party made up of a small group of activists, subordinate to a charismatic leader and engaged not so much in election campaigns as in rallies, pickets, hunger strikes, marches, petitions, and referendum organizing—a policy more characteristic of the 1968 era and beyond than the era of traditional mass parties. For the first time, anti-party-cratic thinking was fully expressed not only ideologically but also practically—through the construction of a fundamentally different type of political organization.

3. The Second Italian Republic, which emerged from the collapse of the First and was characterized by the rise of populists, proved to be infected with the very pathogens it was supposed to be cured of. Silvio Berlusconi, who promoted an agenda of combating the "old politics," transferred many of its elements (corruption, the conflation of public and private spheres with the use of the state for personal gain, and the monopoly of the media) to the "new." The Northern League, which had championed federalism as a vaccine against both the "old" and "new regimes," effectively relegated this rhetoric to the background and became a cog in Berlusconiism. The Italy of Values of anti-corruption hero Antonio Di Pietro, attempting to cleanse Italy through grassroots campaigns and referendums, itself became infected with corruption and autocracy. All these parties symbolized a new age of politics, characterized by charismatic and individual leaders who fight the vestiges of party rule and the old, traditional, party-based methods of politics, but at the same time prove to be replicators of these vestiges and practices.

4. The Five-Star Movement once again made critique of parties and party rule relevant—directed at the present, not the past. It was directed against those mentioned above—those who were supposed to liberate the country from the "old regime" but instead became it. Building on the practical anti-party rule of the Radical Party and Italy of Values, the Movement proposed a new form of political participation: a rejection of parties and representative democracy, and the postulation of direct and electronic democracy through grassroots, spontaneous movement existing in a virtual environment. However, the Movement itself, having spent quite a long time in the institutions of power, moved towards the "old regime", transforming along the way from an experimental party into a personalistic, centralized project, which we consider a logical outcome of the evolution of the Five-Star Movement, taking into account the problematic Italian context.

The theoretical significance of this dissertation lies in the fact that it is the first comprehensive analysis in Russian historical scholarship of the phenomenon of Italian populism in relation to the specific institutional development of Italy itself. **The practical significance** of the study lies in the fact that its results can be applied

to the development of lectures and practical classes on modern history, the contemporary history of Italy, and the history of the European Union, as well as to the preparation of comprehensive works on the history of political systems and socio-political movements in modern European countries, among other topics.

Validation of the research results. The results of the work are reflected in three articles published in journals peer-reviewed by the Higher Attestation Commission (HAC), of which the second is included in the list of journals indexed in the RSCI database, and the third is included in the list of publications recommended by the Academic Council of the Academy:

1. Vakhrushev I. Iu. Populism and Anti-Intellectualism: the Evolution of the Political Views of the Italian "Five Star Movement" (2005–2022) // *Istoricheskij zhurnal: nauchnye issledovaniya*. 2024. № 1. P. 108–120.
2. Vakhrushev I. Iu. Direct and Digital Democracy in the Ideology and Politics of the Five-Star Movement // *Contemporary Europe*. 2024. № 1. P. 194–205.
3. Vakhrushev I. Iu. The Power of the Unworthy: the idea of Particracy in the discourse and practice of the Italian "Five Star Movement" // *Genesis: istoricheskie issledovaniya*. 2025. №9. P. 33–53.

Furthermore, parts and key points of the work were discussed during discussions at the Department of General History at the RANEPA Institute of Social Sciences during graduate studies, as well as during presentations at academic conferences:

1. "Academic Dialogues" (RANEPA Institute of Social Sciences), paper on "Populism and Anti-Intellectualism: The Evolution of the Five-Star Movement's Views" (April 2023, Moscow, Russia).
2. "Academic Dialogues" (RANEPA Institute of Social Sciences), paper on "Parties, Partitocrazia, and Anti-Party: Transformations of the Five-Star Movement's Discourse" (April 2024, Moscow, Russia).
3. "Academic Dialogues" (RANEPA Institute of Social Sciences), report on "Populist Critique of Partitocrazia and Populist Alternatives to the Status Quo in Republican Italy" (May 2025, Moscow, Russia).
4. "Academic Dialogues" (RANEPA Institute of Social Sciences), report on "Main Trends of Party Building in Italian Populism during the Second Republic in Light of the Problem of Partitocrazia (1994–2022)" (April 2026, Moscow, Russia).

The structure of the study is determined by the stated objectives and includes an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, and a list of references and literature. The text consists of 511 pages.