SCUOLA
NORMALE
SUPERIORE

Classe accademica di Scienze politico-sociali,
Scuola Normale Superiore, Firenze

Tesi di perfezionamento in Scienza politica e sociologia

THE NATION AND THE RADICAL LEFT

RADICAL LEFT PARTIES AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN PORTUGAL, SPAIN AND ITALY

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Words of Gratitude

Writing a PhD dissertation is a painful effort, but also an immense privilege. When I was a listless high-school student living in Crevoladossola, a small village in the Alps, I never imagined that I would one day end up researching political phenomena at an important institution such as the Scuola Normale Superiore. The manuscript you have in your hands is thus the result of a long process, which means many people to be thanked. Although we sign PhD theses individually, I believe they are also a product of mutual help and collective reasoning, and this is something that ought to be remembered. Therefore, I am truly grateful to all the people who helped me along the way during the PhD, bore with me, and broadened my mind in many ways.

My supervisors Manuela Caiani and Benjamin de Cleen, for having always been there for me. They have been an inspiration throughout my work, and gave me the support I needed in all times of trouble.

Lorenzo Zamponi, Óscar García Agustín and Yannis Stavrakakis, for agreeing to be on my jury. I have learned a lot from their studies, and I am thus very grateful to have them judging my work.

My sister Francesca Custodi, Nina-Kathrin Wienkoop and Emanuele Nebbia Colomba, for believing in me more than I do.

Marta Novaresi, for always being there for me. And when I say *always* I mean it: from the day of the PhD selections until the dissertation's final editing.

Giada Bonu and Karlo Kraij, for giving me new perspectives on things and for holding my hand lest I should fall.

Eduardo Georjão, Måns Ljungstedt, Beatrice Carella and Silvia Carenzi, with whom I had the privilege of sharing my home life in Florence during some of the PhD years.

Eva Svatoňová, for teaching me that we should never take ourselves too seriously (in academia and elsewhere).

All the people I interviewed for this thesis, for their time and help.

Donatella della Porta, Lorenzo Mosca, Loris Caruso, Niccolò Bertuzzi, Daniela Chironi, Marco Almagisti, Paolo Graziano, Luca Verzichelli, Anna Esteban Benet, Robert Fishman, Ronaldo Munck, Francesco Campolongo, Giulia Daniele, Paolo Gerbaudo, David Veloso, Eleonora Desiata, Eduardo Javier Rivera Pichardo, Giorgos Venizelos, Beatriz Donato, Alessandro Appiani, Walter

Haeusl and Malli Stragapede, for reading some parts of this dissertation and/or helping me in one way or another during the PhD years.

Last, but absolutely not least, I want to share my deepest gratitude to Mum and Dad, who have always supported me in my choices, even when it meant making sacrifices or facing difficulties. I would have never reached this goal without them. But most importantly, they passed on to me life values which I will always be grateful for. We might study for a life and be highly cultured, but at the end of the day what matters the most is to live in solidarity with others, to try our best to be altruistic and empathic. If I learned this, it is thanks to their living example.

Questa tesi è dedicata a tutti coloro che tremano d'indignazione ogni qualvolta si commette un'ingiustizia nel mondo.
Le energie tornano sempre quando torna la speranza.

Lisbon, March 2022

ABSTRACT

This Ph.D. dissertation inquires into an often-neglected dimension of radical left politics: the relation with national identity. Although the scholarly literature on party politics has mostly overlooked this relation, it is a relevant aspect of radical left parties' identity and concrete politics. It is an issue for which there is a puzzling heterogeneity of outlooks within the ranks of the radical Left. Many European radical left parties tend to simply downplay national identity in their political discourse; but others openly reject it; and still others fiercely embrace it. The aim of the research is thus twofold: (a) to study how radical left parties frame and express national identity in their discourse; and (b) to examine the reasons that lie behind the high variation of stances held by ideologically similar actors. This thesis first presents a historical and theoretical overview of the relation between leftist and nationalist politics; then, in order to answer the two research questions, it centres the empirical focus on contemporary radical left parties in Spain, Italy and Portugal. The research brings together nationalism studies and the party politics scholarship on the radical Left; and it draws from an interpretive approach to comparative political science. At the methodological level, this study is based on a triangulation of three different methods of data gathering and analysis: semi-structured interviews, discourse-theoretical analysis and participant observation. As the findings indicate, the relation of the radical Left with national identity is complex and multifaceted, and the heterogeneity of outlooks is related to contextual factors, from historical conditions to political conjunctures, but also depends on the agency of parties. In fact, the stances of radical left parties on national identity intersect with other relevant aspects of their politics, such as their ideological positioning, their strategic reflections and their interaction with the political arena they operate in. Furthermore, national identity is more than something either present or absent in the discourse of a given radical left actor: it can *mean* different things and its presence in the discourses and practices of radical left politics may assume very different forms. Accordingly, the relation with the nation is an important dimension that should not be dismissed when studying radical left parties. It is a shortcoming in the academic literature that this thesis covers, adding to the studies on the radical Left a thorough empirical analysis of this often-omitted, but by no means irrelevant, dimension.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BE: *BLOCO DE ESQUERDA* (LEFT BLOC)

CDU: *COLIGAÇÃO DEMOCRÁTICA UNITÁRIA* (UNITARY DEMOCRATIC COALITION)

EU: EUROPEAN UNION

GJM: GLOBAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

IU: *IZQUIERDA UNIDA* (UNITED LEFT)

PAP: *POTERE AL POPOLO!* (POWER TO THE PEOPLE!)

PC: *PARTITO COMUNISTA* (COMMUNIST PARTY)

PCI: *PARTITO COMUNISTA ITALIANO* (ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY)

PCP: *PARTIDO COMUNISTA PORTUGUÊS* (PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST PARTY)

PRC: *PARTITO DELLA RIFONDAZIONE COMUNISTA – SINISTRA EUROPEA*, OR SIMPLY *RIFONDAZIONE* (COMMUNIST REFOUNDATION PARTY)

RLP: RADICAL LEFT PARTY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Long live Chile! Long live the people! Long live the workers!
Salvador Allende (Last Words to the Nation. September 11, 1973)

On the 25th of April 2020 the sun is shining over Lisbon, while the cool spring wind blows over the trees in the large boulevards of the city centre. The streets and the squares are strikingly empty, as the country is facing a rigid lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, similarly to many other European countries. Looking at an empty Lisbon would be unusual any day of the year, but it is even more impressive on April 25, the anniversary of Portugal's 1974 Revolution. Yet, a man holding a big Portuguese national flag can be seen walking on his own on the downtown boulevards. He is an elderly trade unionist and a member of the Left Bloc, a *new left* radical left party. He goes down to *Avenida da Liberdade*, passes by the Communist Party headquarter, on whose balcony the Portuguese flag hangs next to the hammer and sickle, and continues walking towards one of the main squares, *Praça do Comércio*. With one hand he raises his fist to the sky, with the other he proudly waves the national flag, as a way to honour the Portuguese Revolution and his socialist ideals.

It is hard not to think that such a scene would probably puzzle some European scholars on party politics, accustomed to consider the contemporary radical Left as detached from, or even hostile to, national pride and symbols. But they would not be alone in being puzzled: many radical left activists themselves from other European countries would probably see this scene as odd, being accustomed to see the national flag waved in the street only in right-wing rallies. That would likely be the case if they were coming from the country I was born in, Italy, where much of today's radical Left lives any symbolic expression of banal nationalism with animosity.

Is it a purely Portuguese exceptionality then? If this were the case, the idea that the radical Left has little to do with patriotism would perhaps hold true. But then we would not be able to explain why, in Madrid a few years earlier, shortly before the 2016 general elections, a large crowd, most of whom of radical left ideals, is listening to Pablo Iglesias speaking aloud about how proud he is of Spain and of being Spaniard, to then close the rally by saying «Patria, order, law, institutions!». Nor could we explain why in Paris, at a rally of the radical left party *La France*

Insoumise for the French presidential election of 2017, the French national anthem plays at full volume while their candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon is surrounded by supporters waving the French flag, after having asked them to leave home their red flag and bring the national one instead.

Do these anecdotes mean that we got it all wrong, and in reality the contemporary radical Left is very much at ease with nationalism? The answer is no. Rather, they indicate that the relation between the radical Left and national identity is much more complex than we usually think. In fact, if we look more closely at this matter, a matrix of different, contextual and contingent positions comes to the fore. Many European radical left parties tend to simply omit or downplay national identity in their political discourse; but others openly oppose and reject it; and still others fiercely embrace and reclaim it. Similar radical left actors widely differ on their takes on what used to be called the 'national question' by the 20th-century communist Left. As this manuscript will show, the ways in which contemporary radical left parties articulate national identity in their discourse can vary greatly from country to country, but also between parties in the same country. The variation is related to contextual factors, from historical conditions to political conjunctures, but also depends on the agency of parties, whose leadership can take specific positions on this matter for strategic reasons.

Exploring how the radical Left relates to national identity seems to be a timely research area, given that the salience of national identity has been rising in the politics of many European countries since the 1990s. This trend has been further intensified with the economic and political crises that crossed Europe after 2008, which triggered disaffection for EU institutions and hostility for austerity measures, but also favoured the return of nationality as an important source of political identity, often associated with right-wing sets of values. Furthermore, economic globalisation and migration flows led many European people to look back at their national community as a source of identification, and nationality frequently reacquired a conflictual political dimension mostly driven by rising radical right actors. These socio-political processes have often been analysed by scholars who focused on the radical and/or populist Right: as we will see in the next section on the academic literature, very little has been said about the radical Left on this matter.

What is more, when looking at the relation between the radical Left and national identity, we soon realise that the latter cannot be reduced to a nominal variable – national identity is more than something either present or absent in the discourse of a given radical left actor. It can *mean* different things and its presence in the discourses and practices of radical left politics may assume very different forms. In fact, radical left actors not only differ on the degree to which the nation is accepted as a legitimate form of political collective identity, but also on the ways this identity is conceived. There is a big difference in how nationality is perceived by, let's say, a member of the Portuguese Communist Party waving the Portuguese national flag with genuine pride; an Italian militant of the Communist Refoundation Party, who refuses any form of banal nationalism with annoyance; and a Spanish activist of Podemos, who has been persuaded to reclaim patriotism for strategic needs, but expresses it in a contrived and artificial way.

What emerges is a puzzling plurality of positions that uncovers an often-omitted dimension of radical left politics: the relation with the nation. Where does the diversity of positions come from? And how are these different takes on national identity framed in the discourse of radical left parties? These are questions that remain largely overlooked in the scholarly literature on radical left parties.

1.1 The State of the Field

In the first two decades after the collapse of the USSR, studies on radical left parties (hereafter RLPs) in Europe remained rather scant. In the 1990s and early 2000s, only few works looked at the Western European radical Left (e.g. P. Anderson and Camiller 1994), or examined the transformation of Western communist parties (e.g. Bull and Heywood 1994; Hudson 2000; Bosco 2000). There was some coverage of left parties in Central and Eastern Europe during the democratic transition, but these works were centred on 'communist successor parties' (the former communist ruling parties), included those who went through a process of social-democratisation, and were no longer radical left parties (e.g. Bozóki and Ishiyama 2002; Curry and Urban 2003). Throughout the 2000s there was a mild growth of academic interest on radical left parties, with some works that conceptualized the radical Left and attempted to bring it back to scholarly studies (e.g. March and Mudde 2005; March 2008). Other preliminary studies focused on specific issues, such as the stance of RLPs on European integration (e.g. Dunphy 2004) or their participation in coalition governments (e.g. Olsen, Koss, and Hough 2010). However, it is only during the third decade after the fall of the Soviet bloc, in the aftermath of the outbreak of the Great Recession, that the radical Left became an established field of research. A general consensus concerning definition, concepts and core members of this party family was reached, with most of the academic works covering such phenomena employing the term 'radical Left' (e.g. March 2011; Charalambous 2011a; March 2012; Daiber, Hildebrandt, and Striethorst 2012; March and Freire 2012; March and Rommerskirchen 2012; Tsakatika and Lisi 2013). Recent years have seen the scholarship on the radical Left in Europe further consolidate (e.g. March and Keith 2016; Príncipe and Sunkara 2016; Amini 2016; Damiani 2016; Chiocchetti 2017; Fagerholm 2016). Moreover, works addressing specific issues increased, such as RLPs and their electorate (Gomez, Morales, and Ramiro 2016; Ramiro 2016; Charalambous and Lamprianou 2017); RLPs and the European Union (Charalambous 2011a; 2013a; Dunphy and March 2013; Beaudonnet and Gomez 2017; Keith 2017); RLPs and national government (Katsourides 2016; Lisi 2016); RLPs and social movements (Bak Jørgensen and Agustín García 2016; della Porta et al. 2017; March 2017b). Additionally, the scholarship on populism, which has considerably grown in the last decade, gradually intertwined with the one on the radical Left. Scholars of populism inspired by Cas Mudde's conceptualisation (e.g. Mudde 2004), and even more the ones informed by the theories of Ernesto Laclau (e.g. Laclau 2005), have increasingly looked at the left side of the populist spectrum. (For works inspired by Mudde's conceptualisation, see for instance: Ramiro and Gomez 2017; Mudde 2017; March 2017a. For Laclau-informed works, see for instance: Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014; Errejón and Mouffe 2015; Katsambekis 2016; Kioupkiolis 2016; García Agustín and Briziarelli 2018b; Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis 2018). Recent studies on (radical) left populism have thus increasingly fused with the traditional scholarship on the radical Left, showing how the two scholarships not only share many case studies, but have also built strong bridges between them (e.g. Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis 2019; Charalambous and Ioannou 2020; Damiani 2020).

Despite the European radical Left having gained a relative 'momentum' in academia, there are some important areas of research that remain understudied in the existing literature, with only few works covering them. This is the case, for instance, for the organisational structure of RLPs (della Porta et al. 2017; Toplišek and Thomassen 2017), for RLPs in Central and Eastern Europe (March 2013; Abăseacă and Piotrowski 2018) and, even more strikingly, for the relation of RLPs with national belonging and identity, the topic this research focuses on.

In normative political debates, how the radical Left treats (and *should* treat) the nation is a long-lasting conflictual issue that has raised the most diverse opinions among left-wing intellectuals (for an overview, see, for instance: Ryan and Worth 2010; Dissent 2019). As an area of scholarly research, this theme can be found in studies on Marxism (e.g. Munck 1986; Nimni 1991), in political studies outside European and/or Western contexts (e.g. Goebel 2007; Burbano de Lara 2015), in historical analyses (e.g. Zhou 2019; Bernardini 2020); and in political theory (e.g. Miller 2020; Gerbaudo 2021, 224–48). Yet, it remains notably absent in the literature on contemporary European party politics. Some single-case analyses on this issue can be found in works on secessionist and sub-state nationalisms, but they do not cover state-wide nationalism and national identity outside the specific context of independentism/peripheral nationalism (see, for instance: Erk 2005; Dinas 2012; Olivieri 2015; Dunphy 2016). Single-case researches on RLPs and state-wide nationalism are very scant and often not available in English (e.g. Neves 2008; Ruiz Jiménez, Navarro Ardoy, and

Ferri Fuentevilla 2017), and comparative studies remain virtually inexistent. Preliminary works have attempted to look at the relationship between left-wing ideologies and national identity in times of austerity in specific EU countries (e.g. Ruiz Jiménez, González-Fernández, and Jiménez Sánchez 2015; Glynos and Voutyras 2016) and within the transnational wave of protests of 2011 (Gerbaudo 2017, 113–34). The role of national identity in contemporary European RLPs has also been fleetingly mentioned in works dealing with other issues, such as national identification and electoral behaviours (e.g. Ruiz Jiménez, Ferri Fuentevilla, and Navarro Ardoy 2017) and, more notably, Euroscepticism (e.g. Halikiopoulou, Nanou, and Vasilopoulou 2012; Charalambous 2013b; Holmes and Lightfoot 2016; Keith 2017).

In general, academic studies on nationalism in contemporary Europe and on the recent return of national identity in European politics have usually kept the radical Left out of the picture (Gingrich and Banks 2006; Eger and Valdez 2015; Crouch 2016; 2017a; 2017b; Karolewski, Suszycki, and Suszycki 2010; Wodak and Boukala 2015; Milačić and Vuković 2017; Bieber 2018).

Studies on left-wing populism have at times looked at the national dimension, arguing that left populists are keener to identify with the nation and often use national identity to mobilise support. However, this acknowledgment is mostly relegated to the margins of broader analyses, and lacks targeted empirical studies (Eklundh 2018; Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis 2019, 103–5; García Agustín 2020, 65–80; De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2021, 12–13), with very few exceptions (Custodi 2020; Chazel and Dain 2022).

As this review indicates, there is still an academic shortcoming concerning the relation of the radical Left with national identity in contemporary Western societies. Analyses and categorisations of different radical left outlooks on the nation are thus missing in academia. This is the academic void that this work is aimed at filling, through a thorough empirical and comparative analysis.

1.2 Thesis Outline

This work is devoted to inquiring into the presence and forms of national identity within the discourse of the radical Left. Although the scholarly literature on European party politics has mostly overlooked this theme, it is a relevant aspect of radical left parties' identity and concrete politics. It intersects with other important aspects of radical left parties, such as their ideological positioning, their strategic reflections and their interaction with the political arena they operate in. Moreover, it is an issue for which there is a puzzling heterogeneity of outlooks within the ranks of the radical Left. The aim of the research is thus twofold: (a) to study how radical left parties articulate national identity in their discourse; and (b) to examine the reasons that lie behind the high variation of stances held by ideologically similar actors. To answer these two interrelated research questions, the manuscript proceeds as follow:

Chapter 2 (*Theoretical and Conceptual Framework*) sets out the theoretical account that guides the research, and brings together the party politics scholarship on the radical Left with nationalism studies. It starts by presenting the ontological and epistemological assumptions of this study, that are located within the interpretive turn in political studies. Discourse Theory especially has informed the elaboration of this research, and its core theoretical concepts are thus discussed in this chapter. After that, the chapter provides the operative definitions that guide the analysis. It lays out an anti-essentialist conceptualisation of the nation and its related terminology: a *nation* is an imagined political community conceived as inherently limited and sovereign; *national identity* is the corresponding identity of a given imagined nation, expressed as a matrix of sedimented social practices that appear as if they were natural; and *nationalism* is the politics of imagining a nation, reproducing previous imaginations and/or putting forward new ones. Finally, the chapter discusses the concept of 'radical Left' and provides a definition of *radical left party* (RLP): it is a political party that occupies a composite yet distinct political space to the left of mainstream social democrats.

Chapter 3 (*Setting the Scene: the Radical Left and the Nation*) moves to the core of what this research is about: the relation between the nation and the radical Left. Before entering into the empirical analysis, this chapter broadens the research topic by approaching it from a historical and theoretical perspective. It presents a selective overview that points at the complexity and plurality of the relation between leftist and nationalist politics. After a general discussion on this matter, the chapter inquiries into the role of the nation in Marxist theory and then brings the reader back to present-day European politics, looking at the phenomenon of radical left populism and its relation with the nation.

Chapter 4 (*Research Design and Methodology*) lays out the methodological framework of the empirical research. It presents the case studies and the case selection. It expounds why this research resorts to an interpretive case study strategy and presents the reasoning that guided the selection of the case studies. The cases empirically studied in this research are the radical left milieus at the level of party politics in Italy, Spain and Portugal. It illustrates the research questions and sets out an analytical guideline for studying national identity within the radical Left. Finally, the chapter presents the techniques used for data collection and data analysis. It explains the triangulation of multiple sources of information and collection procedures. In order to answer the research questions, the analysis relies on semi-structured interviews, participant observation and on a set of selected discourses, such as leader speeches, articles, texts and party documents, that are subjected to discourse-theoretical analysis.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are the empirical part of the manuscript, where the analysis is disclosed and discussed. Each chapter presents one of the three case studies taken into consideration: the Spanish, Italian and Portuguese radical Left respectively. The three chapters share the same research puzzle and questions, as well as methodology and theoretical framework, yet each one stands on its own. The first one about Spain (*What Is Spain? Franco's Legacy and Podemos' Patriotism*) centres its focus on Podemos' patriotism, explaining its forms and origins, and discussing how it represented a turning point for the Spanish radical Left. The second one about Italy (*Italy's Wheezing Left between the Shadow of its Past and New Challenges*) studies the increasing detachment of the Italian radical Left from national identity, inquiring into how this detachment emerges in the discourse of radical left parties. The third one about Portugal (*Left-leaning Banal Nationalism in Portugal?*) examines why the radical Left there is relatively comfortable with national identity, and focuses on the rhetorical differences between the two main radical left parties.

Chapter 8 (*Comparing the Results*) takes stock of the empirical findings from a comparative perspective. It discusses some commonalities and differences that emerged across cases and singles out some factors that favour an explanation of the plurality of ways the radical Left engages with the nation. The chapter also draws some categories out of the empirical findings, propounding an innovative analytical typology of the radical Left's stances on the nation.

A concluding ninth chapter (*Conclusion*) briefly brings together the results of the three case studies, reflects on the relevance of this study, and suggests some directions for further research.

2. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

> *If my theory of relativity is proven correct, Germany will claim me as a German and France will declare that I am a citizen of the world. Should my theory prove untrue, France will say that I am a German and Germany will declare that I am a Jew.*
> **Albert Einstein** (Address at the Sorbonne, Paris. December 1929; in New York Times 16 February 1930)

This chapter sets out the theoretical and conceptual framework that guides the research. It proceeds as follows.

The first section (2.1) presents the ontological and epistemological assumptions of this study, which are located within the interpretive turn in political studies. Interpretive political science challenges positivist accounts in the study of politics, proposing instead approaches that are more holistic and less constrained by the need to pursue generalisable laws about causal relationships between social variables. Among different brands of interpretivism, Discourse Theory has especially informed the elaboration of this research, and its core theoretical concepts are thus presented in this section.

The second section (2.2) advances a theoretical account for the study of national identity, based on Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined community. It lays out an anti-essentialist conceptualisation of the nation and its related terminology, providing the operative definitions that guide the analysis. As discussed in the section, a *nation* is an imagined political community conceived as inherently limited and sovereign; *national identity* is the corresponding identity of a given imagined nation, expressed as a matrix of sedimented social practices that appear as if they were natural; and *nationalism* is the politics of imagining a nation, reproducing previous imaginations and/or putting forward new ones.

The third section (2.3) discusses the concept of 'radical Left' and provides a definition of *radical left party* (RLP): it is a political party that occupies a composite yet distinct political space to the left of mainstream social democrats. This section also presents the different party types that constitute this motley party family.

For ease of reading, Table 1 summarises the definitions of the key theoretical concepts that will be discussed in full in this chapter.

Table 1. ***Key concepts***

Nation	an imagined political community conceived as inherently limited and sovereign.
National identity	the corresponding identity of a given nation, expressed as a matrix of sedimented social practices that appear in society as if they were natural.
Radical Left Party (RLP)	a political party that occupies a composite yet distinct political space to the left of mainstream social democrats.

2.1 Interpretive Political Science

Interpretive (or interpretative) political science refers to a broad range of approaches that, in their attempt to understand political phenomena, challenge positivism for its lack of sensitivity to meanings, subjectivity and historical context. For interpretivists, the social world is ontologically different from the natural world and it thus requires its own technique and toolkit to be understood. Oppositely, classic positivism holds the views that we can explain actions by uncovering objective social facts about people, and that the relations that tie together antecedent and consequent in politics are necessarily causal ones – "laws", as in the natural sciences. In the provocative words of Bevir and Rhodes, positivists of the twentieth century "tried to model political science on their view of natural sciences. They were concerned to uncover the laws and regularities that governed social life irrespective of the beliefs of individuals and the meanings found in a society. Today, the most loudly proclaimed approaches to political science – behaviouralism, much institutionalism and rational choice theory – ape such scientism. Interpretive political science provides a clear alternative" (Bevir and Rhodes 2016, 3).

Rather than an atomistic view of the world, interpretive political science holds an organic and relational perspective, and it relies more on holism and narrative explanations than generalisable causal laws. To stress the holistic dimension of politics means acknowledging that there are many factors at work in any given case study and, most importantly, they are mutually influenced, thus weakening the researcher's pretensions of discovering generalisable links between causes and effects.

In keeping a holistic focus, interpretivism emphasises cases as complex entities and underlines the importance of context. Concepts used for the research are theoretically sound but also *orientative*, and they might be improved during the analysis. Data are usually presented in the form of thick narratives, with excerpts from texts (interviews, documents and ethnographic material) used as illustration (della Porta and Keating 2008, 30). However, this does not mean that an interpretivist approach is doomed to lapse into a purely ideographic account of social and political phenomena, nor that it has to refuse all the methods used by positivists for data collection and data analysis. Causality does play a role in interpretations, but it has to be understood as a contingent relation. As Bayard de Volo argues, "[i]nterpretivists recognise correlations and causation but do not see them as social laws to be discovered so much as contingent puzzles" (Bayard de Volo 2016, 242).

For interpretivists, actions cannot merely be correlated with a single isolated attitude, and events cannot be fully explained by simply linking them to their supposedly causal antecedents. We have to interpret actions and facts as part of a whole web of beliefs and interrelated meanings. Furthermore, the meanings attached to concepts and political terms cannot be assumed to be fixed across contexts and time. On the contrary, they are fluid, variable and nuanced. Meanings are not 'neutral': they do not simply describe reality, but they constitute it. Language in politics is performative, it shapes actions: meanings are constitutive elements of political identities and phenomena (Joseph 2004; Cosenza 2018).

In order to avoid reification and determinism, interpretivists argue that political scientists need to find room for historical contingency, shifting meanings and agency. Even if people are necessarily influenced by their context and by their web of beliefs, social facts do not fully fix people's identities, interests, and values, and thus agency is still possible and may even transform the context it is situated in. Moreover, beliefs and discourses are themselves ways of making sense of the world – they are *interpretations*. Therefore, when political scientists explore actions or practices as informed by beliefs or discourses, they actually interpret interpretations. Acknowledging this point is central for an interpretive approach to political science (Rhodes 2017, 18). At the epistemological level, it implies that there is no such thing as an objective and pure experience of the social world. Prior categories always influence and model people's experiences. Experience cannot be separated from the web of beliefs of the perceiver. The framework of meanings that shapes experience cannot be screened off in order to observe objective phenomena. All social phenomena, unlike natural phenomena, hold a symbolic character that emerges out of human interpretation. In other words, all meanings that we assign to social phenomena are socially constructed: “all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (Crotty 1998, 42). Ultimately, to argue that something is socially constructed is to argue that it could also be different from how it is and how it is perceived to be (Hay 2016, 111). This is, in a nutshell, the core of an interpretive approach to political science.

As we will see in section 2.2, this approach is well suited for studying national identity in different political discourses, as this comparative work aims to do, because the meanings of national identity are not univocal: they can change, and be contested, according to context and agency (B. Anderson 1996; Finlayson 1998a; Laclau 2003; De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2021). Unfortunately, comparative politics is a subdiscipline of political science that has been relatively slow to recognise interpretivist approaches (Bayard de Volo 2016). Comparative politics flourished in the 1960s when evolving processes of global interdependence led scholars to extend their range of interest beyond major western countries and formal political institutions (della Porta 2008, 199). It is not surprising that it has been a discipline especially reluctant to recognise interpretivist approaches, considering that during its flourishing in the sixties it had positivism at its heart. For instance, the influential scholar of comparative politics Gabriel Almond equated the comparative method with the scientific method *tout court*. According to him, “since if [political science] is a science, it goes without saying that it is comparative in its approach” (Almond 1966, 878). Academic textbooks of comparative politics have often openly opposed interpretivism, at best vaguely subsuming it under the category of qualitative methods. For instance, in the handbook on comparative politics written by Guy Peters, interpretivism is dismissed in a few lines in the introduction, by saying that

> [t]here are other scholars who would argue that qualitative, interpretative analysis is the only real way to consider comparison (Macintyre, 1978). For these scholars, all this discussion of variance would be irrelevant; what is important is individual interpretation of political events. This volume obviously takes a more positivist position, and argues that we really need to remove, as much as possible, the individual and his or her idiosyncrasies from the research if we want to be able to make statements about politics that are more general, more usable, and testable. (Peters 1998, 9)

Despite this long-lasting academic scepticism, interpretivism has eventually reached comparative political science (della Porta 2008, 211), and interpretivist analyses now proliferate in comparative politics, where “any gap left by the abandoned pursuit of generalisable social laws is readily filled by the richness and depth of local, historically contingent explanation” (Bayard de Volo 2016, 253). In fact, by paying great attention to processes of signification, comparativists who employ an interpretive approach are well suited to grasp the subtle differences in terminology and meanings of political discourses in relation to context and over time (see, for instance: Wedeen 1999). This is of special importance for comparative politics, considering that it is a field where it is common to have scholars conducting their research among different contexts and with different languages.

2.1.1 Discourse Theory

Interpretivism, just like positivism, does not have to be seen as a closed methodology, but rather as a cluster of different approaches that share a common epistemology. Interpretive political theories are variegated and heterogeneous. According to Torfing, some interpretive approaches, such as hermeneutics, have posed valid criticism to positivist political science, but they notwithstanding "have lapsed into an impressionistic descriptivism that lacks a solid theoretical underpinning" (Torfing 2005, 4). Other interpretive approaches, such as Discourse Theory, have instead purported to develop an approach to explanation that satisfies the premises of interpretivism and, at the same time, avoids to fall into merely descriptive and radically relativist accounts of politics (Howarth 2016, 136). In the last two decades, Discourse Theory has attracted mounting interest in academia, especially in populism and political communication studies, and it is now a recognised branch of social and political studies (e.g. Stavrakakis 2017; Carpentier, De Cleen, and Van Brussel 2019).

Since Discourse Theory is a form of interpretivism that has especially informed the elaboration of this research, with some of its core theoretical concepts proving to be very useful for the analysis, I briefly outline here the main tenets of this theory[1] (for the methodological implications of using Discourse Theory, see Chapter 4).

Discourse Theory was set out by political theorists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (e.g. Laclau and Mouffe, [1985]2001; Laclau, 2005), and further developed and operationalised by scholars of the so-called 'Essex School' (e.g. Howarth and Torfing 2005; Glynos and Howarth 2007; Laclau and Howarth 2015). It is an account that originated out of an anti-essentialist critique of Marxism, and used Gramsci's thought as the keystone to go beyond the economicism of Marxism, towards a new theoretical approach commonly defined as 'post-Marxism'. In doing so, it drew from different currents within Marxism (e.g. Gramsci and Althusser), post-structuralism (e.g. Derrida and Foucault), post-analytical philosophy (e.g. Wittegenstein and Rorty) and psychoanalysis (e.g. Freud and Lacan). The result was a synthetic post-Marxist and post-structuralist political theory that has been furthered operationalised since, and turned into an academic approach to study politics, under the label of Discourse Theory.

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[1] Since this is a complex theory that trespasses into political philosophy, for a more complete discussion of its philosophical assumptions there are some good summaries of recent publication (e.g. Torfing 2005; Kølvraa 2018; Stavrakakis and Galanopoulos 2018).

As the name Discourse Theory indicates, at the basis of the theory there is the notion of «discourse». In defining what a discourse is, Laclau and Mouffe's starting point are two central insights of the structuralist linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. First, Saussure argues that language is a system of signs whose meaning is determined solely by their relation to each other. Secondly, he defines a sign as divided in two: on the one hand, the *signifier*, the sound or the visual appearance of the word, phrase, or image in question; on the other, the *signified*, its meaning (Belsey 2002; Dillet, Mackenzie, and Porter 2013).

Drawing from this, Laclau and Mouffe conceptualize discourse as "any complex of elements in which relations play the constitutive role" (Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001, 106–10; Laclau 2005, 68). However, in their perspective discourse is no longer limited to the linguistic dimension: a discourse is not simply "text and talk", but also entails anything meaningful: it includes the material alongside the linguistic insofar as it is meaningful (Kølvraa 2018, 98). Therefore, Discourse Theory holds a materialist conception of discourse that deconstructs the realism/idealism opposition and ultimately transcends the distinction between the linguistic and the extra-linguistic. The classical distinction between the linguistic and the extra-linguistic dimensions of discourse is challenged by Laclau and Mouffe by arguing that, insofar as an event is meaningful, it too is discursively structured. To claim this point, they propose the following example:

> An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independent of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of 'natural phenomena' or 'expressions of the wrath of God', depends on the structuring of a discursive field. (Laclau and Mouffe [1985] 2001, 108)

Accordingly, a discourse covers all social and political phenomena, and it is always a relational system of signification, where meanings and identities are constructed in a way that is contextual, relational and historical (Laclau 1994).

The relational signification process that constitutes a discourse is called *articulation*, i.e. any practice that establishes a relation among different elements such that their identity is modified as a result of such relation (Stavrakakis and Galanopoulos 2018, 6). Thus, discourse is simply the meaningful totality resulting from the articulatory practice.

Yet, it is never a *closed* totality between fixed elements. On the contrary, the very impossibility of any universal and closed representation unties the connection between signifiers and signifieds.

Although the discursive structure (its *architectonics*) never attains full stability and closure, its relative coherence is still secured by it being tied down around certain nodal points, that permit a partial fixation of meanings (De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017). Nodal points are signifiers that are located at the centre of the discourse and around which other signifiers are ordered. Since they aim to represent the totality of a discursive chain, they tend towards a certain semantic emptiness. Therefore, nodal points usually are *empty signifiers*, because they are emptied of strict semantic meaning (i.e., a concrete content or definition). However, empty signifiers tend to be filled by affect: they 'make sense' in an affective mode (Laclau and Howarth 2015, 66–74).

An example of empty signifier given by Laclau is that of *Solidarność* in Poland. At the beginning, the movement was linked to a set of precise demands of the workers of the ship industry. However, many other demands from different areas started to be also articulated, to the point that, at the end, *Solidarność* became the signifier of something much broader, so broad that the reference to a particular signified was very weak (Laclau 2005).

Furthermore, in politics there is often a proliferation of *floating signifiers*, that is elements that have not (yet) received a definite and stable meaning, because a contextual change[2] has detached them from their "sedimented positions" and/or because competing political forces seek to ascribe different meanings to them (Laclau and Howarth 2015, 156–60).[3] A classic example of a floating signifier is "democracy", a signifier that is open to contestation in politics and can be articulated in radically different political projects – that is, it has one meaning for a certain political group and a different meaning for another.

In studying signifiers, the concept of *sedimentation* is central. It refers to certain meanings that have settled over time and come to appear as if they were "natural and unalterable" (Laclau 1990, 34–35). In this perspective, what Laclau terms 'the social' designates those social practices that have become sedimented, whereas 'the political' is the realm of conflict and contestation, of breaking old meanings and making new ones. In political competition, rival political forces who attempt to partially fix floating signifiers to specific signifying configurations, produce conflicting hegemonic articulations of meanings and identities. This process is intrinsically linked to the construction of (ant)agonism at the political level. Such floating-ness usually ends (although partially and temporarily) only with the hegemonic victory of one actor over the other (potentially producing, in the long run, new sedimentations of meaning).

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[2] 'Contextual change' is a simplification here. Laclau would rather call it a process of 'dislocation', i.e. the moment of dissolution of previous articulatory structure, for instance due to an organic and symbolic crisis. By creating a lack of meaning, it provokes the need to articulate new discourses (Laclau 1990, 3–85).

[3] Empty signifiers and floating signifiers are two analytically distinct concepts, although it can be argued that they are only different on a phenomenological level. According to Laclau, "[i]n the case of a floating signifier we would apparently have an overflowing of meaning while an empty signifier, on the contrary, would ultimately be a signifier without a signified. But if we analyse the matter more carefully, we realise that the floating character of a signifier is the only phenomenic form of its emptiness" (Laclau and Howarth 2015, 82).

Most of the scholars that use a discourse-theoretical approach in their studies have centred their research on populist politics and left-populism. This is arguably due to the fact that this was one of the major academic interests of Laclau (e.g. Laclau 2005) and that populism has been an extremely popular research field in academia for the last twenty years. However, there is no theoretical reason for limiting the applicability of Discourse Theory to the sole populist politics. On the contrary, discourse theorists have stressed the importance of studying different topics within social and political science using the theoretical toolkit of Discourse Theory (e.g. Howarth and Torfing 2005, 25; De Cleen and Glynos 2020). Moreover, although the encounter between Discourse Theory and studies on nationalism is relatively recent, the usefulness of combining the two scholarships has been increasingly recognised in academia and it opens up for new fruitful theoretical perspectives (e.g. Finlayson 1998a; Sutherland 2005; De Cleen 2017; De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017; Stavrakakis et al. 2017). As we will see in the next section, Discourse Theory's insights and toolbox prove very useful for understanding national identity and for conceptualizing it in a non-essentialist way capable of grasping its shifting political dimension.

2.2 Mapping the «National»

The «national» is a phenomenon that permeates our daily life *nolens volens*. It "colours our every act: the way we speak, eat, think and behave" (Munck 1986, 1). But what exactly is it? How can we *interpret* a political discourse on the nation? As I argue in this section, Benedict Anderson's studies on nationalism provide groundbreaking insights in understanding the national phenomenon, and they pave the way to an interpretive reading of national identity. In fact, as Day and Thompson argue, Anderson's idea of the nation as an imagined community "made a decisive, if not necessarily fully intended, contribution towards the ascendancy of a constructionist perspective on nationalism" (Day and Thompson 2004, 87–88).

Yet, before discussing Anderson's theory and advancing a conceptualisation of national identity, it is necessary to briefly stress the complexity and disagreements that lie behind nationalism studies. In fact, the national is a contextual phenomenon that eludes clear definition. In his book on nationalism, the famous historian Eric Hobsbawm speculates about a near future where an alien historian lands on our planet to study the causes of human extinction, after an apocalyptic nuclear war caused by competing nationalisms, and remains puzzled in front of the tremendous power of an idea – the nation – that s/he struggles to understand.

> Suppose that one day, after a nuclear war, an intergalactic historian lands on a now dead planet in order to enquire into the cause of the remote little catastrophe which the sensors of his galaxy have recorded. He or she - I refrain from speculating on the problem of extraterrestrial physiological reproduction - consults the terrestrial libraries and archives which have been preserved, because the technology of mature nuclear weaponry has been designed to destroy people rather than property. Our observer, after some study, will conclude that the last two centuries of the human history of planet Earth are incomprehensible without some understanding of the term 'nation' and the vocabulary derived from it. This term appears to express something important in human affairs. But what exactly? Here lies the mystery. (Hobsbawm 1992, 1)

Its ambiguous and chameleonic aspects make it difficult to define what a nation is, as well as to track its origins (Williams 2014, 159–61). In the field of nationalism studies, scholars have been divided up between so-called *modernists* and *primordialists* regarding the birth of nations. While for the former the foundation of nations is a modern phenomenon, linked to industrialization and the expansion of capitalism, for the latter the nation is something far more ancient, that goes back to Ancient Egypt, or even to the origins of human society (for an assessment of these historical debates, see: Smith 2000). In a similar vein, scholars disagreed regarding the relation between nationalism and the nation. According to a classic definition, nationalism would be "an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining the autonomy, unity and identity of a nation" (Smith 1991, 74). However, this definition immediately raises a question: does nationalism come first and create a collective national identity, or is there a pre-existing national identity that leads to nationalism? As much as this may sound like a 'which came first, the chicken or the egg?' question, it bares the substantive problem of whether nationality is 'constructed' politically (e.g. Hobsbawm and Ranger [1983] 1992) or based on previous ethnocultural elements (e.g. Smith 2009). And this is all but irrelevant, considering that the terminology derived from the word 'nation' has been pervading world politics for two centuries.

What is more, nationalism does not seem to be fading away, although many hypotheses of this kind have been voiced over the years. In the 1980s, Hobsbawm assumed that the increased scholarly attention on nationalism was a sign that "the phenomenon is past its peak": "The owl of Minerva which brings wisdom, said Hegel, flies out at dusk. It is a good sign that it is now circling around nations and nationalism" (Hobsbawm 1992, 192). Despite Hobsbawm's optimism, in European politics we are currently experiencing a re-emergence of national identity as an important source of political identity, mainly triggered by right-wing forces (Gingrich and Banks 2006; Eger and Valdez 2015; Crouch 2016; 2017a; 2017b; Milačić and Vuković 2017; Bieber 2018) or by secessionist and sub-state nationalist actors (Lecours 2012; Olivieri 2015; Ruiz Casado 2020). Certainly, the power of the nation-state appears to be shrinking in many areas of the world, besieged by a globalized economy and transnational actors (Habermas 1999), but this should not be confused with the decay of national identities or nationalist politics. On the contrary, the decline of the nation-state often signals a revival of nationalism (Nimni 1991, 2; D'Eramo 2009, 13). Globalisation, migration flows, terrorism and the neoliberal dismantlement of the welfare state seem to have provided the occasion for a strengthening of the political dimension of the nation, together with the general decline of other collective identities such as religion or class, and with the ideological void left by the crumbling of Marxism-Leninism (Nairn and James 2005; Crouch 2017b). Once emotionally powerful, the international working class seems to have now dramatically lost its appeal as a collective identity, leaving space to others. While neoliberal globalisation has uprooted many traditional identities and fostered the loss of community values, the national community has returned to be a source of political identification for many people, bringing back nationalist politics to European democracies (Crouch 2018; Judis 2018). Finally, the atrocious crimes committed by nationalisms in the first half of the twentieth century faded away in the collective memory, reducing its capacity to act as a bulwark against the appeal of nationalism (Crouch 2016, 3).

It is difficult to deny that nationalism is still among us, and that it periodically reappears in societies where it seemed to have lost importance. However, one question remains open: what is this 'nation' that nationalism refers to and whose sense of belonging has shaped world politics for the past two centuries? If we think about our «nationality» we usually intend it as the collective identity of a specific territory and/or a specific people to which we belong. But what is this collective identity based on? As Rogers Brubaker argues, this question risks to be misleading, because it leads to define nationhood in substantialist terms. What we should rather ask, instead, is how the idea of the nation works (Brubaker 2004, 114–16). In fact, general definitions of the nation based on objective criteria, such as ethnic or linguistic commonality, or shared traditions and cultures, do not usually hold true when faced with historical enquiry. Indeed, many attempts to provide a definition of nationality have run into this problem: "[t]hey have adduced language or territory, written literature, history, form of government or so-called national feeling; and in every case the exceptions have proved more important than the rule" (Canetti [1960] 1984, 197). This is because nations are not unitary phenomena – they are not defined by concrete traits equally observable in all cases. Even a specific territory – the trait we refer the most when thinking about nations – is not always adequate to define a nation. Not only because historically the borders of nationalities are anything but rigid and immutable, but also because the very idea of belonging to a nation can also be conceived as independent from the territory. Just to give an example from the history of the Left, in the early twentieth century the Bund, the Jewish workers' socialist movement, proudly considered the Yiddish-speaking people of Eastern Europe as a "nation", without aspiring to reunite it into a geographically-defined territory (Beit-Hallahmi 1993, 43–45).

Rather than a concrete entity, a nation can thus be better understood as a type of 'imagined political community', as Benedict Anderson famously claimed in his groundbreaking study (B. Anderson [1991] 2006). Originally published in 1983, and then updated in 1991 and again in 2006, *Imagined Communities* is the fifth-most cited book in social sciences (2016 data) (E. Green 2016). However, many citations of Anderson's book do little more than quote the title (see: Breuilly 2016). In the provocative words of White, "[r]arely has a critical best-seller been so popular *and* so ignored at the same time" (White 2004, 50).

In the diatribes between scholars of nationalism, Anderson fits into the modernist and constructivist vein, but he does so from a new and original perspective (B. Anderson 2016). In his view, nations are *imagined* because their members "never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (B. Anderson [1991] 2006, 22). *Imagined* should not be misread as *imaginary*. As Thomas Hylland Eriksen explains:

> [t]his confusion is so widespread that the anthropologist Richard Jenkins once titled a book chapter 'Imagined, but not imaginary'. Perhaps much misguided criticism of the social constructivist perspective developed in the book could have been avoided if he had titled it *Abstract Communities*, but as he pointed out when I mentioned it to him, it would then have been far less evocative and seductive. He is nevertheless crystal clear when he links 'invention' not to fabrication and falsity, but to imagining and creation. (Eriksen 2016, 4)

In this perspective, any kind of community larger than those based on face-to-face contact is actually imagined (perhaps even those, as Anderson provocatively suggests). All the collective political identities that shape our social and political life have an element of imagination at their core. Imagining communities, in the Andersonian sense, plays a central role in our ideological thinking (Finlayson 1998a, 113) and is a constitutive element of politics itself (Finlayson 2012, 279). However, for Anderson the nation is also a definite modern phenomenon: it is a *specific* type of community that belongs to modernity and occupies the place originally occupied by other – equally imagined – communities, such as the religious community and the dynastic realm. According to

Anderson's theory, the nation has its roots in the spread of print capitalism in Europe and in the political developments in the American colonies during the 18th century (B. Anderson 1992; [1991] 2006). In fact, while the preconditions were set in Europe, the development of national consciousness began in the Western Hemisphere in the late 18th century – in the former Spanish colonies, Brazil and the United States. From there, it spread to Europe and then to former colonies of Europe, in Africa and Asia.[4]

What distinguishes the nation from other contemporary types of imagined community is the fact that it is always conceived as *limited* and *sovereign*. As Anderson explains:

> The nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind. The most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation in the way that it was possible, in certain epochs, for, say, Christians to dream of a wholly Christian planet.
>
> It is imagined as *sovereign* because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. Coming to maturity at a stage of human history when even the most devout adherents of any universal religion were inescapably confronted with the living *pluralism* of such religions, and the allomorphism between each faith's ontological claims and territorial stretch, nations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state. (B. Anderson [1991] 2006, 7)

Despite their commonality of being sovereign and limited, nations can still be imagined according to a wide range of different characteristics and political values. Nations should not be distinguished "by their falsity/genuineness", but rather "by the style in which they are imagined" (B. Anderson [1991] 2006, 11). This implies that, in order to understand if a nation 'really exists', it does not matter much whether the history of the nation or its cultural commonality (upon which its legitimacy is constructed) are an incomplete reinterpretation of history, a totally invented tradition created by a political elite, or a rather accurate historical fact (Wallerstein 1991). What matters is whether the members of the nation eventually imagine it as such and feel part of it.

This sense of commonality that the nation evokes can serve the most diverse political purposes, from preserving internal discriminations to fighting them. But either way, it requires an imagination of fraternity and horizontality among the community's members. As Anderson says, "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (B. Anderson [1991] 2006, 7). In psychoanalytical terms, nationality works as a category of identification "through which a narcissistic drive [of the subject] is sated in identification with self via identification with the nation" (Finlayson 1998b, 159).

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[4] I do not dwell here further on the historical part of Anderson's theory about the *origins* of nationalism, because it is not central to this thesis, which looks at contemporary political actors within long-established nations. For a detailed description of Anderson's historical analysis, see B. Anderson [1991] 2006, while for a critical assessment see Cheah and Culler 2003; Breuilly 2016.

But how is this feeling of belonging to the nation signified and reproduced in politics? This is a crucial question from a discourse-theoretical standpoint (see section 2.1.1). A first answer is that the meanings of belonging to the nation depend upon historical circumstances and political contingency. In fact, a national community can be potentially imagined drawing from the most divergent political values, from the far right to the far left of the political spectrum, and sometimes even from supposedly-antithetical values, such as internationalism. For instance, the *Hero of the Two Worlds* Giuseppe Garibaldi was a fervent Italian nationalist and also a sincere internationalist, praising the International Workingmen's Association as "the rising sun of the world to come" (Garibaldi 1885, 51). As Laclau argues on this point, the power of Anderson's notion of imagined community lies exactly in its ability to provide us with a useful matrix out of which we can theoretically apprehend the different variants of a nationalist discourse (Laclau 2003, 21). In this perspective, the 'emptiness'[5] of the signifier nation is central in understanding how nationalism operates in politics. In fact, for Anderson and Laclau alike, the images and symbols that reproduce the nation tend to be partially empty of semantic meanings (B. Anderson 2003, 226). As Laclau contends,

> here lies the explanation of one of the paradoxes of nationalism alluded to by Anderson: what he calls "[t]he 'political' power of nationalisms vs. their poverty and even incoherence" (14). If the point that I am making is correct, such poverty is not a deficiency: it is the result of a discourse which can only function on the basis of emptying its central signifiers. (Laclau 2003, 24)

Accordingly, as the history of the twentieth century has shown, a sentiment of national pride can be seen much in the dreadful crimes of fascist regimes as in the antifascist resistance; much in the colonialism of European countries as in anti-colonial movements of the Third World. Even at the level of world politics, it is difficult to trace all-embracing causal mechanisms that characterise nationalism's role. If Wallerstein contends that nationalism is often only a "nervous tic" of world capitalism, he nonetheless acknowledges that there are "very important moments when nationalism mobilises significant anti-systemic sentiment, and thereby affects the politics of the entire world-economy" (Wallerstein 1983, 100–101).

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[5] For the concept of 'emptiness' see Section 2.1.1.

In contemporary Europe, most of the nations are long-established imagined political communities that have proven to be highly resilient and represent a primary source of identification for a vast number of people (Stavrakakis 2007, 189–210; Rokkan 2009; Finlayson 2012). In this context of established imagined nations, nationalism emerges as a discursive attempt to trigger their political dimension. In other words, nationalist politics in contemporary Europe (including sub-state nationalisms) tends to politicise a national identity that is already there, usually as a form of "banal nationalism" (Billig 1995) – as a matrix of social practices that have become 'sedimented'[6] and thus appear as if they were natural (Kølvraa 2018, 99–100). The term "banal nationalism" refers to the everyday representations of the nation which build a shared sense of national belonging amongst citizens – a sense of community through national identity. The term is derived from Michael Billig's 1995 book of the same name, where the author devised the concept to highlight the routinized ways in which established nation-states are reproduced from day to day. Examples of banal nationalism include the use of flags in everyday contexts, national songs, symbols, popular expressions and so on. Many of these examples are most effective because of their constant repetition, and have an almost unnoticed and subliminal nature (Billig 1995).

Nationalism thus plays a major part in naturalizing and reproducing the ideological conceptions and the sets of values that have been ascribed to the imagined nation – the 'sedimented' meanings of it. This is what often happens with the banal nationalism embedded in States' laws and institutions. However, nationalism can do more than that. In fact, in its attempt to politicise national identity, not only does nationalism reproduce sedimented ideological conceptions, but it can also actively modify them, or even subvert them through new hegemonical articulations (Sutherland 2005). This is because such ideological conceptions are neither immutable nor universal. When actors imagine the nation, they usually do so in their own *image and likeness*: they often conceive the nation according to their own political values, which do not necessarily fully match with the sedimented meanings of the nation. In doing so, they attempt to ascribe new meanings to it. This is possible because the meanings of terms and symbols around which the imagined nation is constructed and represented (such as nationhood, hymns, flags, national pride) are the result of conjunctural articulations – they only make sense within specific discursive regimes (Laclau 2003, 26). There is not a 'true' colour of nationalism: the meanings ascribed to nationality change across time and space, and different meanings can also co-exist within the same juncture, with rival hegemonic attempts to define the nation according to different sets of values (Finlayson 1998b, 111). When this happens, nationality tends to turn into a floating signifier,[7] oscillating between different processes of signification set by competing political forces. As Laclau explains, this is made possible by the relative emptiness of the nation. As he argues:

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[6] For the concept of 'sedimentation' see section 2.1.1.

> 1) there is no a priori limitation of the experiences, perceptions, struggles, etc. that can enter into an equivalential chain and, thus, constitute an imagined community;
>
> 2) the more the chain is extended, the more empty will be the signifiers, the "images" which represent the totality of the chain, for in order to homogenise heterogeneous elements the hegemonic images could not identify with the particularistic heterogeneity of any of the intervening links. (Laclau 2003, 26)

However, stating that there is no *a priori* limitation on the types of political values that can be articulated with the imagined nation, does not mean that there are no limits. Sedimentation acts as a strong brake in the face of attempts of resignification. For instance, when the meaning of national pride is highly sedimented and relatively fixed, the room for manoeuvre for altering is restricted. But even in the extreme case of an organic crisis that unleashes the possibility to radically alter the symbolic order of a society, 'nation' is still a term with a history, and history still influences the ways in which new articulations can be carried out (Finlayson 1998a, 113). Consequently, a nationalist discourse can move in *any* direction (Laclau 2003, 26), but it still has to deal with the "discursive conditions of possibility" of its time and space (Laclau 1999, 96).

Furthermore, nationalism is often used as a *political legitimation strategy* by political actors: they often turn to nationalism as a strategy to legitimize themselves, using national identity as a mobilizing rhetorical appeal and exploiting the emotion-charged symbolism of the nation (Finlayson 1998a; Stroschein 2019). This is because, as Anderson explained, nationalism is not simply an ideology, but something that goes deeper in the shaping of human identities. Rather than as a proper ideology, nationalism thus emerges as a *sustainer* of the actor's actual ideologies (Freeden 1998). Being a widespread sedimented identity, nationality may serve actors as a means to provide fixity and legitimacy to their own political values, by linking them to the apparent 'naturalness' of the nation (Finlayson 1998a, 103).

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[7] For the concept of 'floating signifier' see section 2.1.1.

The capacity of nationalism to potentially affect actors' political values, as by providing them with further strength and legitimacy, is an important theoretical point. It indicates that nationalist politics, by linking the actor's values to the imagined nation (and to its sedimented meanings), does not only affect and modify the meanings of the nation, but also the meanings of the actor's values. They are both affected by the nationalist discourse: this is the core of what discourse theorists call 'articulation' (see section 2.1.1).

The inquiry on the national phenomenon presented so far constitutes the theoretical angle from which I look at national identity in radical left politics. Conceptualizing the nation as an imagined community is not only a rich and fruitful theoretical perspective, but it also has a positive analytical implication: it permits to engage properly with the heterogeneity of traits that constitute each nation, and provides a definition that does not fall back into those tentative conceptualisations of nationality that look for concrete traits equally observed in all cases. This makes it possible to untie the concept of nationalism from its frequent association with the radical Right, turning it into an analytical category that refers to a specific form of politics. Consequently, the definitions used in this study are the following:

Nation	an imagined political community conceived as inherently limited and sovereign.
National identity / Nationality	the corresponding identity of a given nation, expressed as a matrix of sedimented social practices that appear in society as if they were natural.
Nationalism	the politics of imagining a nation – it can attempt to reproduce previous imaginations and/or put forward new ones.

Before moving to the discussion on the concept of *radical Left*, one last terminological problem ought to be briefly assessed for the sake of conceptual clarity: namely, the distinction between patriotism and nationalism. In the analysis of nationalism provided in this section, analytical clarity has been prioritized over normative convictions, presenting nationalism as the politics of imagining a nation – any kind of it. However, the polymorphism of nationalism has led some scholars to elaborate a normative distinction between patriotism and nationalism. The former is described as inclusive, defensive and multicultural; while the latter as exclusive, aggressive and nativist (see, for instance: Adam 1990; Viroli 1995). In a nutshell, they portray patriotism as the positive counterpart of negative nationalism. A well-known example of this distinction is the concept of *constitutional patriotism* popularized by Jürgen Habermas: a positive collective identification to the norms, values and procedures that constitutes a liberal-democratic political community, opposed to ethnic nationalism (Müller and Scheppele 2007).

This distinction between patriotism and nationalism reflects the meanings that these two terms often hold in politics (e.g. Orwell [1945] 1953) and it certainly is a common distinction in the political language of many Western societies. However, in academic analysis it risks to simplify the intrinsic plurality of ways through which a national community can be imagined, by reducing it to two normative types. The politics of imagining a nation should not be downscaled to a normative nominal category (either good or bad). Positive and negative manifestations of national identity can certainly exist (and hybrid forms too), but they are all shaped by the common underlying logic of nationalism provided in the definition above (Billig 1995; Brubaker 2004, 120; Bonikowski 2016, 3). Consequently, in this thesis I retain from normatively distinguishing between patriotism and nationalism, opting for treating the two terms *analytically* as synonyms and thus interchangeable. I privilege one term or the other only on the basis of stylistic reasons or to better adhere to the vocabulary of the actor under scrutiny. However, this does not imply that in the empirical analysis I overlook the plurality of terms used by the actors. Differences in the words actors use to label the national community – such as *patria* or *nation* – often have an empirical value that is fully taken into account in the analysis.

2.3 Locating Radical Left Parties

The previous two sections provided the theoretical framework and the conceptual toolbox necessary to study national identity in political competition. It is now necessary to move the discussion to the radical Left: which political parties does it embody? And how should they be categorised?

In the 2010s, *the radical Left* appeared to be regaining a certain degree of dynamism and political influence in Europe. For instance, in the European election of 2014 the left group of the European Parliament (GUE/NGL) reached the highest number of seats ever (52 over 751, with a growth of +17 seats compared to 2009). The financial crisis of 2008, the resulting austerity policies and the cycles of protest against them opened new windows of political opportunity for left-wing parties (della Porta 2015b; March and Keith 2016; della Porta et al. 2017). In fact, the economic crisis originated in processes that the radical Left had been denouncing for a long time, such as globalisation and neoliberalism. Moreover, the crisis inaugurated a new time of austerity where the ruling parties hailed neoliberalism as the answer to a crisis of neoliberalism, and the lower classes found themselves worse off (Crouch 2015). It all seemed like a ‘perfect storm’ for radical left parties (hereafter RLPs), and in a few cases, it turned out to be quite so. Enhanced by the links with grassroots anti-austerity social movements, some radical left parties rapidly increased their popular support, often in a new populist fashion, capable of challenging the hegemony of liberal centre-left parties. The most famous electoral achievements were the ones of *Syriza* in Greece (2012-2015), *Podemos* in Spain (2014-2015) and *La France Insoumise* in France (2017). Along similar lines, in the late 2010s *Bloco de Esquerda* and *Levica* increased their political influence over Portuguese and Slovenian politics respectively, and *Sinn Féin* made an electoral breakthrough in Ireland’s 2020 general election. Moreover, in some countries without solid RLPs, markedly pro-workers and pro-welfare political messages that resembled those of the radical Left came back into the political debate, as in the United Kingdom through Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour Party (and the same could be said for Bernie Sanders in the USA). Particularly, Syriza’s seizure of power in 2015 seemed like a game changer: until a few years earlier, few would have predicted that in 2015 they would be reading on the front page of any Western newspaper about the victory of a RLP in a European country.

However, if we look at the whole of European politics, we are still talking about small numbers: although in some countries the radical Left is more relevant now than at any time since the fall of the Soviet bloc, it remains virtually non-existent in various European states – especially, but not exclusively, in the East. It represents overall a minor party family and some leftist actors seem to have already lost their momentum, or being in the process of losing it. Syriza is no longer in power and, even when it was still ruling, the massive expectation that had triggered among leftists throughout all Europe had already vanished or even turned into a disheartened disappointment (Kouvelakis 2019; Sotiris 2020; Varoufakis 2020). Most of the new seats won by the leftist European parliamentary group GUE/NGL in 2014 (+17) were already lost in the next European election of 2019 (–11).

But what exactly is the radical Left? To define and situate it on the level of party politics, it is necessary to acknowledge that the classification of political actors can be done according to different criteria. Such criteria are not *a priori* correct or wrong, and they should not be guided by any essentialist approach. Rather, they depend on the explanatory purpose of the classification and on the type of research the classification is used for. Hence, different criteria to classify political actors are possible, but they are not all equally valid. In specific inquiries, some classificatory criteria can be very useful, and other can be highly misleading. For instance, we can classify political parties according to their set of values, or according to the form of their political practice and so on. The former option, usually defined within a unidimensional linear spectrum, is the most common one: it is the ordinal (continuous) division between Left and Right, that has been one of the most important political axes from the French Revolution onwards. In such a perspective, the radical Left is *leftist* due to its commitments to equality and internationalism, and *radical* due to its aspirations to fundamentally transform society (March and Keith 2016, 5).

Recently, this Left-Right ideological division has increasingly come under scrutiny, both in academia and in the political realm, especially from the end of the Cold War onwards. Many reasons have been given for a reassessment of the traditional Left-Right dichotomy (see, for instance: Kitschelt 1994; Kriesi et al. 2008; Ostiguy 2009); yet, much as the division between Left and Right may raise some problems when used to rigidly split up the ideological spectrum, I contend that it remains a useful analytic tool for locating the radical Left on the level of party politics. This is because the idea of 'radical Left' that emerges out of this division permits the conceptualisation of a grouping whose boundaries are not only relatively well defined in the political realm, but that exist in the majority of European societies and are perceived as such by the vast majority of the citizens of such societies. Moreover, there is a general scholarly consensus about its conceptualisation, as well as about the core members of this party family (e.g. March 2011; Amini 2016; Katsourides 2016; March and Keith 2016; Chiocchetti 2017). Therefore, drawing from the scholarship on the radical Left, the definition I use in this study is the following:

Radical Left Party (RLP)	a political party that occupies a composite yet distinct political space to the left of mainstream social democrats.

It is a *distinct* political space, because RLPs are not simply *on* the left of social democrats, but *to* the left of them. It means that they identify and organize themselves as a separate group from the mainstream centre-left, rather than being a leftist tendency within the centre-left.

It is a *composite* political space because actors that fall into it have different political stances and come from heterogeneous backgrounds. Although they share a common origin within the broad tradition of the 'class Left', they come from competing sub-traditions and have evolved through different paths.

March and Keith single out four different types as composing this motley party family (March and Keith 2016, 8–9):

(1) *Conservative communists*. Old-style Communist parties highly linked to the Soviet

tradition (often Stalinist), they maintain a Cold War understanding of the world, a platform inspired by 20th-century socialism, and a party strategy quite institutionalised and traditional.

(2) *Reform communists*. Usually more eclectic and pragmatic, they retain important elements of the Soviet legacy, but their ideological and strategic positions are less dogmatic.

(3) *Revolutionary extreme Left*. Generally inspired by Leninism, Trotskyism, or Maoism, parties on the extreme Left are usually quite doctrinaire, they focus on class-based grassroots mobilisation and tend towards anti-systemic sectarianism.

(4) *Democratic socialists*. They are a broad group of parties that try to hold a position distant from both Soviet communism and social democracy. They share elements of the post-1968 'new left' agenda (environmentalism, feminism, grassroots democracy and so on).

Beyond these four types of radical left parties, the recent scholarship on radical left politics suggests that a fifth typology should to be added, namely *left-wing populism* (also called *radical left populism*). Much as it is a subtype of the fourth one (democratic socialists), its increased relevance requires treating it separately. In fact, radical left populists are frequently identified as a distinct typology within the radical Left party family and the concept of a populist (radical) Left is now commonly used in academia (e.g. March 2017a; Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis 2019; Damiani 2020; García Agustín 2020). Drawing from the recent literature on this party typology, I provide the following definition:

(5) *Left-wing populism*. Left populists retain a democratic socialist ideological core, but the claim to be the 'vox populi' and not the proletarian vanguard is strengthened, as well as the attention given to territorial identities (national and/or regional). They tend to have charismatic leaders, significant links with anti-austerity grassroots protests, and a narrative that draws from the people-elite dichotomy.[8]

Distinguishing these different analytical types is certainly useful; yet they should not be reified: the radical Left has proven to be a party family that is neither rigid nor unchangeable, where actors often present elements that trespass on one single typology. As March and Keith argue, these types "rarely parlay exactly into division among the radical Left; rather they are intended as a heuristic device for illuminating a complex reality" (March and Keith 2016, 9).

Furthermore, the conceptualisation of the radical Left provided so far raises a question about the meaning of the adjective 'radical'. What does this radicalism refer to? After all, most of these parties do not claim the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, much as they maintain an anti-capitalist ethos. They uphold a class politics that is more anti-neoliberal than anti-capitalist, usually declined in gradualist, welfarist and neo-Keynesian terms. Some have argued that, together with the neo-liberalization of the Social Democrats, there has been a corresponding social-democratisation of the radical Left (see, for instance: Arter 2002). This viewpoint is partly misleading, because it does not take into account distinctions in rhetoric, post-materialist claims and relationships with social movements, to name just a few differences between the radical Left and the old social democracy – yet, it is hard to deny that it holds some truth. There has undoubtedly been a *de*radicalisation of the radical Left.

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[8] For a longer examination of the concept of left-wing populism and its relevance for this study, see section 3.3.

In light of this, a scholarly explanation to the fuzzy radical Left's *radicalism* has been to consider it as a 'situational' (March and Keith 2016, 7) and 'relational' (Chiocchetti 2017, 10) character. Accordingly, RLPs are radical insofar as they are compared with the mainstream centre-left, and/or insofar as they have values that are radical in the party's national situation. However, as much as we should rightly see their radicalism mostly as a relational qualifier rather than a substantive one, I argue that this solution risks to fail distinguishing the party's positioning in the ideological spectrum from the one in the realm of political competition, and ends up for overlapping the two. Much as they are interconnected, strategy and ideology do not necessarily correspond. There are radical left parties who enter into a governing alliance with the moderate centre-left and still continue to be 'radical', whereas there are others who remain in a conflictual relation with the centre-left, but nonetheless abandon many of their core political values, to the point that is hard to define them as 'radical' anymore.

Ultimately, we should not dwell too much on the search for a rigid and definitive conceptualisation, but rather use the definition of the radical Left (*a composite yet distinct political space to the left of mainstream social democrats*) as a spatial and analytical category. The qualifier 'radical' should not be abandoned, but used 'under erasure' (*sous rature*) in a Derridean sense, meaning that it is a qualifier that is not fully adequate for the concept it represents, yet it is necessary because no better words have (yet) been found due to the constraints and the relativity of language (Derrida [1967] 1997). In fact, the idea of *radical* Left immediately gives to our interlocutor the idea of the political grouping we are referring to. After all, Syriza, which paved the way to the new wave of the European radical Left after its electoral breakthrough in 2012, is an acronym that stand for "Coalition of the Radical Left". It is no coincidence that the party, having long abandoned its original radicalism, went through an internal discussion to change the party name.[9]

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[9] In 2020, Syriza eventually rebranded itself as "Progressive Alliance", a line that was added to its shortened name Syriza, while abandoning the full name "Coalition of the Radical Left" (see https://www.ekathimerini.com/249387/article/ekathimerini/news/planned-name-change-in-syriza-sparks-internal-divisions and https://www.ekathimerini.com/253777/article/ekathimerini/news/syriza-set-to-rebrand-itself-as-progressive-alliance, accessed 20/11/2020).

3. SETTING THE SCENE: THE RADICAL LEFT AND THE NATION

> *What is increasingly needed is a sophisticated and serious blending of the emancipatory possibilities of both nationalism and internationalism. Hence, in the spirit of Walt Kelly as well as Karl Marx in a good mood, I suggest the following slogan for young scholars:*
>
> Frogs in their fight for emancipation will only lose by crouching in their murky coconut half-shells.
> Frogs of the world unite!
>
> **Benedict Anderson** (A Life Beyond Boundaries, 2016)

In the previous chapter I inquired into the concepts of nation (with its related terminology) and radical Left. It is now time to take a step forward, moving to the core of what this research is about: the *relation* between them. As already stated, this study analyses the relation between the radical Left and the nation by focusing on contemporary radical left parties in Spain, Italy and Portugal. The next chapter will thus present the case studies, the methodology and the data, and then from Chapter 5 the empirical analysis begins. Before that, this chapter broadens the research question and gives an introductory overview on the nexus between the radical Left and the nation. Through a selective overview that by no means aspires to be exhaustive, the first part of this chapter outlines the relation between the radical Left and the nation by focusing on its complexity both at the theoretical and historical level. After this first general overview, the chapter goes on looking at two specific moments of this troubled relation: the nation in classical Marxism and the nation in contemporary left-wing populism. The reasoning behind this selection lies in the fact that Marxism had, and still has, a prime impact in shaping the way of thinking of the radical Left, and thus it is worth providing an historical overview of how classical Marxist theory engaged with the nation. This help avoiding any risk of "presentism" when studying contemporary debates of the radical Left. Left populism, on the contrary, is mostly a recent phenomenon which nonetheless has had a significant influence on contemporary European radical left parties, favouring new discourses and practices as regards to nationality, and thus requires to be discussed before moving to the empirical chapters.

The chapter proceeds as follows:

The first section (3.1) briefly introduces the discussion, by pointing at the complexity and plurality of the relation between leftist and nationalist politics.

The second section (3.2) focuses on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, presenting the Marxist thought on the nation. It summarises what Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels thought about nationality and the national question; and presents the historical debate that the major Marxists of the early twentieth century had on nationality.

The third section (3.3) takes us back to present-day European politics, looking at the phenomenon of radical left populism and its relationship with the nation. By discussing the concept of populism, this section critically engages with a recent issue in academia, namely the nexus between nationalism and populism.

3.1 A Puzzling Story

Does the Left need the nation-state to achieve its political goals? This is a question that has crossed many historical rifts within the Left, since the days of the International Workingmen's Association and the disputes between Marxists and anarchists. However, it is a question that actually embodies two distinct queries:

(1) Does the Left need the *state* to achieve its political goals?
(2) Does the Left need the *nation* to achieve its political goals?

Although interconnected and often historically overlapping, these two queries should be analytically distinguished. In a nutshell, in the 'nation-state' formula the *state* refers to the political entity and the institutional and legal framework for exercising power within the boundaries of this entity; the *nation*, on the other hand, here equates with the idea of 'nationality' and refers to the collective identity of a specific territory and/or a specific people (see section 2.2).

Precisely in the light of the differences between the ideas of state and nation, the Left has not always answered questions (1) and (2) in the same way. As a matter of example, many of the 20th-century Western communist movements not aligned with Moscow recognised the importance of seizing state power, but openly denied any positive role of national identity as a collective identity (we can think for instance of most Trotskyist movements in post-war Europe). On the contrary, the Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan in his writings shows great distrust for state power, which he does not want to seize but rather replace with other forms of political institutions; yet he does not dismiss national identity, and indeed his *confederalist* project aims at eliminating the state but not the nation(s), which would eventually turn democratic and flourish (Öcalan 2019).

The relationship between leftist policies and nationality is a problem that also runs through questions of political philosophy. Assuming that there is a sense of solidarity, and not individualism, at the basis of left-wing policies, the questions point at how close, and based on which attributes, a collective identity needs to be in order to foster solidarity among its members (see: Miller 2020). Does that collective identity need to be *national*? And if so, on what grounds should a membership to the nation informed by leftist ideology be defined?

Strange as it may seem today, originally the concepts of *left* and *nation* were not all that far apart: in an article published in the New Left Review, the historian Eric Hobsbawm goes as far as to suggest that, after all, not only the political concepts of the nation and the left arose from the same cradle – the French Revolution – but that they were also in some way synonymous (Hobsbawm 1996, 45). In the troubled French summer of 1789, the Third State declared itself 'the Nation' and transformed itself into the National Assembly, thus beginning the French Revolution and creating the very concept of the 'nation' at the political level. The formal motion that established the National Assembly was written by Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, who was also the author of the famous pamphlet «What Is the Third Estate?», published shortly before the outbreak of the revolution, in which it was written that "[the Third Estate] contains everything proper to the nation; and those who do not belong to the Third Estate cannot be seen as part of the nation" (Sieyès 1789). Once the National Assembly was established, the supporters of the Third Estate and the Revolution sat on the left side of the chamber and described themselves equally as 'the National Party' or 'the Left', thus creating the political concept of the 'left' as well (Conversi 2017, 1).

Yet, with the rise of the worker and socialist movements, and later with the spread of anti-colonial struggles, the history of the relations between leftist and nationalist aspirations became much more see-sawing and complex. At different times and periods, socialism and nationalism either united into fragile alliances, fused into one single aspiration, or fought against each other on opposite sides. Socialism and nationalism were often (but by no means *always*) on the same side of the barricade whenever the labor movement operated in contexts where a struggle for the independence and territorial sovereignty of their country was also taking place, against colonialist or imperialist interference. This was the case, as we will see in the next section, that interested the Bolsheviks the most in their early discussions on how workers should stand on the national question. But the right to national self-determination was not necessarily the only situation when socialist and national demands met. For instance, in the early twentieth century the Jewish Worker League (Bund) proudly considered the Yiddish-speaking people of Eastern Europe as a "nation", without wanting to put an end to the geographical fragmentation: the Jewish socialist movement demanded "national-cultural autonomy" for the Jewish nation, without aiming to reunite it into a geographically-defined territory, and it was thus resolutely adverse to Zionism (Beit-Hallahmi 1993, 43–45).

The relationship between the radical Left and the nation is a gigantic puzzle that cannot be reconstructed in a few pages, as it is a non-linear story, which varies greatly in space and time. It is a puzzle further complicated by the fact that the encounter between nationalism and leftist ideologies has not paved the way to one specific form of politics, but rather to a plurality of substantially different political configurations, ranging from the German *National Bolshevism* of the 1920s (Bernardini 2020) to the Third Word's anti-colonial struggles (Munck 1986, 108–25), from Austro-Marxism (Blum and Smaldone 2016) to *Chavismo* (Roberts 2012). Even the anarchist and left libertarian movements, despite being arguably the furthest away from nationality, count renowned 'patriots' among their ranks, such as Carlo Pisacane in the Italian *Risorgimento* (Lamendola 1988); and, as Anderson argued, at times they triggered nationalist movements outside Europe (B. Anderson 2006). Nowadays, the anarchist-leaning Zapatista movement in Mexico often makes use of the Mexican national flag in its rallies and claims its being Mexican with the slogan "never again a Mexico without us" (Gallaher and Froehling 2002; Tunali 2020).

This pluralism of political configurations is obviously amplified by the fact that national identity and nationalism are not univocal phenomena, but can have different meanings (see section 2.2 2). As Hobsbawm argues, if it is historically wrong to assume that national identity is irrelevant to the working-class, it is also wrong to assume that such an identification is unique and unchanging (Hobsbawm 1982, 75).

The relationship between working-class movements and the nation is puzzling even if we look only at the history of Soviet-type communist regimes (Munck 1986; Nimni 1991). As Michael Löwy puts it, when we study the relationship between communism and nationalism we are soon faced with a "puzzling paradox": although the Russian Revolution "owned nothing to nationalism and was explicitly directed against the 'national defence of the fatherland' in the war with imperial Germany", it is in the name of "national liberation" that most of the 20th-century movements inspired by the Russian Revolution "were able to win popular support and triumph: in Yugoslavia, China, Indochina, Cuba and Nicaragua" (Löwy 1998, 51).

Even in the Soviet Union itself the relation between communism and nationalism changed deeply over time: despite the fact that the nation had faded into the background during the Revolution and the first years of Bolshevik rule, Soviet identity soon mutated from a class identity into a *sui generis* national identity, opening the door for nationalism to come back in. For instance, although in classical Marxism internationalism and cosmopolitanism were equally praised and meant the same thing (Marx and Engels used the two words almost interchangeably), during Stalin's rule in the USSR, cosmopolitanism was a crime, and being accused of rootless cosmopolitanism and/or anti-patriotism meant that your life was in real danger (see Achcar 2013, 103–44). And this was not exclusive to the Stalin regime: in many of the 20th-century socialist countries the governing elites increasingly resorted to nationalism for building an internal consensus and/or for chauvinist aims (Munck 1986, 126–43; Mevius 2009; Zhou 2019).

References to the nation were also at the base of several rifts and tensions within the communist camp, with many communist leaders around the world justifying their will to achieve political autonomy from Soviet ideological (and military) hegemony in light of their own *national* specificity: from the '*Polish* way to socialism' to 'socialism with *Chinese* characteristics'.

If the early twentieth century had seen an increasing 'nationalization' of a large part of Europe's socialist movement (with the brief, but extremely relevant, parenthesis of the first years of the Bolshevik Revolution), in the second half of the twentieth century many Western European Communist parties undertook instead a slow path of gradual distancing from national identity. Moreover, new far left subcultures began to emerge in the West, displaying a rising hostility for national belonging towards their homelands. Concurrently, in large areas of the Third World, nationalism and socialism were instead fusing together under the anticolonial flag. We can very generally say that this rift on nationality between the radical Left in peripheral and central world areas has continued and, with due exceptions in both contexts, strengthened over time. For instance, at the turn of the century, activists of the Global justice movement in Western Europe and the US displayed an increasingly post-national discourse and practice, avoiding a national symbolic repertoire and treating the global and local arena, and not the nation, as their central battleground (Gerbaudo 2017, 113–34; Custodi 2021); meanwhile, new left-wing actors in Latin America (such as Hugo Chávez in Venezuela) were winning national elections with a discourse heavily loaded with patriotic rhetoric and symbolism (Burbano de Lara 2015).

As the list of examples provided so far indicates, the relation between the radical Left and the nation varies chronologically and geographically, and it is obviously too big a story to be written here.[10] However fascinating to deepen, it goes far beyond the scope of this study. As already argued at the beginning of this chapter, for the purpose of this research it is worth centring the focus on two pieces of this puzzle: classical Marxism and left-wing populism. This is what the next sections do.

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[10] Some informative texts that address the historical relationship between communism(s) and nationalism from a theoretical and/or historical perspective are: Munck 1986; Nimni 1991; Löwy 1998; Achcar 2013; Benner 2018; Vanaik 2018.

3.2 Marxism and the Nation

It has often been said that Marxist theory has little to do with, and to say about, the nation. Marxist (and Marx-inspired) reflections have often shared the viewpoint that the nation is something fated to disappear soon, being historically outdated by the internationalization of capitalism as much as by the internationalism of the working class. This line of thought existed in Marx's heyday as well as nowadays: it is traceable from the *Communist Manifesto* to the *Empire* of Hardt and Negri, where the two authors reiterate the view that, all things considered, globalisation is positively wiping out the narrowness of nation-states (Hardt and Negri 2000). Accordingly, national identity becomes not only something to be rejected politically, but also an issue of minor significance, not so compelling to reflect upon. This rather-mechanistic view led many Marxists and neo-Marxists to disregard the ways nationalism has articulated, and continues to articulate, social discontent. It left them ill-equipped to cope with sudden nationalist outbursts (sometimes paving the way to a *volte-face* to warlike nationalism, as happened to many internationalist socialists during the First World War). To put it in Nimni's provocative words, the problem has been that "the national question did not disappear because Marxists wished it would do so" (Nimni 1985, 58). Influenced by this illusion, many Marxists mistakenly looked at the crisis of the nation-state as if it were a crisis of national identity, while the opposite is often true: the incessant world subversion operated by the capitalist market may simultaneously cause the crisis of the nation states *and* the worsening of nationalisms and identity claims (D'Eramo 2009).

In light of this, it has become commonplace to assert that Marxism largely underestimates the political relevance of nations, and has never been able to explain the vast world-historical power of nationalism (Nairn 1975; Debray 1977; Bottomore 1983; Nimni 1985; Avineri 1991). As Tom Nairn famously claimed, the theory of nationalism represents "Marxism's great historical failure" (Nairn 1975).

There is undoubtedly some truth in that, yet such statements tend to overlook the wide-ranging discussion on nations and nationalism that characterised Marxism from the beginning of the twentieth century until the outbreak of WWI. In this section I will try to briefly assess that theoretical dispute, tracing back the main standpoints that characterised it. It was arguably the richest and most comprehensive debate on the nation ever witnessed within Marxism. Although some of these reflections have been partly forgotten, they are worthy of examination because they represent the theoretical root of the troubled relationship between the radical Left and the nation. But first it is necessary to take a further step back, up to Marx and Engels, to try to grasp what the founders of Marxism thought about the nation. In fact, their writings on national issues are fragmentary and at times ambiguous, but they do exist.

3.2.1 Marx, Engels and nationality

The nation does not have a systematic place in the theories developed by Marx and Engels. It takes no relevant part in the economic analysis of capitalism, nor in the political discussion on how to achieve socialism. Yet, it appears often in their writings, including in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, whose famous paragraph about the nation later favoured the most contradictory interpretations. It says:

> The Communists are further reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationality. The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got. Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word. National differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto. The supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish still faster. United action, of the leading civilised countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat. In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end. (Collected works, v. 6, p. 503)

In these few lines, Marx and Engels claim that the proletariat has no homeland, but also that it must embody the nation, although in an unclarified sense of the term ‘national’ that would differ from the bourgeois one.[11] Two potentially-conflicting views are present here. There is the belief that capitalism prevents the proletarians from enjoying their nation-ness – something that can be achieved only through the liberation of the proletariat. But there is also the positivist account that capitalism is destroying national differences and the victory of the proletariat will just continue and complete this process. This linear assumption on the progressive role of capitalist expansion, that makes nationalities disappear, is often present in their writings. In *The German Ideology* of 1846, Marx and Engels assert that, although "the bourgeoisie of each nation still retained separate national interests", large-scale industry "destroyed the peculiar features of the various nationalities" and "created a class which in all nations has the same interest and for which nationality is already dead": the proletariat. In a note of 1845, Marx writes that

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[11] There is, in this sentence, a certain reminiscence of the dynamics of the French Revolution, in which the Third Estate aspired to ‘represent the nation’.

> the nationality of the worker is neither French, nor English, nor German, it is labour, free slavery, self-huckstering. His government is neither French, nor English, nor German, it is capital. His native air is neither French, nor German, nor English, it is factory air. The land belonging to him is neither French, nor English, nor German, it lies a few feet below the ground. (Collected works, v. 4, p. 280)

This understanding of nationality as a vanishing legacy of the past, ultimately external to the conflict between capital and labour and thus not very relevant, begins to wobble in their late writings, making way for a recognition of the political role of the nation in such a conflict. From the late 1860s onwards, Marx and Engels begin perceiving Irish nationalism as a relevant variable in the development of socialism in Britain. Marx explains that the study of Ireland made him aware that

> the antagonism between Englishmen and Irishmen […] makes any honest and serious co-operation between the working classes of the two countries impossible. It enables the governments of both countries, whenever they think fit, to break the edge off the social conflict by their mutual bullying, and, in case of need, by war between the two countries. (Collected works, v. 43, p. 475)

Such an antagonism, he believes,

> is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short, by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. This antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organisation. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power. And the latter is quite aware of this. (Collected works, v. 43, p. 475)

Rather than being a secondary issue, nationality is now seen as something relevant for the capital-labour conflict – as the linchpin of the capitalist class' dominion. In Marx and Engels' discussion on the colonial domination of Ireland, the problem of national oppression and the distinction between dominant and oppressed nations take shape. The national emancipation of Ireland is now seen as the condition for the social emancipation of the English working class. However, they do not systematically develop this insight – it remains external to the postulates of Marx and Engels' general theoretical reflection. In fact, Engels also uses at times an opposite distinction: the controversial categorisation of nations as 'historical' and 'non-historical', borrowing the terminology from Hegel (whether Marx agreed with this dichotomy is debated: see, for instance, Löwy 1998, 22–23). The distinction concerns the capacity of national communities to evolve from 'lower' to 'higher' stages of development. The non-historical nations are the ones that lived under foreign rule and lack their own history, as well as the premises for industrialization. They are incapable of having national states of their own and are doomed to be assimilated by more advanced nations. Consequently, in their struggle against assimilation, they would play a reactionary role, opposite to the interests of the working class. They were, according to Engels, the Gaels of Scotland, the Bretons, the Basques, the Yiddish-speaking Jews of Eastern Europe and the Southern Slavs.[12] Regarding the synthesis between the national struggle of the proletariat and its inherent internationalism outlined in the Manifesto, Marx returns to it in 1871, talking about the Paris Commune. He declares:

> If the Commune was thus the true representative of all the healthy elements of French society, and therefore the truly national government, it was, at the same time, as a working men's government, as the bold champion of the emancipation of labor, emphatically international. Within sight of that Prussian army, that had annexed to Germany two French provinces, the Commune annexed to France the working people all over the world. (Collected works, v. 22, p. 338)

In celebrating proletarian internationalism as a guarantee for peace against fratricidal wars, Marx now uses a language that partially differs from the one of his early writings: he does not seem to talk anymore about the nation as something doomed to disappear with the liberation of the proletariat, but rather as something destined to change. He calls the governments of France and Germany *official* France and *official* Germany – thus suggesting a conceptualisation of the nation internal to the articulation of political conflict, and not as something purely descriptive that remains neutral and in the background. If there is an 'official' France, it seems plausible that a different France may also exist – the one where the working class will be the *national ruler* and where peace will be its international battle cry:

> The very fact that while official France and Germany are rushing into a fratricidal feud, the workmen of France and Germany send each other messages of peace and goodwill; this great fact, unparalleled in the history of the past, opens the vista of a brighter future. It proves that in contrast to old society, with its economical miseries and its political delirium, a new society is springing up, whose International rule will be *Peace*, because its national ruler will be everywhere the same – Labour! (Collected works, v. 23, p. 220-

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[12] Among the first Marxist criticisms of Engels' *historical* and *non-historical* categorisation, the one by Otto Bauer (1907) stands out. The thought of Bauer is discussed in the next section.

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The same view is also present in the late writings of Engels, who for example in the preface to the Italian edition of the Communist Manifesto, writes:

> Without restoring autonomy and unity to each nation, it will be impossible to achieve the international union of the proletariat, or the peaceful and intelligent cooperation of these nations toward common aims. (Marxist.org library, Manifesto of the Communist Party: Preface)

These standpoints of Marx and Engels, lacking a coherent systematization, anticipate subsequent Marxist reflections on the theme of national independence, exemplified by Lenin's famous defence for the right of nations to self-determination. But they tell us little about what a nation is, where it comes from, and what political role it plays, besides the specific case of national liberation struggle. For that, we have to direct our attention to the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Austria at the turn of the century.

3.2.2 Otto Bauer and the Marxist debate on the national question

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was a multinational state where ethnic and national tensions were rising, as well as harming the unity of the labour movement. Its capital, Vienna, was a cosmopolitan city with peoples from all angles of the empire. The German-speaking social democrats were preaching a humanist message of fraternization, rejecting national tensions as divisionary and wishing to preserve the framework of the Empire, but the Czech workers' movement was instead under considerable nationalist influence (Munck 1985, 86). Troubled with the proletariat torn by national divisions, "the Social Democratic party lacked any common analysis of national conflicts within the multinational states, and could offer no united guidelines beyond an abstract profession of internationalism" (Loew 1979, 19). As an attempt to react to this situation, in 1899 the party approved the *Brünner Programm*, which provided the socialist movement with a political line on the national theme. Inspired by Karl Kautsky, the programme advocated for restructuring Austria into a federal state based on language divisions. The social democrats aimed at transforming the state into a 'democratic federation of nationalities' (*demokratischen Nationalitätenbundesstaat*), where each nationality would have cultural and administrative autonomy, while economic policy would be left to the central state.

A young member of the left side of the party, Otto Bauer, disagreed with the idea that national differences should be crystallized territorially, and instead contended that the cultural autonomy of nationalities should be extra-territorial, thus considering the nation more as an 'association of persons' rather than a 'territorial corporation' defined by a common language (Bauer [1924] 2000, 281). Together with Karl Renner, Bauer argued that the various nationalities of the state should be organised in a way that permitted them to freely administer their cultural affairs regardless of the territory in which they resided. It was a groundbreaking standpoint that kept together a defence of national autonomy and a critique of the nation-state. Such a position would be soon taken up by the Bund, a non-Zionist Jewish socialist party operating in the Russian Empire and elsewhere. Although long forgotten, this stance has yet much to say on contemporary issues such as multiculturalism, the rights of indigenous people or the politics in countries affected by deep ethnic conflicts where territorial separation is unfeasible. (For a contemporary assessment of this model of 'national cultural autonomy', see: Nimni 2005; 2007).

Driven by pragmatic discussions on how to cope with the spread of nationalism within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bauer deepened his studies on the national phenomenon, and in 1907 he published 'The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy'. The book became the cornerstone of the Viennese Marxist school (which was later to take the name of Austro-Marxism) and it paved the way to a far-reaching debate on nations and nationalism that lasted until the beginning of WWI, involving the major Marxist theorists of that time. In just a few years, high-profile Marxists published articles and books on nations and nationalism, often as a polemical response to Bauer or to subsequent assessment of Bauer's ideas. Examples include Karl Kautsky's "Nationality and Internationality" (1908), Rosa Luxemburg's series of articles known as "The National Question and Autonomy" (1908-1909), Josef Stalin's "Marxism and the National Question" (1913) and Vladimir Lenin's "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination" (1914).

Bauer opened his work conceding that

> Until now scholars have almost entirely left the nation to poets, newspaper columnists, and speakers at public gatherings, in the parliament and the alehouse. In an era of great national struggles we barely have the beginnings of a satisfactory theory of the essence of the nation. And yet we are in need of such a theory. After all, we are all affected by national ideology, by national romanticism; few of us would be able even to say the word "German" without its resonating with a peculiar emotional overtone. Anyone seeking to understand national ideology or to criticize it cannot avoid the question of what it is that constitutes the essence of the nation. (Bauer [1924] 2000, 19)

Acknowledging that the role of nationalities in social life had been mostly ignored by Marxist intellectuals, he wished to put forth a theoretical analysis of national identity from a Marxist standpoint. He considered the "naive cosmopolitanism" that some socialists inherited from the

Enlightenment as misleading, because it treated nations as different entities only because of their language, but not as far as their "character" was concerned. On the contrary, Bauer believed that different "national characters" do exist, but they are a material product of history, not a "mysterious spirit of the people". The character that marks out a nation is not "a fixed thing", but rather an ongoing historical process whose elements are "variable" and change in time (Bauer [1924] 2000). Therefore, the nation cannot be understood by listing a set of categories or by referring to some essential quality. This is why his approach has been defined as an "epistemological break" (Munck 2010, 49). Moreover, the nation is not alone in having a "community of character": class has that too. However, the community of character of class emerges from a similarity of fate, whereas in the case of the nation from a community of fate (Bauer [1924] 2000, 101). At the basis of nations there is thus a community of shared fate. Shortly put, a community of fate is "a form of continuous interaction and reciprocity that generates an intersubjective bond that manifests itself in a common culture and a common apperception" (Nimni 2005, 107). It is a rather-intricate argument that eventually results in the definition of the nation as "the totality of human beings bound together by a community of fate into a community of character" (Bauer [1924] 2000, 117).

This being said, Bauer's originality laid not only in the analysis of what a nation is, but also on his assumptions about the future of nations. Since under socialism the workers would be fully integrated into the national cultural community, he believed that national specificities would then flourish freely, rather than being governed by blind economic forces. As he put it,

> the fact that socialism will make the nation autonomous, will make its destiny a product of the nation's conscious will, will result in an increasing differentiation between the nations of the socialist society, a clearer expression of their specificities, a clearer distinction between their respective characters. This conclusion will perhaps surprise some; it is regarded as a certainty by supporters and opponents of socialism alike that socialism will reduce national diversity, narrowing or even doing away with the differences between nations. (Bauer [1924] 2000, 96)

This implied, as he stated in the introduction to the second edition of the book, that the task of International Workingmen's Association had to be the engendering of international unity in national multiplicity, and not the levelling of national particularities (Bauer [1924] 2000, 21). For Bauer, socialism would allow various national peculiarities to emerge, and evolve, in freedom, peace and cooperation (thus anticipating by half a century some criticisms that would be raised against orthodox Marxism from postcolonial studies). This view brings us to the last novel aspect of Bauer's approach: although he was concerned like many other socialists of his time for the spread of bourgeois nationalism among the ranks of the labor movement, he nonetheless believed that nationalism should be fought on its own ground. Quoting Hegel, he claimed that in order to fight the opponent we have to operate in the spaces of the opponent and not in spaces where the opponent is absent. Subsumed to this stance, there was the idea that nationality was also a terrain of class struggle. Whereas for Lenin and many other Marxists of that time there was no such a thing as a single national culture, but every nation was rather made up of two different cultures, that of the bourgeoise and that of the proletariat, for Bauer the national culture did exist – it was an unsteady site of struggle between the classes. As both Munk and Nimni noted, Bauer's viewpoint resembles the political strategy that Antonio Gramsci later developed around the concept of 'hegemony', centred on the idea that the working class had to actively contest the rule of the bourgeoise at the broader cultural/ideological level (Nimni 1985, 78; Munck 1986, 168). In fact, as Laclau argued, the Gramscian idea of 'hegemonic struggle' implies penetrating into the discursive domains of the adversary, and this also entails the construction of antagonistic articulations around national and popular symbols (Laclau [1981] 2021).

It was a very different approach than the ones of the leading Marxists of Bauer's time, which were often grounded on class reductionism and/or bumptious economicism. Kautsky, for instance, insisted that capitalism made the proletariat *intrinsically* international and he believed that the constitutive element of the different nationalities of the working class was simply language, and thus nationality was fated to soon disappear with the international market leading to a world language (Kautsky [1908] 2009). According to Kautsky, the relevance given by Bauer to the national aspect was therefore enormously exaggerated (Kautsky [1908] 2009, 162). As Bauer wrote in response to Kautky's criticism:

> We both fight for unified and decisive tactics for the proletariat of all nations. Kautsky believes that this goal can most quickly be furthered when he stresses the international character of modern culture, reducing the nation to a mere language community, and complaining that the language differences are a hindrance to the mutual comprehension and single-minded action of the classes and peoples. I believe, however, that we can only defeat the bourgeois nationalism which also deludes many of our comrades, when we bring to light the national content of our international class war in its meaning for the international proletarian struggle […] Thus, we seize nationalism and place it upon our own ground. Not, thereby, avoiding our enemy, but rather carrying the war into [his][13] own land, so the art of war instructs us. (Blum and Smaldone 2016, 293–94)

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[13] The English translation of Blum and Smaldone was wrong here and I had to modify it. They wrote "carrying the war into our own land", but it is the land of the adversary that Bauer is referring to. See the original version: Otto Bauer, Bemerkungen zur Nationalitätenfrage, Die neue Zeit - Wochenschrift der deutschen Sozialdemokratie, 26.1907-1908. Available online at http://library.fes.de/cgi-bin/neuzeit.pl?id=07.06628&dok=1907-08a&f=190708a_0792&l=190708a_0802 [07/02/2020]

In his polemic with both Kautsky and Bauer, Stalin (on behalf of the Russian Bolsheviks) advanced instead an analysis of the nation based on fixed and rigid criteria, while claiming that Bauer's theory "divorces the nation from its soil and converts it into an invisible, self-contained force" (Stalin [1913] 2012, 15). For Stalin, a nation is a concrete reality definable as "a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture" (Stalin [1913] 2012, 11). Lenin also dismissed Bauer's theory, labelling it as "basically psychological" and based on "nationalistic infatuation" (Lenin 1914, 398). For him, the Austro-Marxist idea of 'cultural-national autonomy' had to be rejected as a refined form of harmful nationalism, that implied the corruption of the workers through the bourgeois slogan of national culture (Lenin 1913, 3). However, whether Lenin actually agreed or not with Stalin's rigid definition of nationality, remains questionable (see, for instance, Löwy 1998, 38). Rather than general definitions, what interested Lenin the most was to have an appropriate strategy for using national contradictions to the benefit of the workers' movement. With this aim in mind, he advocated for the right of self-determination (including secession) for smaller nations when oppressed by a dominant larger nation. As he put it: "to imagine that social revolution is *conceivable* without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe […] is to *repudiate social revolution"* (Lenin 1916, 25). Bauer was not very enthusiastic about this principle: he preferred to see the cultural autonomy of nationalities granted within multinational frameworks (after all, he stressed that even the most homogeneous nation has some national minorities within its territory). However, in 1918 he eventually endorsed the territorial self-determination of nations, in front of the feasibility of his ideas fading away (and he also called for "an energetic fight against the chauvinistic socialism of Renner"[14]) (Blum 2015, 183).

The prominent Marxist who was openly critical of the right of nations to self-determination was instead Rosa Luxemburg, who saw in it an echo of old bourgeois nationalism (Luxemburg 1909). She considered national self-determination impossible under capitalism, and superfluous under socialism. Arguing against Polish national independence, she disagreed that socialists had an unconditional duty to support all nationalist aspirations and considered Lenin's view somehow as an opportunist move. Stimulatingly, she questioned who would be entitled to opt for the secession: "But who is that 'nation' and who has the authority and the 'right' to speak for the 'nation' and express its will?" (cited in: Munck 2010, 48).

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[14] Karl Renner (1870 - 1950) was an Austrian politician of the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Austria who, together with Bauer, supported the principles of national-cultural autonomy. Yet the two diverged in 1918 on issues concerning the war and the future of Austria, with Bauer accusing Renner of chauvinism (see Blum 2015, 182–84).

The Marxist debate on nations and nationalism did not really continue in the aftermath of the First World War. After Stalin prevailed in the power struggle within the newly created Soviet state, his pamphlet ‘Marxism and the National Question’, that was explicitly directed against Bauer and written at the request of Lenin, became an unquestionable component of the Marxist-Leninist corpus. Paradoxically, although Stalin’s pamphlet condemned Bauer’s national-cultural autonomy with the accusation of being “a subtle form of nationalism” (Stalin [1913] 2012, 40), the totalitarian regime that Stalin gradually built in the USSR would eventually resort heavily to nationalism, both in geopolitical terms and in terms of internal consensus (Achcar 2013, 134–44).

Bauer’s theory, together with much of the discussion it triggered, sank into oblivion. This was the case within Soviet Marxism, but also within Heterodox Marxism – Trotsky himself praised Stalin’s work, considering it theoretically correct, although claiming that it was “wholly inspired by Lenin, written under his unremitting supervision and edited by him line by line” (Trotsky [1946] 2016, 197–98). Not only did the discussion opened by Bauer no longer seriously resume, but it also left few traces in twentieth-century Marxist traditions. It is not a surprise, then, that the first English translation of Bauer’s ‘The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy’ dates back to 2000, and of Kautsky’s ‘Nationality and Internationality’ to 2009. Within the Leninist tradition, Trotskyist sociologist Michael Löwy was arguably one of the first to eventually reject Stalin’s book and to positively reconsider the legacy of Otto Bauer (Löwy 1998).

Furthermore, it is relevant to note that the 1907-1914 Marxist debate dealt with two aspects which, much as they were obviously interconnected, were not the same: one revolved around *national identity* (What is a nation? Where does it come from? How does it relate to capitalism and socialism?) and the other one around the *national question* (Do all nations have the right to create a corresponding independent nation-state? Is this helpful to the struggle for socialism?).

Although Otto Bauer wished to develop a concrete political strategy for dealing with the multinational framework of Imperial Austria, his most famous contribution was theoretical, and it was concerned with the first aspect. He set the task for himself to investigate the history and the nature of phenomena such as nationality and national identities, towards a socialist theory of the nation. On the contrary, for Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin the main issue at stake was the second aspect: how to deal with national oppression and the national liberation struggles of their years. If traces of that debate survived within the Marxist theoretical heritage, these are mainly related to the second aspect – self-determination. In fact, at the theoretical level little survived of this discussion on how nationality should be treated, from a Marxist standpoint, in contexts other than those of the struggle for national liberation.

Yet, as the empirical chapters of this thesis will disclose, there exists in the contemporary radical Left a standpoint which, without explicitly referring to Bauer's theory, has nonetheless brought back to life some of his more political arguments by treating national identity as a terrain of political struggle, something that ought to be wrested from the grasp of the Right and reframed with left-wing values. As we will see, Podemos – the Spanish party that is usually treated as the left populist party *par excellence* (e.g. Damiani 2020, 11) – has held this stance (see section 5.2). Is there therefore a nexus between the left-wing populism that spread in Europe after the 2008 financial crisis and the rediscovery of national belonging?

3.3 Left-wing Populism and the Nation

In the previous chapter, while discussing radical left parties (see section 2.3), left-wing populism was defined as a distinct sub-typology of the radical Left, that retains a democratic socialist ideological core, but where the claim to be the 'vox populi', rather than the proletarian vanguard, is strengthened, as well as the attention given to territorial identities (national and/or regional). Left-wing populist parties tend to have charismatic leaders, significant links with grassroots protests, and a narrative that draws from the people-elite dichotomy. They combine (radical) left-wing politics with populist rhetoric and themes, such as anti-elitist sentiments, opposition to the establishment and speaking for the 'common people'.

It is a party typology that has been studied in academia mostly by drawing on the European situation, particularly after the economic crisis of 2008, by looking at new parties that came from the radical Left but performed a type of leftist politics distinguishable from traditional radical left parties and close to some populist features (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014; Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis 2019; Damiani 2020). The discussion on left-populism was also shaped by the political and academic debate generated around the populist strategy (Errejón and Mouffe 2015; Mouffe 2018; Chazel and Fernández Vázquez 2019). Furthermore, previous experiences of Latin American left-wing politics also influenced this discussion, both theoretically and politically, and favoured new academic readings of Latin American left-wing politics as forms of inclusionary populist politics (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013; De La Torre 2016; Stavrakakis et al. 2016).

As García Agustín explains, "left-wing populism is not a 'pure' or fixed concept, or an unproblematic one, but it is necessary to grasp the multiple debates and crossroads faced by the left in searching for its own identity" (García Agustín 2020, 3). Despite its ambiguity, left populism remains a useful typology and, much as other types of radical left politics, it should not be intended as a rigid party typology, but rather as a heuristic device for the research (see section 2.3). Radical left parties can be highly or only partly populist, and their populism can vary at different junctures of their political trajectory.

It is a party typology of special relevance for this thesis, because, due to its relative newness and electoral success, it had a great impact on the contemporary radical left party family –which this research centres its empirical focus on; and also because, compared to other forms of radical left politics, it tends to be more at ease with the nation. In fact although nationalism is far from being a common trait of the European radical Left (March and Keith 2016; Chiocchetti 2017), there is a scholarly agreement that the left-populist variant of the European radical Left is keener to draw from nationalism in its discourse (Custodi 2017; Mudde 2017a; Eklundh 2018; Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis 2019, 103–5; García Agustín 2020, 65–80; Custodi 2020). Despite the legacy of the global justice movement – which avoided a national symbolic repertoire and saw the global and/or local arena as its central battleground – still influencing the contemporary European radical Left, left-wing populism emerges as a national-popular project deeply rooted in the nation-state, and thus more prone to see the nation as its prime political battleground and even as a source of identity (Gerbaudo and Screti 2017; Gerbaudo 2017, 113–34; Damiani 2020).

This attention for national identity is usually treated as one of the key novelties that left populism brought to the radical left party family, at least as far as the post-1989 European radical Left is concerned (with the relevant exception of radical left independentism, such as in the Basque country, which instead has a long-lasting tradition of mobilising support through the political use of national identity). As we will see, this research actually problematises the assumption that left populism is the only form of contemporary radical left politics where nationalist elements can be found (the case of the Portuguese Communist Party presented in Chapter 7 is an ideal typical example of a patriotic non-populist radical left party). Yet, there is no doubt that, in the broad European context, it is more common for left-wing parties to engage with nationality when they are also populists. As de Cleen and Stavrakakis argue in discussing the populism-nationalism nexus in politics:

> The populism-nationalism nexus is not limited to radical right and to sub-state nationalisms, which have nationalism at their ideological core, however. Left populists too have engaged with the nation, with Latin American populisms from the mid-20th century until the 21st century pink tide as the clearest examples (e.g. de la Torre 2017; Burbano 2015). In Europe, it has been pointed out that a recent wave of left populist actors – some of which, in particular Podemos, have also been inspired by these Latin American experiences – has been characterized by a stronger reliance on national

> sovereignty as well as a more positive appreciation of national identity and national pride (García Agustin 2020, chapter 4). The Spanish Podemos (Custodi 2020; Lobera 2020; Ruiz Jiménez et al. 2020) and Jean-Luc Mélenchon's La France Insoumise (e.g. Marlière 2019) have been of particular interest here. (De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2021, 12)

It is a peculiarity of left populism that Chantal Mouffe – one of the most known supporters and theorists of populism as a strategy for the Left – recognises and endorses. As she explains, the nation is, and ought to be, the prime political battleground for left-populism:

> Another frequent criticism addressed to the left populist strategy is the role it attributes to the national dimension. […] What I want to underline is that the hegemonic struggle to recover democracy needs to start at the level of the nation-state that, despite having lost many of its prerogatives, is still one of the crucial spaces for the exercise of democracy and popular sovereignty. It is at the national level that the question of radicalizing democracy must first be posed. This is where a collective will to resist the post-democratic effects of neoliberal globalisation should be constructed. It is only when this collective will has been consolidated that collaboration with similar movements in other countries can be productive. (Mouffe 2018, 70)

However, there is not only the idea that the nation-state remains an indispensable arena for democratic and progressive politics, but also the recognition of the nation as a source of identity for the people. As Mouffe goes on:

> […] a left populist strategy cannot ignore the strong libidinal investment at work in national – or regional – forms of identification and it would be very risky to abandon this terrain to right-wing populism. This does not mean following its example in promoting closed and defensive forms of nationalism, but instead offering another outlet for those affects, mobilizing them around a patriotic identification with the best and more egalitarian aspects of the national tradition. (Mouffe 2018, 70)

In this perspective, national identity becomes something that ought to be wrested from the grasp of the Right and reframed with different values (Custodi and Caiani 2021). This standpoint implies engaging in a hegemonic struggle with the adversary on the national terrain, where the issue at stake is the articulation of national symbols and belonging (Laclau [1981] 2021). As we have seen, this is a political position that was openly endorsed by Bauer and can also be derived from Gramsci's insights.

3.3.1 The people and the nation

Given that the populist Left tends to display nationalist elements, does it follow that populism and nationalism are somewhat equivalent? After all, scholarly works on European politics have often conflated the concepts of ‘people’ and ‘nation’, considering populism as “a kind of nationalism” (Stewart 1969): a political project that “articulat[es] an anti-elite, nationalist rhetoric” (Jansen 2011) and “emphasizes nativism or xenophobic nationalism” (Inglehart and Norris 2016). Does it mean that populism and nationalism eventually equate to each other? As noted by De Cleen and Stavrakakis, this tendency to theoretically conflate nationalism and populism is arguably a consequence of the “strong presence of populist radical right parties in Europe”, becoming the prime objects of populism studies (De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017, 3). In fact, as claimed by a string of recent relevant publications, acknowledging that most European populists are also nationalists does not imply that populism and nationalism are synonyms (De Cleen 2017; De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017; De Cleen et al. 2019; Kuyper and Moffitt 2020).[15] Ultimately, these analyses converge on the importance of treating nationalism and populism as two analytically distinct concepts, because this permits to better study their empirical interaction in concrete politics (De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017; Anastasiou 2019; De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2020). This work fits into this academic vein, thus avoiding any *conceptual* mixing of populism and nationalism. Moreover, the analysis conducted provides an important contribution to this discussion, inquiring into the relevance of patriotism for the populist radical Left (see the discussion on Podemos in section 5.2 and the comparative analysis in Chapter 8).

Certainly, the concepts of nationalism and populism share some similar features: although nationalism tends to be much more sedimented than populism (see section 2.2), they both refer to an idea of community whose boundaries remain open to political contestation. Moreover, like nationalism, populism is a *sustainer* of the actors’ actual ideologies, rather than a proper ideology (Freeden 1998; Laclau 2005; Mouffe 2018). Similarly to nationalism, populism too can be articulated with a plurality of political and ideological contents (Caiani and Graziano 2016; Stavrakakis and Galanopoulos 2018). Yet, the processes of identification with ‘the people’ and ‘the nation’ also bear specific meanings and social practices which are profoundly sedimented in contemporary societies. Historically, the concepts of nation and people have evolved through a “zigzag pattern of semantic change” that led them to be more or less similar according to different historical phases, up to a greater overlapping in more recent times (Greenfeld 1992, 4–9). However, greater coincidence of meanings does not imply that people and nation are identical. As an example, we can think of the strong semantic relation that the signifier *nation* holds with the idea of *State* in most Western societies (crystallized in the *nation-state* formula); a relation that the signifier *people* does not usually have. It is certainly possible for a political actor – as it will be seen in the empirical part of this thesis – to discursively claim that 'the people' equates to 'the nation', but the very fact that s/he would need to claim so implies that this is not an automatic association, but rather a political articulation of two concepts whose semantic fields are not perceived as completely identical by the listener, because they carry different sedimented meanings.

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[15] Along this line, some doubts have also been casted regarding the supposed ‘populism’ of some radical right actors, contending that they would be better categorised primarily as nationalist, rather than populist (see Rydgren 2017; Stavrakakis et al. 2017).

Therefore, as De Cleen and Stavrakakis point out, it is important to analytically distinguish between populism and nationalism (De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017; 2020). Nationalism has already been dealt with extensively in Chapter 2 and I will not dwell upon it anymore. The concept of 'populism' requires instead some additional clarification. In fact, there is broad scholarly consensus on *who* left-wing populists are, less so about what it means to be populist (see Panizza 2005, 1; Moffitt 2016, 11).

Among different accounts of populism that exist in academia, such as those based on sociocultural (e.g. Ostiguy 2017), ideological (e.g. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017) or discursive (e.g. Laclau 2005) definitions, there is one that characterises populism in strategic terms – as a specific way of doing politics. It considers populism as the strategy of building and/or maintaining political power based on the mobilisation of supporters through anti-elitist sentiments, opposition to the establishment and speaking for the "common people" (Barr 2018; Weyland 2017). It is a heterogeneous approach that includes scholars with divergent views on the defining attributes of the populist strategy, as well as scholars with differences of opinion on the relation between populism and democracy. However, a shared focus on the means and ends of building power based on mobilisation – and thus on agency and conscious political action – brings them together (Barr 2018, 44). As Barr explains, when populism is understood as an ideology, the risk is "to hinder the full accounting for outcomes that are dependent in part on agency and action" (Barr 2018, 53). On the contrary, defining populism as a political strategy allows to centre the analysis on agency, political intentionality and goal-oriented leadership. It implies that the struggle for achieving popular consensus is at the core of what populism is.

It is not a strictly formalized approach and it can intertwine with other approaches such as the discursive one that emerges from Ernesto Laclau's theory (e.g. Laclau and Howarth 2015). For instance, when Chantal Mouffe talks about populism as a specific 'political strategy' for the Left, she draws from Laclau's discursive approach to populism (Mouffe 2018). For Mouffe, populism is the intentional political strategy of constructing a political frontier dividing society into two camps and calling for the mobilisation of the people against the elite (Mouffe 2018). As De Cleen explains, moving away from ideational approaches towards how populists discursively construct and claim to represent the people, "allows taking into account more thoroughly the crucial strategic dimensions of populism […]. Parties and movements can turn to populism as a strategy to acquire power, even when they were originally not populist, and they do not necessarily remain populist once they are in power" (De Cleen 2017, 346).

Following this account, I contend that the best way to grasp the populism of left-wing populists is indeed by approaching the concept of populism in strategic and discursive terms. In the analysis carried out in this thesis, whenever the notion of populism emerges, it is thus treated as the actor's discursive strategy to increase consensus and broaden its appeal by articulating its political discourse around a division between the people and the elite (with the former being a large powerless group, and the latter a small and illegitimately powerful group), and by framing its political demands as representing the will of 'the people' (e.g. Mouffe 2018). As we will see in the empirical analysis, the concept of populism is a useful analytical tool in explaining some stances of the radical Left in regard to nationality. However, it is also important to not *reify* populism, i.e. treating it as a 'phenomenon as such' rather than as one dimension of multifaceted political phenomena (see: De Cleen and Glynos 2020).

3.3.2 The «national-popular»

Since populism does not equate to nationalism, what is it then that explains the frequent presence of nationality in populist discourses? As it has already been said in the previous paragraph, in today's Europe, political competition is still highly nationalised and the political concepts of people and nation, however distinct, have parts of meaning that overlap and interconnect. It is difficult (albeit not impossible, see De Cleen et al. 2019) to politically conceive 'the people' not as 'people-nation'. As García Agustín points out, "'the people' are, above all, a national community, and the defence of the popular sovereignty takes place within the nation-state borders. The importance of emotions and affect to constitute collective identities contributes to overlapping appeals to 'the people' and the national community, since the nation entails a considerable amount of symbols which reinforce the sense of belonging" (García Agustín 2020, 65). Hence the strong link that left-populism often has with national identity emerges. There is a notion, made famous by Antonio Gramsci, which helps conceptualizing this link: the "national-popular" (Gramsci 1935).

Gramsci uses the term national-popular in his *Prison Notebooks* to indicate what is both national and popular, with specific reference to cultural productions: literary or artistic works that express the distinctive characteristics of national culture and are recognised as representative by the people. Gramsci's stances on the nation were not discussed in section 3.2 about Marxism and the Nation, because he did not actively participate in the Marxist debate of the early twentieth century about nationality. Yet, it was mentioned that some of Otto Bauer's reflections are close to those that Gramsci will develop in subsequent years during his incarceration in Mussolini's prisons (see section 3.2.2). In fact, according to Gramsci, the national-popular factor is of paramount importance in politics: the working-class movement needs to build its hegemony by creating "the national-popular collective will" (Gramsci 1935).

Always committed to the highest proletarian internationalism, Gramsci was nonetheless convinced that to be an internationalist does not mean despising the popular classes' cultural traditions and national roots, nor to fall into "the most superficial cosmopolitanism and apatriotism" (Gramsci 1935, Q2 N25). Accordingly, he claimed that there could be no revolutionary fight for emancipation without constructing a "sentimental connection between intellectuals and people-nation" (Gramsci 1935, Q11 N67). Informed by the history of French Jacobins, Gramsci was in fact convinced that a revolutionary movement fighting for ruling the country must embody and identify itself as the country, the *People-Nation*, and this goes also for the working-class in its hegemonic struggle against the bourgeoisie. There can be no emancipatory action, Gramsci insisted, if a political project develops "in opposition to the spontaneous feelings of the masses" (Gramsci 1935, Q3 N48).

As we will see in the empirical chapters, the ways left-populists engage with national identity are reminiscent of these reflections. In fact, these actors often try to construct a national-popular discourse, in which positive identification with the nation and with the people are articulated together. It is no coincidence that Gramsci is an intellectual that theorists of populism and left-populist politicians alike often hark back to (Laclau 2005; Errejón 2012; Monedero 2013; Howarth 2015; P. Anderson 2016). A national-popular politics (or the *counter-hegemonic* struggle to reclaim it, as we will see in Chapter 5 about Spain) is in fact a common element of left-wing populist actors. However, it would be a mistake to consider national-popular politics an exclusive feature of left-wing populism within the radical left party family: in specific contexts national-popular elements can be amply present also within other types of radical left parties (as it will be shown in Chapter 7 about the Portuguese radical Left). Yet, there is no doubt that left-wing populism brought about a comeback of the national-popular in leftist politics, which had gradually disappeared in most of the post-1989 European radical left parties.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

> *Whatever is dependently co-arisen / That is explained to be emptiness.*
> *That, being a dependent designation, / Is itself the middle way.*
> *Something that is not dependently arisen / Such a thing does not exist.*
> *Therefore a non-empty thing / Does not exist.*
> **Nagarjuna** (Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, 24:18-19. 2nd century AD)

This chapter lays out the methodological framework of the research. The empirical analysis relies on a theoretically-informed conceptualisation of national identity that goes beyond treating it as a mere static variable (see Chapter 2). In fact, the theoretical bedrock that I advanced in the previous chapters serves to shed light on the complex range of different stances held on the same issue (national identity) by similar actors (parties from the same party family). As outlined in Chapter 1, this is the puzzle at the basis of the research. For ease of reading, research puzzle and questions are refiled and summarised here in Table 2. The first research question refers to the *how* of the puzzle, whereas the second one focuses on the *why*.

Table 2. *Research questions*

Research Puzzle	National identity is an issue for which there is a high heterogeneity of outlooks within the ranks of the radical Left.
RQ_1	How do radical left parties talk about the nation in their discourse? How do they frame and express their stances on national identity?
RQ_2	Why do radical left parties talk so differently about national identity? What reasons lie behind the variation of stances on national identity held by similar parties?

The chapter proceeds as follows:

The first section (4.1) presents the case study and the case selection. It expounds why this research resorts to an interpretive case studies strategy and outlines the reasoning that informs the case selection. The cases studied empirically in this research are the radical left milieus at the level of party politics in Italy, Spain and Portugal.

The second section (4.2) illustrates the research questions and advances an analytical guideline for studying national identity within the radical Left. It is an original framework that results out of the theoretical approach described in Chapter 2.

The third section (4.3) presents the techniques used for data collection and data analysis. It explains the triangulation of multiple sources of information and collection procedures. In order to answer the research questions, I rely on semi-structured interviews, participant observation and on a set of selected discourses, such as leader speeches, articles, texts and party documents, that are subjected to discourse-theoretical analysis.

4.1 Case Studies

The issue of national identity is a puzzling dimension of radical left politics, not only because it appears to be highly variable in time and space and among similar actors, but also because it has been largely overlooked by the literature on the radical Left in contemporary Europe (see section 1.1 for an overview of this academic gap). Since little is known about the phenomenon under investigation, the scope of my work is thus primarily exploratory, and in-depth case-oriented comparisons are considered to be particularly appropriate and especially suitable for this aim (Yin 2018). This study thus relies on a cross-national case-oriented comparison, and the design of the research goes along the lines of an interpretive case studies strategy, which is the type of inquiry that uses elaborated theoretical frameworks to help comprehending particular cases (Vennesson 2008, 227). An interpretive case studies strategy "focuses upon relatively small number of cases, analysed with attention to each case as an interpretable whole (Ragin 2000: 22), seeking to understand a complex unity rather than establish relationship between variables" (della Porta 2008, 204).

According to della Porta, there are two main types of comparative analysis in the social sciences: "[o]ne type focuses on large number of cases, regularities in behaviour and universal patterns. The other concentrates on context, complexity and difference" (della Porta 2008, 221). The first type of design is usually a statistical large-N project based on variables. The second one is instead case-oriented, usually covering a small-N, and its main scope is to provide a dense knowledge of a certain phenomenon through the qualitative analysis of few instances of it. This second type is the one that best matches an interpretive approach to politics (see section 2.1) and it is the type of design that I use for this research. In fact, a small-N is more effective in pointing at similarities and differences through dense narrative, with a large number of characteristics being taken into account, together with their interaction within long-lasting processes (della Porta 2008, 204). At the same time, a narrative form of explanation fits well with the need to explore diversity within a topic where little is known and where a theoretical toolkit can help studying it (della Porta 2008, 219).

Yet, it is important to remark that, although a small-N case-based project is typically the most feasible for developing an interpretation, interpretivists may also use data generated by various techniques, be they qualitative or quantitative, based on statistical large-N or comparative small-N. Rather than a specific methodology, what constitutes an interpretive design is a particular way of treating data. In fact, the distinctiveness of interpretivism rests in epistemology more than research methods (della Porta and Keating 2008, 28; Bayard de Volo 2016, 241). Interpretivism's refusal to opt for 'method-driven' research (where the validity of the research equates with the scientific validity of the techniques of data gathering and analysis) is exactly what motivates its methodological openness. Rather than method-driven, interpretivist research has to be treated as problem-driven. It has to single out a range of disparate empirical phenomena as a *problem* to study, and locate it at the appropriate level of abstraction and complexity (Howarth 2005, 318–19; Glynos and Howarth 2007, 167). In this problem-driven perspective, the problematisation of a social or political phenomenon constitutes the starting point of the research strategy, and the cases to study are chosen according to their capacity to best inquire the specific problem (D. P. Green and Shapiro 1994; Shapiro 2002).

As already outlined in Chapter 1, the points of departure of this research were the acknowledgement that the attitudes of radical left actors towards national identity are rather puzzling due to high variation, and the fact that such attitudes unveil a complex dimension of radical left politics that has been mostly disregarded by recent academic literature. In order to problematise this dimension, I chose to limit the range of options for my case selection to Southern Europe, for two key reasons:

- As explained in the literature review (see section 1.1), studies that focus on the relations of radical left parties with national identity usually cover non-European contexts or specific historical periods, whereas as far as contemporary Europe is concerned, this remains a highly under-researched topic, at least outside the specific case of left-wing secessionism and independentism. European politics thus seems a field where further research on this matter is needed. Within Europe, the South has been the geographical and socio-political area where, from the 2008 financial crisis onwards, radical left parties have experienced a certain degree of innovation and electoral growth, thus attracting growing attention from scholars studying the radical Left. Yet, in such studies, the national identity dimension remained largely uncovered. Therefore, Southern Europe appears to be an area where the study of the radical Left can benefit from the relevance and dynamism of the cases, and at the same time a field where the existence of a higher number of studies makes the absence of an analysis on national identity particularly arresting.

- Cross-national comparisons in the social sciences usually address countries belonging to a common geographical area, sharing historical traditions, cultural traits and political or economic development (della Porta 2008, 214). This is certainly the case for Southern Europe, whose nation-states, despite the particularities of each country, share some commonalities at the level of political tradition and welfare regime, and, in the recent years, were all similarly marked by the debt crisis and the subsequent implementation of EU-led austerity measures. A certain degree of resemblance, at least in some macro dimensions, favours comparison. Of course, this does not mean that such a resemblance allows to consider null the influence of each case's environment. On the contrary, it permits to point at similarities and differences at a deeper level of analysis, with a larger number of secondary characteristics being also taken into account.

Within the context of relative similarity of Southern Europe, I decided to select three countries whose differences at the level of radical left politics were maximised, in order to be able to better explore the high variability of the dimension under scrutiny. In this perspective of maximising differences, I opted for choosing the radical left milieu of Portugal, Spain and Italy:

- Portugal presents influential and relatively-stable radical left parties, rather understudied in academia, and it is also a country that perplexes many scholars for the scarce presence of populism in its political landscape, apparently disproving the fact that nowadays all major leftist parties are also populist.
- Spain, on the contrary, is the arena of a much-discussed radical left party, Podemos, that is often considered an archetypical example of left-wing populism, whose rapid electoral achievements shortly after its foundation triggered mounting scholarly interest, especially, but not exclusively, within populism studies.
- Italy appears instead as a sort of negative case when looking at the radical Left. The Italian radical Left is out of the scene in the country's political landscape, and it is fractured in a myriad of tiny parties with scarce political influence, that frequently split and recompose with new

names. This is despite the fact that there have been times when the Italian radical Left used to be very influential in Italian politics, as well as a reference point for the European Left.

Moreover, discrepancies between the radical Left in these three countries emerge neatly also when we focus on the national identity dimension. First of all, Spain and Italy have radical left traditions that reject the feeling of national attachment, and they have also been experiencing a political hegemony of the Right over national identity, especially in recent times. However, none of these two facts hold true for Portugal, where national identity is relatively more accepted by the Left, and also relatively less exploited by the Right. Second, in Spain Podemos has tried to break with the tradition of deep discomfort with Spanish identity that characterised the Spanish radical Left, and references to patriotism have become common in the speeches of its leaders, contending their 'true' patriotism against the 'false' patriotism of the Right. On the contrary, in front of the spreading nationalism of the populist Right, the Italian radical Left mostly maintained, or even amplified, its distance from the nation. Yet, some minor sectors of the Italian radical left have moved away from this tradition and at times endorsed nationalist ideas that resemble those of the radical Right.

Lastly, one final reason led me to the selection of Italy, Portugal and Spain as case studies. Namely, the fact that I am fluent in the national languages of these three countries. This may sound as a banal justification, but in an interpretative approach it is of paramount importance to be able to work with the national language of each case study in order to fully grasp the complexity of terminology and meanings (see section 2.1). This is even more valid for a comparative analysis on a theme such as national identity, which is expressed linguistically in forms that depend highly on the discursive context of each country. For instance, Podemos' choice of using the term *patria* but not *nación* (nation) is indicative of this point. It unveils a subtle linguistic dimension of nationality that oftens reflect contextual peculiarities or responds to precise political strategies from the actors, and would be largely missed in a quantitative analysis based on a standardized English translation for all the cases.

Each of the three cases is analysed as a single case study that stands on its own. They share the same research puzzle and questions, as well as methodology and theoretical framework, yet the narrative explanation of each chapter follows its own structure in order to respect the singularity of the cases. This is in line with the application of an interpretative approach to case study, as sketched in this section: although there are references and connections between one chapter and another, each case is treated as an "interpretable whole" (Ragin 2000: 22). The purely comparative analysis is carried out in a specific chapter that follows the empirical ones. Accordingly, Chapter 5 deals with the radical left parties' milieu in Spain, Chapter 6 with the one in Italy, Chapter 7 in Portugal and

Chapter 8 compares the three cases.

Before moving to the analytical framework, one last clarification is necessary in regard to the ‘radical left milieu’ I refer to. In my analysis and data gathering, I have tried to maintain a holistic account, thus looking at the whole milieu of radical left parties in each of these three countries. Yet, parties with higher political influence and electoral strength were prioritized in the discussion. In Spain, most of the analysis is thus centred on Podemos, but United Left, More Country and Anticapitalists are also discussed, and interviews with their members have also been carried out. In Portugal, the relative stability of the radical Left permitted me to centre the research on the Left Bloc and the Portuguese Communist Party. Yet, other actors are also briefly taken into account in the process of narrative explanation. Finally, the Italian case proved to be more complex in this respect, since there are plenty of equally-weak parties, that divide and recompose frequently. Therefore, for the Italian case I opted for interviewing top-ranking members (usually party leaders) from a higher number of parties compared to Portugal and Spain and I kept an overview as holistic as possible, although two parties have received more empirical attention, namely the Communist Refoundation Party and Power to the People!. The most-analysed parties in each of the three countries, in addition to being presented within the empirical analyses, are also summarised in the introduction of each empirical chapter, for ease of reading (see Table 3, 7 and 9).

4.2 Analytical Framework

In this section I present an analytical guideline for studying national identity within radical left politics. As discussed in the previous section (4.1), an interpretive case studies strategy requires an in-depth investigation of the cases chosen, highlighting similarities and dissimilarities, and drawing theoretically-informed interpretations. To this end, I developed an original framework that works as a bedrock for this research and it is informed by the conceptual toolkit of Discourse Theory (see section 2.1.1). It is an interpretive framework based on retroductive reasoning (also called *abductive* reasoning). Whereas an *inductive* approach begins with a set of empirical observations, seeking patterns in those observations, and then theorizes about those patterns; and a *deductive* approach begins with a theory, developing hypotheses from that theory, and then collects and analyses data to test those hypotheses; a *retroductive* approach starts with an initial and incomplete empirical observation – a puzzling one – and then proceeds to the likeliest possible explanation through further empirical observation and through the lenses of theoretical categories and concepts useful for the explanation (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 18–48). Contrary to deduction and induction, which follow a linear-sequential approach, retroduction is better understood as a ‘cycle’, because it is an iterative process that goes back and forth between what is puzzling and its possible explanations – between data and theory (Glynos and Howarth 2019). It is an approach that was advanced by American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce at the end of the 19th century and then used in several disciplines, from theoretical physics (Einstein used it) to computer science and artificial intelligence research. In the social sciences, it is mostly used in interpretive political science, because it is a non-positivist type of inference that fits interpretivism’s epistemological assumptions (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 18–48; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2012, 27; Rhodes 2017, 186). As Mattoni explains, a retroductive research process

> keeps a strong mutual connection among the three key moments – data gathering, data analysis, and concept building – without denying the role of previous theoretical knowledge on the topics under investigation. […] [According to retroductive thinking] “the interpretation of the data is not finalized at an early stage, but new codes, categories and theories can be developed and redeveloped if necessary” (Reichertz 2010, 224), so that it is possible to generate “creative and novel theoretical insights through a dialectic of cultivated theoretical sensitivity and methodological heuristics” (Timmermans and Tavory 2012, 180). As in other qualitative research strategies, data gathering, data analysis, and concept building do not follow one another in a linear way. In fact, they interact simultaneously during the research process, so that the practice of fieldwork is not separated from the theorizing of analysis. (Mattoni 2014, 28)

According to this research process, I began from the puzzling observation that the attitudes of radical left actors towards national identity present a high degree of variation and have been mostly disregarded by academic literature on contemporary European politics. Hence, I formulated the following research questions:

1. How do radical left actors talk about the nation in their discourse? How do they frame and express their stances on national identity?
2. Why do radical left actors talk so differently about national identity? What reasons lie behind the variation of stances on national identity held by similar forces?

Though a reasoning around these inquiries, I began drafting some initial analytical categories that would guide the investigation. The analytical categories are theoretically-informed and based on the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2: the toolbox of Discourse Theory and the Anderson-informed conceptualisation of national identity. These analytical categories were fit together and sharpened up in light of the case selected (see section 4.1) and the data collected (see section 4.3), in a creative and dynamic research process that went back and forth from theory to data, coherently with a retroductive reasoning. This resulted into two analytical frameworks that guide the empirical research: one per research question, based on four analytical categories each. They are presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2, respectively.

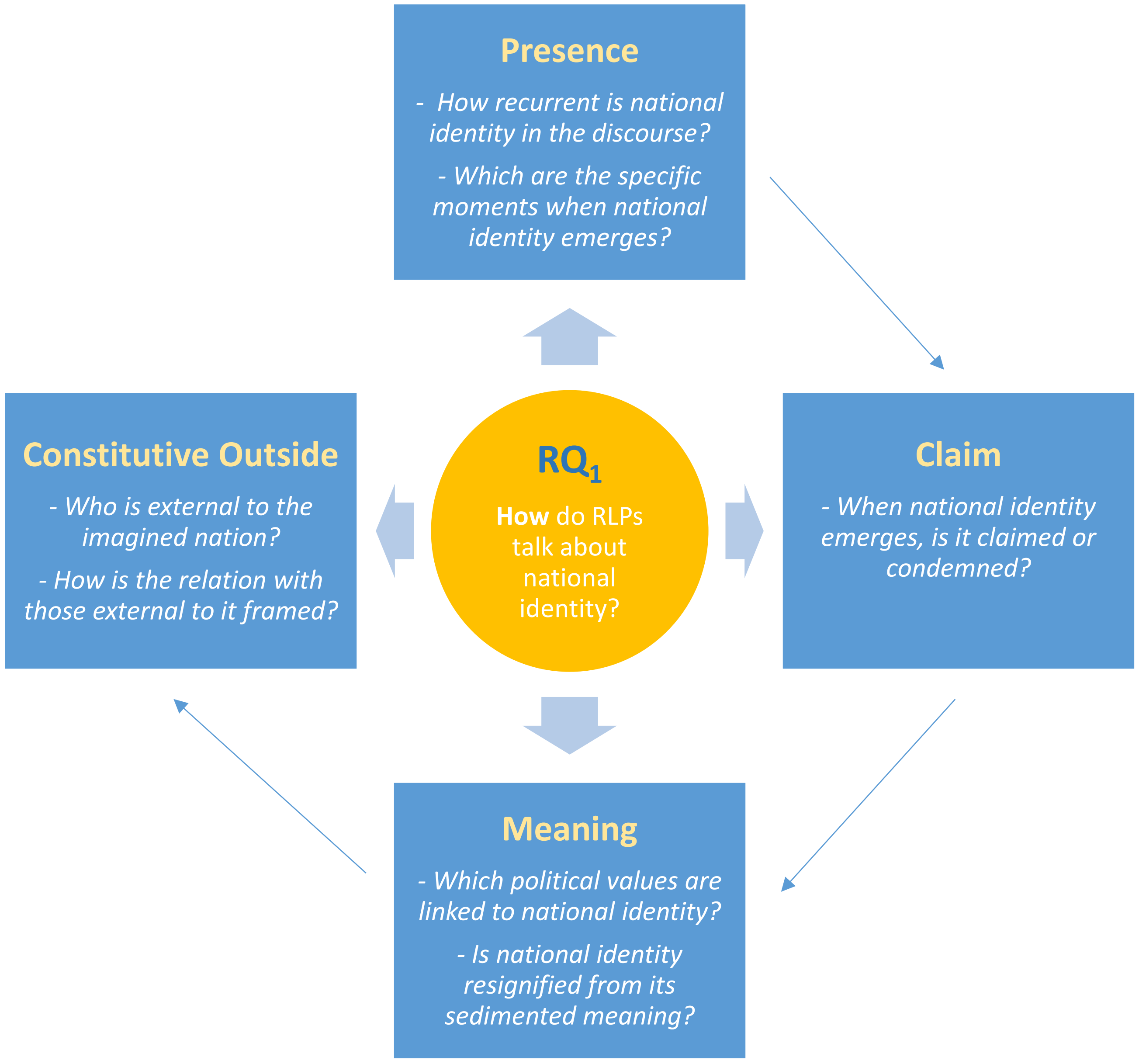
For the first research question, I centred the analysis on the level of discourse, operationalizing national identity as follows:

- first, I looked at the *presence* of national identity in the discourses of the radical Left, focusing on whether it plays a central or marginal role and on whether it emerges frequently or just in specific moments;
- then, I analysed if actors refer to national identity for endorsing or for criticising it, that is if they lay claim to their own national identity or not;
- subsequently, I moved to the core of the analysis by looking at the specific *meanings* that national identity acquires in the discursive process of signification; studying the political values associated to national belonging in the discursive process of signification;
- finally, I looked at the *frontiers of exclusion* that are constructed around references of national identity: who is part of the nation and who is not?

For the second research question, I took a more macro approach and I began by centring the analysis on the context in which the radical Left operates. The operationalization proceeded as follows:

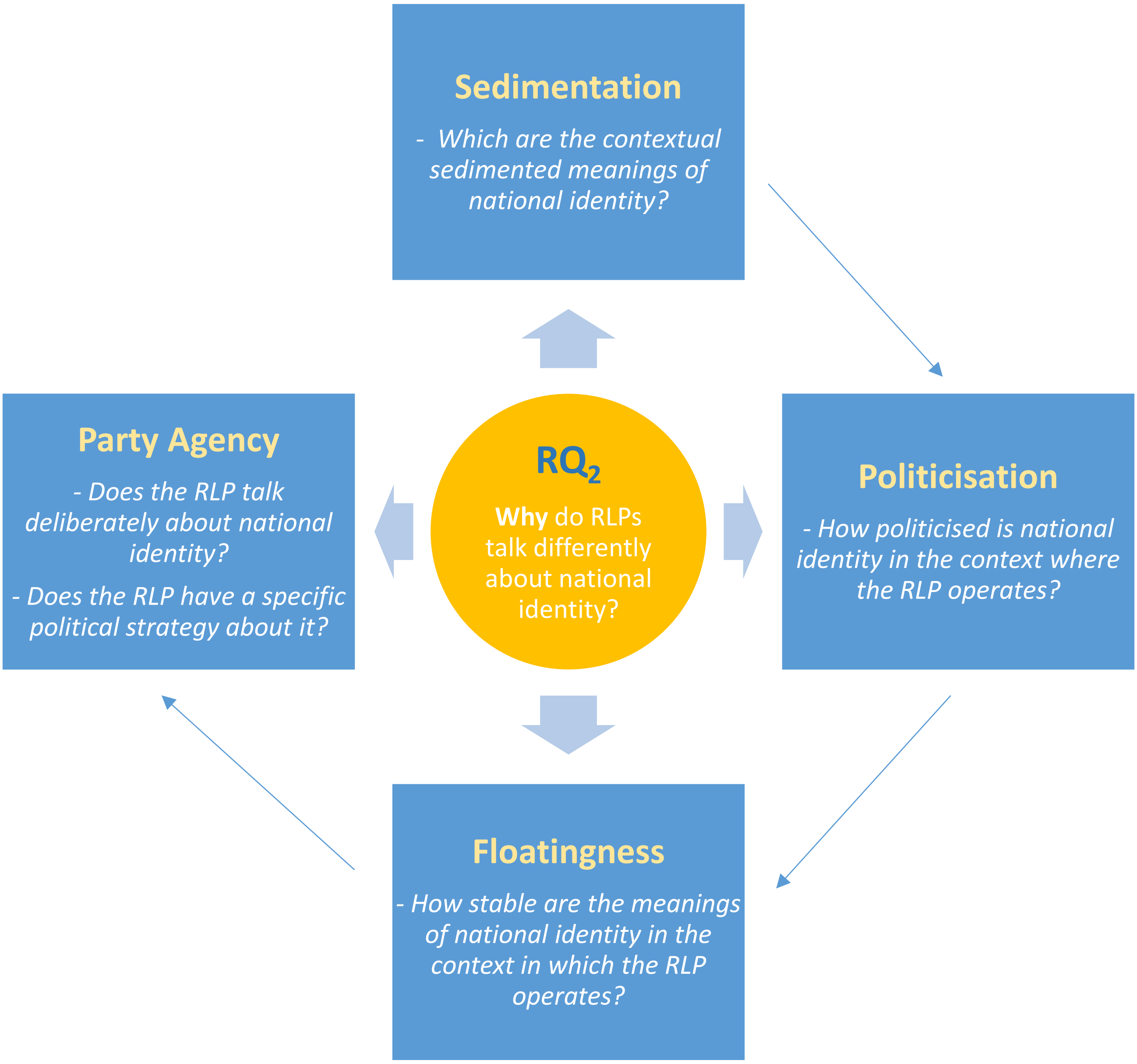
- first, I looked at the meanings that national identity has in the context where the radical Left operates, that is which meanings are *sedimented* in a given place and time;
- then, I analysed the level of *politicisation* of national identity, that is how much national identity is politicised within the political field in which the radical Left operates;
- subsequently, I tried to understand the *floatingness* of national identity, that is how stable its meanings are, if they tend to mutate easily or not;
- finally, I looked at the *agency* of the actors, analysing if there is a specific party strategy on these themes and whether it relates to the party typology.

Figure 1. ***Analytical Framework for the Research Question #1***



Presence
- How recurrent is national identity in the discourse?
- Which are the specific moments when national identity emerges?
Constitutive Outside
- Who is external to the imagined nation?
- How is the relation with those external to it framed?
RQ1
How do RLPs talk about national identity?
Claim
- When national identity emerges, is it claimed or condemned?
Meaning
- Which political values are linked to national identity?
- Is national identity resignified from its sedimented meaning?

Figure 2. *Analytical Framework for the Research Question #2*



Sedimentation

- *Which are the contextual sedimented meanings of national identity?*

Party Agency

- *Does the RLP talk deliberately about national identity?*
- *Does the RLP have a specific political strategy about it?*

RQ$_2$

Why do RLPs talk differently about national identity?

Politicisation

- *How politicised is national identity in the context where the RLP operates?*

Floatingness

- *How stable are the meanings of national identity in the context in which the RLP operates?*

4.3 Methods and Data

The step-by-step operationalization presented in the previous chapter is based on a triangulation of different methods of data-gathering and data analysis. With ‘triangulation’, I refer to the use of a combination of methods of investigation, data sources and theoretical concepts to analyse the same research puzzle (Ayoub, Wallace, and Zepeda-Millán 2014). Although combining different epistemologies is hardly possible, since they rest on different assumptions about social reality and knowledge, this is not the same for methods. In fact, different techniques and methods are not necessarily tied to specific epistemological assumptions, and they can be fruitfully combined for the research purpose (della Porta and Keating 2008, 34). Triangulation permits to paint a more holistic picture of the complex phenomena under scrutiny, and, rather than a validating strategy, it as an approach best suited for narrative explanation and multidimensional understanding (Ayoub, Wallace, and Zepeda-Millán 2014, 67–68).

This research thus employs a combination of three different methods of data gathering and analysis: semi-structured interviews, discourse analysis and participant observation. Not every step of the analytic framework required all three methods equally. For example, discourse analysis of politicians’ speeches was predominant in answering the first research question, while playing a secondary role in the second research question, where interviews prevailed (and where extensive use of secondary literature was also made, to understand the contextual aspects). Participatory observation, on the other hand, mainly served to strengthen and corroborate the findings that emerged from the first two methodologies, in both research questions.

In what follows, I expound each method adopted and the related collected material.

4.3.1 Discourse analysis

For the purposes of the research, I collected a set of selected statements, speeches, articles and texts from leaders and key members of radical left parties in Italy, Spain and Portugal, that provide useful information for the analysis of national identity. In this selection, I prioritized the speeches that party leaders gave at major party events and at opening or closing rallies of the general election campaigns, as well as specific texts where they discussed nationalism and issues related to nationality. Besides politicians’ discourses, I also relied on some relevant party documents and reports (whenever I used unpublished documents that were privately given to me by party members, this is specified in the text). The texts analysed cover the years 2014-2020,[16] although at times I also looked at older texts, whenever a diachronic analysis was needed for the explicatory aims of the second research question. As almost all the texts analysed are in Italian, Portuguese and Spanish, any phrase reported within inverted commas was translated into English by myself, unless otherwise stated.

All the data have been subjected to discourse-theoretical analysis (Carpentier and De Cleen 2007; De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017). This is a type of interpretive discourse analysis mostly used for empirical research in communication and populism studies (see, for instance, Carpentier, De Cleen, and Van Brussel 2019; De Cleen et al. 2019; Miró 2020), although its applicability is not restricted to specific research areas (Howarth and Torfing 2005, 25). It is *discourse-theoretical* because it draws its conceptual toolbox from Discourse Theory. The central insight of Discourse Theory is that meaning comes about through processes of articulation; and discourse theoretical analyses thus focus on how discourses bring together different elements to produce particular structures of meaning (see section 2.1.1). It is primarily a *qualitative* discourse analysis, but quantitative methods can also be used, since they may "provide an initial picture of the overall patterns of discourse, while registering the presence of 'overwording', unusual collocations, and specific rhetorical figures" (Howarth 2005, 337) In fact, discourse-theoretical analysis combines the theoretical rigour of Discourse Theory with analytical openness, and can thus be integrated with the procedures of other approaches to discourse analysis (see De Cleen et al. 2019, 9).

Compared with other types of discourse analysis, discourse-theoretical analysis is characterised by a more macro-approach to the study of discourse; it is especially suited for identifying the construction of political identities and/or the discursive strategies of the actors (De Cleen et al. 2019, 10). It inquires into the 'architectonics' of discourses – that is, how words and concepts are articulated together to produce particular structures of meaning (Stavrakakis 2017, 6).

Accordingly, when analysing the texts, I centred my attention on how the architectonics of the actors and parties' discourses look, what role national identity plays in such discourses, what position it has in the discourse, and how it assumes meanings in light of the relational elements of its articulation. This last point – the search for meanings, that is the interpretive analysis on the processes of signification – was central for the analysis, and it led me to map out semantic fields within which national identity is discursively signified, which are specific fields that share a set of meanings and where the process of signification takes place (Cosenza 2018, 14–15).

The analysis was carried out relying on a qualitative coding procedure (Coffey and Atkinson

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[16] Although the empirical focus was on the years 2014-2020, in some cases I also looked at speeches from 2021, in order not to miss the latest political developments and to provide an overview that is as up-to-date as possible.

1996) that aims at capturing “something [that is] important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun and Clarke 2006, 82). In doing so, I gradually moved from descriptive coding that stays close to the texts and refer to the analytical categories, over axial coding that identifies patterns and meanings in the texts under study, towards ever more interpretive, selective and theoretically inspired coding that allowed me to answer the general research questions.

Moreover, whenever a quantitative analysis was considered necessary to highlight certain linguistic patterns and to corroborate the findings of the qualitative analysis, this was done with KH Coder (https://khcoder.net/en/), an open-source software for computer assisted content analysis.

The list of all the texts analysed is reported in Appendix One.

Finally, as Discourse Theory rightly points out, a ‘discourse’ is a system of signification that goes beyond its textual dimension and can also be expressed in visual forms, through images, symbols and representations (see section 2.1.1). In fact, visual analysis helps studying physical, representational, and public visibility elements that exist in collective actors and are part of their political discourse (Doerr and Milman 2014). Consequently, during the analysis I also looked at images and symbols that were relevant for the research, such as parties’ symbols, flags and so on. They are reported in this manuscript as ‘Figures’ and the list can thus be seen in the List of Figures.

4.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

During my research fieldwork, I conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews in Spain, Italy and Portugal. Most of the interviews were conducted with the leadership of radical left parties and thus they are *elite interviews*, whose interviewees were party members that hold, or held, top-ranking positions within the party, such as national leaders, high-ranking party strategists and front-line politicians. I also conducted some *expert interviews* in each country, targeting pundits and experts (usually academics or journalists) whose political background or research field led them to have in-deep and up-to-date information on radical left politics in their country.

I also conducted some interviews to party members who were active in the party but had no high-ranking positions. The aim of these interviews was exploratory, and it eased my access within the party ranks towards top-ranking (or former top-ranking) members. The results of these interviews also helped me in enhancing my knowledge of these parties, as well as at sharpening the retroductive research process (see section 4.2). However, since this research aims at inquiring into the party narrative as shaped by its leadership, rather than by its activists or voters, the respondents’ answers were not used in the empirical analysis. Leaving them aside, the interviews conducted and used for this study are thirty. The majority of them are elite interviews (21) and the remaining ones are expert interviews (9). They have all been conducted during the period 2018-2021. The list of all interviewees can be seen in Appendix Two. Since almost all the interviews were conducted in Italian, Portuguese or Spanish, any phrase reported in this manuscript within inverted commas was first translated into English by myself.

The type of interview that I used is that of 'qualitative semi-structured interview'. It is an interviewing technique that proves "especially useful in studies where the goals are exploration, discovery, and interpretation of complex social events and processes" (Blee and Taylor 2002, 93). It does not follow the rigidity of structured interviews based on a fixed schedule of questions (referred to as a 'questionnaire') and typically associated with survey research. Yet, it also avoids the free-flowing conversation typical of unstructured interviews, that are based on a personalized approach hardly suitable for comparative studies. As a middle ground option, in-depth semi-structured interviews allow for the comparison of interviewees' responses, while also leaving space for exploring topics relevant to that particular interviewee (della Porta 2014, 228–61). In semi-structured interviews, the researcher thus relies on an 'interview guide' that includes a consistent set of questions clustered into some macro themes, but leaves the possibility for the interviewee to digress, and for the interviewer to add or personalize some questions within the macro themes.

The guiding sheets that I wrote for conducting elite and expert semi-structured interviews in each country are based on the categories of the analytical framework and follow its explanatory aims (see section 4.2). They are reported in Appendix Three.

All conducted interviews have been coded using MAXQDA (https://www.maxqda.com/), a qualitative data analysis software. The codes represent the arguments, the frames and the issues that emerged in the interviews. The complete codebook is reported in Appendix Four.

4.3.3 Participant observation

Participant observation is a data-collecting technique typical of ethnographic studies. It is an activity that permits to collect first-hand data through the researcher's observation of a specific community of people in their own space and time, thereby gaining a close and intimate familiarity with them and their practices and symbols (Bray 2008; Balsiger and Lambelet 2014). It is also a technique for which knowing the local language is especially helpful, because it permits to better understand people on their own terms and to properly grasp their frames of mind (Bray 2008, 305). Since participation calls for involvement, while observation calls for detachment, adopting this technique requires a careful and continuous balance of the two (Rhodes 2016, 176).

For the purposes of this research, I conducted participant observation at various party (and inter-parties) events in Italy, Spain and Portugal, such as meetings, demonstrations, congresses, rallies and celebrations. During and after each observation, I took 2-4 pages of fieldnotes describing what I had seen, usually followed by some reflections on the significance and implications of the information collected. I took a careful account of the symbolic dimension of each event attended, such as the symbols present in the environment, and the words and the gestures used by the attendees. Specifically, I took close attention to any direct or indirect reference to national identity, in the symbols as well as in the talks. Some events I attended were public, and thus there was no need to officially disclose my researcher identity, and I did so only during informal talks with attendees on the sidelines of the events. In other cases, participation required a formal request, as they were events reserved to party members. On those occasions, I was granted access by formally presenting myself as an academic researcher in political science from Scuola Normale Superiore. In total, I gathered field note descriptions of eighteen events across Italy, Spain and Portugal. The list of all the events I attended is reported in Appendix Five.

5. THE SPANISH CASE. *WHAT IS SPAIN?* FRANCO'S LEGACY AND PODEMOS' PATRIOTISM

España, España, España.
Dos mil años de historia no acabaron de hacerte.
Eugenio García de Nora (Canto)

This chapter presents the first case study of the research: the Spanish radical Left. As stated in the methodological discussion (Chapter 2), the investigation conducted in this empirical chapter is based on *elite* and *expert* interviews; discourse analysis of leaders' speeches and party documents; and participant observation. Primary data are reinforced by drawing on secondary literature, especially as regards history, and by resorting to visual analysis.

In order to facilitate the reading of the chapter, Table 3 summarises the main Spanish parties analysed.

Table 3. *Radical left parties in Spain*

Party name	**Year of Foundation**	**Party typology (indicative)**	**Electoral strength (selection)**
Podemos (We Can)	2014	Left-populist / democratic socialist	7,98% in 2014 (European election), 20.66% in 2015 (with local lists), 21.15% in 2016 (as *Unidos Podemos*, with local list), 12.9% (as *Unidas Podemos*, with local lists) in November 2019
Izquierda Unida (United Left, IU)	1986 (as coalition) 1992 (as party federation)	Democratic socialist / reform communist	6,92% in 2011, 3,67% in 2015 and from 2016 onwards always with Podemos (*Unidos Podemos/Unidas Podemos* alliance)

Anticapitalistas (Anticapitalists)	2009 (as *Izquierda Anticapitalista*) 2015 (as *Anticapitalistas*) 2020 (as independent from Podemos)	Revolutionary extreme Left (Trotskyist) / democratic socialist	Within Podemos up to 2020
Más País (More Country)	2019	Left-populist / green	2.41% (with local list) in November 2019

The chapter proceeds as follows:

The first section (5.1) sets out an historical and contextual overview, crucial to understand the contemporary situation of the radical Left in Spain, with regard to its stances on national identity.

The second section (5.2) focuses on the political party Podemos, the main actor of the Spanish radical Left since its founding in 2014, and explores with an in-depth analysis its relationship with national identity, highlighting the novelty compared to the past. It analyses the discourse of Podemos as regards to nationality and the reasons that lie behind the party's stance on this matter.

The third section (5.3) deals with the other main actors of the Spanish radical Left – namely *Izquierda Unida*, *Anticapitalistas* and *Más País* – and discusses their relationship with national identity and with Podemos' patriotism.

The last section (5.4) briefly summarises the findings.

5.1 A *Spanish* Radical Left?

If we turn our attention to national identity within Spanish politics, we immediately run into a paradox: nowadays Spain is facing a right-wing nationalist revival, with the far-right party VOX making nationalism its *raison d'être*; and yet, since Spain returned to be a democratic State in the seventies, Spanish nationalism has usually been described by pundits as something almost inexistent in the political and civil life, only waived by small and marginal groups of extremists. To quote the political scientist Jordi Muñoz, "Spanish nationalism has been, in both public and academic debate, like the naked king. It was there and no one dared to even name it" (Muñoz 2008). The reason why "no one dared to eve name it" has to be searched in the profound connection between Spanishness and Francoism. A connection that the radical Left also (and even more so) internalised, as I briefly explain in this section.

Francisco Franco, in his more than thirty years of fascist dictatorship (1939–1975), was very successful in appropriating the idea of 'Spain', associating it with his far-right political values, with monoculturalism and administrative centralism, and ultimately with the regime itself (Núñez Seixas 2010; Ruiz Jiménez, González-Fernández, and Jiménez Sánchez 2015; Herrera and Miley 2018, 203; Priorelli 2018). Despite the fact that during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) patriotic claims and references to the «patria»[17] were frequent within the anti-fascist and leftist Republican front, in the late years of Franco's regime it had become virtually impossible for the radical Left to refer to Spanish national identity or to Spanish patriotism, as they were then fully associated with Francoism (Rendueles and Sola 2019, 42). As Podemos MP (2016-2019) Nagua Alba explains:

> in a way, and it is terrible to say it, the Franco regime did a very good job, because it built an image of Spain in its image and likeness. In other words, the regime and the country were the same thing. [ES-INT.5]

Moreover, the alliance between the radical Left and peripheral nationalisms (anti-Franco as well as anti-Spain) consolidated in the late years of Francoism, thus strengthening the radical Left's hostility towards Spanish national identity, with the incorporation of many elements of the Catalan and Basque nationalists' discourse into its own (Quiroga 2010). The sedimented meanings of Spanish identity were based on Francoism to the extent that Franco's legacy on national identity remained rather intact even with the Spanish transition to democracy (1975-78). In fact, not only did the radical Left avoid any reference to nationality, but, albeit with different gradations, the entire party system that emerged out of the democratic transition initially tended to refrain from patriotism in public speeches, in order to avoid that their words would recall Francoism (Coller, Cordero, and Echavarren 2018, 189). In the early years of democratic Spain, the expression '*españolismo*' and in general any manifestation of Spanish nationalism came to have many negative connotations, for being associated with the Franco regime (Molina 2009, 278). During those years, Spanish politicians tried not to talk majestically about Spain so as not to be branded as Francoist, including on the Right, as politicians were afraid of being identified as a continuation of the regime. Neither in political events nor in other public events such as the demonstrations called against the ETA attacks were there patriotic emblems or allusions to the patria (Navarro Ardoy 2015, 2). As Ruiz Jiménez, Romero Portillo and Navarro Ardoy summarise, "[t]he difficulties of articulating a nationalist discourse have been particularly acute in leftist parties because of the monopolisation of patriotism during the previous Francoist regime (Ruiz Jiménez et al., 2017). Initially, this inheritance seems to have affected both the right and the left (Núñez Seixas, 2010; Quiroga, 2008; Quiroga, 2011; Uriarte, 2002), both of which reflected the belief that opposing nationalism was equivalent to rejecting Francoism (Sanz

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[17] I have decided to leave the Spanish word 'patria' untranslated, since it is understandable for English-speaking readers. The English term with the closest meaning would be 'fatherland', or 'homeland'.

Campos & Archilés, 2011)" (Ruiz Jiménez, Romero Portillo, and Navarro Ardoy 2020).

This tendency to downgrade national identity from public discourse gradually vanished over the years, and it reached a turning point during the right-wing presidency of José María Aznar (1996-2004), leader of the rightist party *Partido Popular.* The party increasingly praised national pride and national unity, criticising the lack of patriotism of the Left, whose links with peripheral nationalisms were accused of undermining the unity of the country. As Molina and Villaverde explain

> the Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar set out to personify a new attitude of patriotism *sin complejos* – without hang-ups. Avoiding the actual word *nationalist*, which was reserved for Spain's peripheral nationalisms, this conservative leader inspired a new political discourse, focusing on patriotic myths (the conquest of America, the worldwide role of the Spanish language) in an effort to recover national pride and overcome the inhibitions inherited from the transition years after the death of Dictator Francisco Franco. The objective was to see Spain return to the forefront of international politics and rescue it from what Aznar called 'a remote corner of history. (Molina and Villaverde 2012, 47)

The Spanish identity was by now being normalized in public and political discourse, gradually losing its automatic association with Francoism, which however continued to be seen by the radical Left, who maintained its "deeply-felt antipathy towards [Spanish identity]" (Rendueles and Sola 2019, 49).

If the years preceding Aznar's victory had been relatively favourable for the radical Left, with the *Izquierda Unida* (United Left) electoral cartel reaching 10.54% of the popular vote in 1996 under the leadership of Julio Anguita, from the late nineties onwards the party entered into a downward phase (which will see the party reach 5,45% of the votes in 2000, 4,96% in 2004 and 3,77% in 2008). In the 2000s, with the Spanish Right now embracing Spanish identity in its discourse, and with the centre-left gradually and timidly following the same path, the radical Left remained instead on its track and refused to accept a normalisation of the idea of 'Spain'. As Jorge Sola, a left-wing sociology professor at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid recalls:

> when my generation came to politics in the 1990s, we all saw with horror the idea of Spain, the flag of Spain and the symbols of Spain, and we all spoke about 'the Spanish State' as a way of avoiding all that. Even those like me who are from Aragon, which is an autonomous community of Spain without a strong national identity, came to speak about Aragon with pride and about Spain with rejection. That is something I would say was transversal and common for radical left people of my generation who were born after the Franco regime. [ES-INT.12]

César Rendueles, a renowned left-wing philosopher born in 1975, has a very similar memory of those years. While talking about his political activism, since he was seventeen years old onwards, he says:

> the word Spain was never pronounced in any [radical left] political movement or in any grassroots assembly, to the point that it had become a mechanism of identification. It is like now saying '*nosotras y nosotros*'. It doesn't really serve much except for identifying those who are like you. You heard 'Spanish state' and you knew that the one talking was one of us. It is a mechanism for identifying radicalism and for excluding those who are not like you. When we heard someone saying 'Spain' the normal reaction was 'where the hell does he come from'. [ES-INT.11]

For most radical left militants, Spanishness remained an identity intrinsically linked to the Francoist heritage, and they thus rejected many national symbols and any political articulation of Spanish identity – so much so that they often shunned the name of the country itself (calling it 'Spanish State' rather than 'Spain'), mirroring the discourse of peripheral nationalisms (Bassets 2015, 1). Nonetheless, this trend was about to change deeply, at least at the level of political discourse, with the emergence of Podemos, a new political actor born within the camp of the radical Left in 2014, as I explain in the next section.

5.2 The Breakthrough of Podemos

Podemos was established in early 2014 with the aim of participating in the European election of the same year. It emerged from a group of young leftist professors of Political Science at the Complutense University of Madrid – many of them coming from autonomous and movementist branches of Marxism, of Italian influence[18] – converging with parts of the militancy of the 2011 *Indignados* movement (*15-M*) and the small Trotskyist party *Izquerda Anticapitalista* (Anticapitalist Left). In 2015, one year after its establishment, Podemos received 20.66% of the votes at the national election (12.67% as Podemos, plus 7.99% from Podemos-backed local coalitions in Galicia, Catalonia and the Valencian community). The result shook the Spanish party system and overturned the power relations inside the Spanish Left, leaving the 'official' radical left party, *Izquierda Unida* (United Left), in the corner.

Although the leaders of the party all came from radical left subcultures, they did not employ most of the traditional vocabulary of the radical Left. Rather than accepting to locate themselves into the "symbolic distribution of positions of the regime", they saw the possibility to act as an outsider and to employ a "left-populist discourse", capable of articulating a new popular collective will (Errejón 2014, 2). This new left-populist discourse aimed at constructing a different political frontier, "between the establishment elites (la 'casta') and the 'people'" (Mouffe 2018, 21). As 2014-2021 Secretary-General (*Secretario general*) Pablo Iglesias Turrión explained,

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[18] This is openly recognised by the founders of Podemos (see Errejón 2020, 4) and clearly emerges in Iglesias' publications prior to the Podemos experience (e.g. Iglesias 2008).

> the spectre of an organic crisis was generating the conditions for the articulation of a dichotomizing discourse, capable of building the 15-M's new ideological constructs into a popular subject, in opposition to the elites. For the founders of Podemos, this was not a novel hypothesis; we had begun to sketch it out in our initial reflections on the 15-M movement. Our thinking drew on a particular set of political experiences—Latin America's 'gained decade'—and a specific model for political communication: our television programme, La Tuerka [The Screw]. Analysis of the developments in Latin America offered us new theoretical tools for interpreting the reality of the Spanish crisis, within the context of the Eurozone periphery; from 2011, we began to talk about the 'latinamericanization' of Southern Europe as opening a new structure of political opportunity. This populist possibility was theorized most specifically by Íñigo Errejón, drawing on the work of Ernesto Laclau. (Iglesias 2015b, 14)

One of the novelties of Podemos' leftist leadership was precisely its 'populism', expressed in the discursive opposition between the people and the elite, and in the refusal to clearly position the party on the left-right axis. As Iglesias used to say, the Podemos leadership aimed at conducting an 'assault on the institutions' – i.e. "the need to recuperate their hold on political power and dislodge the elites that are controlling them" (Gerbaudo and Screti 2017, 9). Academic works have shown how Podemos can be rightly considered as a sort of "ideal typical example of a European Populist Radical Left Party" (Damiani 2020: 11): its populist discourse has been addressed extensively in the literature (e.g. Kioupkiolis 2016; Ramiro and Gomez 2017; García Agustín and Briziarelli 2018b) and it has also been recognised by the party leaders themselves, who acknowledged to have been inspired by Laclau's studies of populism (Errejón and Mouffe 2016; Iglesias 2015b). Moreover, many studies highlight the strategic and pragmatic dimension of such a populism: especially among Spanish scholars, Podemos' populism has been defined as a tactic to break through the Spanish political system (Franzé 2017, 240); a strategy to interpret the political moment after the economic crisis (García Agustín and Briziarelli 2018b, 18); and a discursive strategy from which its electoral success was largely derived (Rendueles and Sola 2019, 18).

In more recent years (2019-ongoing), due to a mutation of the political context compared to 2014, and to changes in the leadership's strategy, the populist dimension of Podemos has gradually reduced and lost in importance. The evolution of Podemos' populism has already been extensively studied in academia, and goes beyond the scope of this study (see: Franzé 2017; Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis 2019, 61–64; Chazel and Fernández Vázquez 2019; Mazzolini and Borriello 2021; Campolongo and Caruso 2021). As Mazzolini and Borriello summarise it:

> [T]he irruption of new actors on the right of the political spectrum reshuffled the cards. First, *Ciudadanos* emerged on the national political scene as the 'Podemos of the centre-right'. Second, the spectacular rise of *Vox* put an end to the absence of a far-right force that represented a 'Spanish exception' in the European context (Peres, 2019, p. 140). Those evolutions deprived Podemos of its exclusive role of political challenger and progressively favored the return to a left-right axis of political confrontation between two opposite blocks […]. In this situation, Podemos was somehow naturally induced to switch back to a leftist symbolism. Things were made even more complex by the blazing up of the Catalan question, which completely obscured other political issues. On the issue, Podemos took an intermediate position that was little rewarding in a context of high polarization. These evolutions deeply complexified the political space by multiplying the axes of confrontation: left vs. right, old vs. new parties, technocracy vs. populism, and centralists vs. regionalists. In such a context, the task of building a transversal and radical force capable of challenging alone the dominance of the traditional elites became increasingly difficult. (Mazzolini and Borriello 2021, 9)

This being said, some elements of the populist repertoire were preserved and populism has not completely disappeared in the party discourse: although over the years Podemos returned to openly position itself in the left-right axis (as a self-defined *leftist* force), it has maintained an innovative communication strategy that aspires to go beyond the boundaries of the radical Left.

What is central for this study, is that populism has not been the only wind of change that Podemos brought to the Spanish radical Left. Since the foundation of Podemos in 2014, Iglesias and the party's other leaders started to draw from a national-popular vocabulary and to openly reclaim state-wide patriotism for their political project. They frequently labelled their politics as patriotic and repeatedly claimed to be proud of Spain and of them being Spaniards, while labelling political adversaries (from tax-evading businessmen to corrupt politicians) as 'enemies of the fatherland' and 'anti-patriots', unworthy to even pronounce the name of the country. As we have seen in the previous section (5.1), this was a novelty in a country where Spanish patriotism and national symbols used to be a strong component of the discourse of the Right and were largely avoided by the radical Left. Such a patriotic dimension of Podemos has long remained scarcely explored in academia: it is at times acknowledged in scholarly works, but it is relegated to the margins of broader analyses, and lacks targeted empirical analyses (see, for instance, Gómez-Reino and Llamazares 2015, 2–3; Gerbaudo 2017, 122–23; García Agustín and Briziarelli 2018a, 18; Basile and Mazzoleni 2019, 7). However, Podemos' patriotism should not be underestimated, considering the importance it has played in the party's discourse and the turning point it represents in the history of the Spanish radical Left. Very few radical left activists, if any, would have predicted that in 2016 they would be cheering a leader who, during the closing rally of the electoral campaign, stated that they were the ones who represented «patria, order, law, institutions», while, in front of him, the crowd was holding giant letters that together formed the phrase 'the patria is the people' (Iglesias 2016a).

Patriotism is in fact a constant element in the narrative of Podemos and it emerges especially during the inflammatory parts of Iglesias' speeches, in which he starts making abundant references to Spain, the patria and his pride in being a Spaniard. By way of example, Table 4 shows a simple quantitative analysis I conducted of the speeches Iglesias gave for the 2016 and 2019 general elections, during the closing rally of the two electoral campaigns. Nationality (expressed with different terms, such as patria, Spain, country and Spaniard/s) is a central element in the architectonics of the discourse.

Table 4. ***The most recurrent nouns in Pablo Iglesias' speeches at the closing rally for the 2016 and 2019 general elections***[19]

2016		2019	
Nouns	*Frequency*	*Nouns*	*Frequency*
Corruption (corrupción)	30	**Spain (España)**	**13**
Thanks (gracias)	22	**Country (país)**	**11**
Patria (patria)	**20**	Campaign (campana)	9
Spain (España)	**18**	Constitution (constitución)	8
Right/s (derecho/s)	11	**Spaniard/s (español/es)**	**7**
Law (ley)	10	Contract/s (contrato/s)	7
Country (país)	**10**	Company/es (empresa/s)	7
Change (cambio)	9	People (gente)	7
Word (palabra)	9	Majority (mayoría/s)	7
People/s (pueblo/s)	9		
Europe (Europa)	8		
Institution/s (institución/es)	8		
Flag/s (bandera/s)	7		
Comrade/s (compañero/a/os/as)	7		
People (gente)	7		
History (historia)	7		
Total nouns of the speech	*671*	*Total nouns of the speech*	*448*

But why has Podemos embraced patriotism? And how exactly does Podemos talk about nationality? Lastly, how is it expressed symbolically? In the following sections I will try to answer these three questions respectively: first I will examine the reasons that led Podemos' leadership to embrace patriotism; then I will move to the analysis of what type of patriotism they express; finally I will discuss how Podemos' patriotism is symbolically expressed beyond language.

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[19] All nouns that recur at least 7 times are shown in the table.

5.2.1 Why has Podemos embraced patriotism?

In analysing the role that patriotism plays in the discourse of Podemos, we must keep in mind that including patriotism in a leftist speech was not only a novelty for the Spanish radical Left (see section 5.1), but it was a new stance also for the founders of Podemos themselves, including the party leader, Pablo Iglesias. In early 2013, a year before founding Podemos, Iglesias still claimed that Spanish identity had been irremediably lost to the Right since the end of the Spanish Civil War, and thus was of no use to the Left, and that he personally could not even pronounce the word 'Spain' (Iglesias 2013). However, by 2014, the year Podemos was founded, he had reconsidered his position, arguing that it is not possible to win your country over to your political project without referring to 'Spain' and laying claim to the idea of patria (Iglesias 2014b). What happened? What was that convinced Iglesias and the main figures of Podemos' leadership, such as Íñigo Errejón, to play the patriotic card when they had never done so?

A first answer has to be found in some contextual reasons that paved the way to this choice. First of all, the *15-M* (the Indignatios movement that swept Spain in 2011) was central in elaborating the theoretical and communicative novelty of Podemos, as the founders of Podemos recall (Errejón 2014; Iglesias 2015b). The turmoil that the *15-M* brought to Spanish politics reminds Zolberg's conceptualisation of 'moments of madness', when actors have more possibilities to forge new repertoires in an act of creation (Zolberg 1972, 196). These moments emerge with new cycles of protest (Tarrow 1993), opening new 'windows of political opportunity' that, when the cycle of mobilisation declines, can allow 'movement parties' to arise from these protests and enter into the field of institutional politics (della Porta 2015a). In Spain, this cycle was the wave of protests against austerity and corruption, and for a 'real democracy', that began in 2011 with the *15-M* movement. As noted by della Porta et al., "[i]nstitutional closure and the start of a demobilisation process provoked a turning point in the contentious cycle: from a destituent process (based on protest and unconventional repertoires) to a constituent process (based on the 'assault on institutions'); and from a more movementist pre-15M cycle to a post-15M cycle with more electoral connotations" (della Porta et al. 2017, 48). In this perspective, Podemos can thus be seen as a movement party that navigated the transition from the 'moment of madness' of the 15-M cycle of protests, towards a moment of institutionalisation, that is the incorporation of the "15-M's new ideological constructs" into the institutional political realm (García Agustín and Briziarelli 2018a, 10). What is central for this analysis, is that among "15-M's new ideological constructs" there was also a return to a national-popular symbolic repertoire, different from the frames of the radical Left. In fact, the protest movements of 2011, although transnational and interconnected, returned to perceive the nation as their prime political battlefield and even as a source of identity. They moved beyond the framework of the Global Justice Movement – that had rejected a national symbolic repertoire and sought its ideological battleground in the global arena (and/or in the local arena, but less in the national one) – and turned to be rooted in the nation-state, pointing at national adversaries and using a more national-popular discourse (Gerbaudo 2017, 113–34). As Carolina Bescansa, co-founder of Podemos (together with Pablo Iglesias and Juan Carlos Monedero), explains:

> ultimately, the patriotism of Podemos is a mirror of the refoundation of the patriotic sense made by the 15-M movement, which refounded a new sense of citizenship and democracy from below. [ES-INT.1]

Furthermore, those were the years in which the Latin American Bolivarian Left had become a reference point for many European leftists, who looked with interest at the left-wing governments of Hugo Chávez's Venezuela, Evo Morales' Bolivia and Rafael Correa's Ecuador, which, among other things, made extensive use of a national-popular and patriotic rhetoric (Burbano de Lara 2015, 22–23). As Pablo Iglesias remembers,

> what we had learned from Latin America was that the national-popular was a way of making headway in a left-wing, progressive direction much more effective than old identities linked to the aesthetic of the labour movement and the traditional left in Europe. (Iglesias 2020a)

Drawing on the political experiences of the Latin American Left, after 2011 some of the future leaders of Podemos began thinking about the possibility of a "latinamericanisation" of Southern Europe, that is the opening of a new structure of political opportunity similar to the one of Latin America (Iglesias 2015b). According to Javier Franzé – an Argentinian political theorist who introduced Laclau's theory of populism to Íñigo Errejón (Errejón 2014) –, the patriotism of Podemos

> recalls the national liberation movements of the Third World and especially the recent national popular movements from Latin America, such as the ones from Venezuela and Bolivia. […] Podemos' idea was to bring to Europe a progressive national popular discourse, with the 'national-popular' more as the ideology and populism more as the form, in the Laclauian sense. [ES-INT.10][20]

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[20] The similarity with national liberation movements lays here in the use of a national-popular imaginary and in the identification with the national community, rather than in having an adversary outside national borders.

Certainly, the *15-M* and the Latin American Left have shaken some sedimented meanings of national identity within the Spanish radical left, favouring a renewal of the symbolic repertoire and vocabulary. Yet, this alone is not enough to explain the turning point of Podemos. It was not in fact a simple and gradual relinquishment of the Left's anti-national stance, but it was an up-front patriotism, that was explicitly articulated since the beginning. In order to explain this stance, it is necessary to also turn the attention to the party's agency, and especially to the populist strategy – for which controlling the meaning of popular concepts is an important part of the wider hegemonic struggle (Mouffe 2018) – that was planned by Podemos' leadership.

While conducting field research, I was granted access to one unpublished detailed report of a private meeting held in mid-2013 by the future leaders of Podemos, at which they discussed the creation of the party and the strategy to adopt. As the report reveals, between February and March of 2013 they conducted a professional national survey that was coordinated by Carolina Bescansa, a professor of methodology of political science research at the Complutense University of Madrid, with the objective of using the survey's findings for elaborating the narrative of what would later be Podemos. The report presents the survey's results and the internal debate that followed, and it is thus a valuable document that gives fundamental insights for understanding Podemos' approach to populism and to nationalism, as I explain in the section.

5.2.1.1 The populist strategy on nationality

As Bescansa recalls, in 2013 many of the people who would go on to create Podemos the following year, worked together to "identify the narrative structure of what would later become Podemos" [ES-INT.1]. With this aim in mind, between February and March of 2013 under the coordination of Bescansa they conducted a national survey, with no intention to publish it [ES-UNP.1]. They conducted 2,000 in-depth phone interviews asking questions related to eight different themes: (1) democracy, (2) economic crisis, (3) constitution, (4) autonomous communities and state centralism, (5) form of state (monarchy vs. republic), (6) national identity, (7) class perception, and (8) vote preferences [ES-UNP.1]. In the words of Bescansa, the aim of the survey was "to find the central elements around which a political force capable of subverting the party system could be constructed" [ES-INT.1]. The goal was to indicate the themes that could potentially be articulated in a populist strategy – how to discursively construct a distinction between the people and the elite [ES-UNP.1]. The survey suggested what had to be named (and what not) in order to be an electoral success; it indicated the problems most commonly perceived by Spaniards and gave feedback on how to frame them in order to give a leftist reply that could resonate in a transversal electorate. In sum, the data of this survey were "the root the Podemos project was built on" [ES-INT.3].

On theme 6 (national identity), the survey's results showed that national belonging remained a few points under local and regional belonging, but was nonetheless very important for most of the respondents [ES-UNP.1]. In the survey, Spanishness emerged as a significant identity for the respondents. However, most respondents did not provide a clear answer when asked what they loved about Spain – they referred to general traits, such as "Spaniards' happiness", "the sun", and "the people". On the question regarding the historical events that made them proud of being Spanish, a common answer was the victory of the Spanish football team in the World Cup of 2010 [ES-UNP.1].

Although there is broad agreement that the Spanish Right has been politically dominant in defining Spanishness, framing it in terms of centralisation and monoculturalism (see section 5.1), the survey indicated that such right-wing construction of national identity was not particularly prevalent in the respondents' replies. It suggested, rather, that there was a space for a political articulation of nationality that would differ from that of the right wing [ES-UNP.1]. Therefore, in the private discussion that followed the results of the survey, Podemos' future leadership began to form the view that the political hegemony of the Right over nationality could be undermined, and that national identity was an important theme around which a populist discourse had to be articulated [ES-UNP.1, ES-INT.1, ES-INT.2, ES-INT.3]. As Bescansa explains:

> It was precisely the awareness that the Spanish national identity remained an unresolved issue within the progressive camp after the Francoist regime that made us think it was essential to create a resignification of the value of being Spanish. In many ways it had already become normalised among the Spanish people and yet it had not been normalised in the discourse of the political actors. [ES-INT.1]

They decided that, for a populist project to be successful, it had to include "the aim of refounding a new Spanish national identity" [ES-INT.1]. Patriotism, they believed, would provide legitimacy and strength to their political project [ES-INT.2]. In the words of Iglesias: "Patria is the community that allows us to dream a better world, but to seriously believe in our dreams" (Iglesias 2015a).

This decision led Podemos to begin drafting a narrative that drew from the emotionally powerful sense of belonging that the imagined nation engenders in many people, and at the same time tried to modify the ways the nation was imagined. In doing so, the party leadership intertwined the creation of the political frontiers typical of populism (*us, the people* vs. *them, the elite*) with the in-out relation typical of nationalism (*patriot* vs. *antipatriot*). This emerged clearly since the first party conference in 2014, when Iglesias exemplified this entanglement by saying that "it is not the political elite that makes the country work, nor does it make the trains run on time, or the hospitals and the schools work. It is the people. This is our patria: the people" (Iglesias 2014a). Working people and the poor thus began to be labelled as "patriots" (Iglesias 2016a), while tax-evading billionaires and corrupt politicians became "an elite that uses the Spanish flag to hide its corruption" (Iglesias 2017). They are "enemies of Spain" (Iglesias 2015c) and "traitors of the patria" (Iglesias 2019b), "unworthy to even pronounce the word Spain or the world patria" (Iglesias 2016a). It is not to the elite, but to the humble people that the patria belongs (Errejón 2017a). As Íñigo Errejón, a founding member of Podemos, remembers:

> from the beginning, a distinctive feature of Podemos was its social and democratic patriotism, synthesized in the slogan "the patria is the people", of clear national-popular resonance. This was radically innovative in Spain since the end of the dictatorship, and was harshly criticised by the Left who accused Podemos of getting close to the extreme right – when in fact it was blocking its way. (Errejón 2020)

As he explains, this resignification of Spanish identity served to deny reactionary political forces "the opportunity to put forward, uncontested, their own view of what the country stands for" (Errejón and Mouffe 2016: 68). Progressive forces must hegemonize the terrain of national identification, Errejón insisted, or the reactionary forces will do it instead (Errejón 2018a, 2018b). Iglesias admitted that this would not come easily for them, because

> our political group [*the leftists]* lost a war [*the Spanish Civil War*], and when they lost a war they lost a country, and the country began to be associated with the Right, and when they take this away from you, when they take away from you a flag that can be used to name us all, they have taken much away from you. (Iglesias 2014b)

As Sarah Bienzobas, founding member of Podemos and head of Podemos' graphic team in 2014, says while remembering the early days of the party, this was a difficult task even at the individual level, since most of Podemos founders were people who, politically, grew up in the post-Francoist radical Left and had thus internalised its hostility towards the nation. As she recalls,

> sometimes we were kidding about that among us, calling each other "Spaniard" as a joke, something that we had never done before. We believed that the choice of claiming patriotism was right, it was something necessary, apt to open new political opportunities for us. Yet, I imagine that there were moments when those of us who had to talk in public must had thought "my god, what I've gotten myself into now!". [ES-INT.3]

Despite the difficulties, Pablo Iglesias and most of the party leadership was now convinced that this was a necessary and important part of the populist project that Podemos aimed to put forward. In order for Podemos to perform a politics centred on the idea of 'the people', national identity had to be wrested from the grasp of the Right and reframed with different values (Errejón 2017a; Iglesias 2014b), in line with the idea of "Spain as a country of the People against the antipatriotic elites" (Errejón 2017b).

As this indicates, nationalism has been embedded in the party's populist strategy since the beginning. Podemos' leaders used a dichotomic division between the people and the elite as a calculated discursive strategy, and, in order to strengthen this populist strategy, they made full use of nationalism. Thus, the nationalist elements of Podemos' discourse are not traces of banal nationalism, but they are intentionally used by the party's goal-oriented political leadership as a means to reinforce their populist project and their political legitimisation. This finding is consistent with Finlayson's claim that nationalism can be a key part of an actor's political legitimation strategy, because it provides fixity and legitimacy to specific values, linking them to the apparently 'natural' nation (Finlayson 1998b, 103) (see section 2.2).

5.2.2 What type of patriotism does Podemos embrace?

As explained in the theoretical framework (Chapter 2), nationalism is not 'univocal': there is not one unique way of praising national belonging. It is therefore not enough to say that Podemos embraced patriotism, or that it did so as part of its populist strategy, but we also need to understand *what kind* of patriotism has Podemos embraced – what image of the nation it performs.

First of all, it is relevant to notice that it is a kind of patriotism that relates to morality and emotions. The emotion of pride plays a central role: it is constantly used to articulate another idea of nationality. In fact, the analysis of the architectonics of the discourse indicates the existence of a constant pattern in how Iglesias attempts to reimage Spain: he first declares his pride in Spain/patria/Spanishness and soon moves to his own definition of what Spain/patria/Spanishness *really* means. For instance, he is "proud of being a Spaniard" because in his patria "the best healthcare is public and looks after everyone" (Iglesias 2015c). This is the common pattern of articulation through which nationality is resignified with left-wing values by Podemos.

It can be easily seen through a simple quantitative analysis: if we take the speeches presented in section 5.2, we see that the adjective 'proud' is the most recurrent throughout the speeches, as Table 5 indicates, and, most importantly, that it is mainly associated with national belonging, as Table 6 shows.

Table 5. ***The most recurrent adjectives in Pablo Iglesias' speeches at the closing rally for the 2016 and 2019 general elections***[21]

2016		2019	
Adjectives	*Frequency*	*Adjectives*	*Frequency*
Proud (orgulloso/s)	**22**	**Proud (orgulloso/s)**	**11**
Social (social/es)	13	Spanish (español/a/es)	9
Political (politico/a/as)	12	Public (público/os/a/as)	9
First (primer/a/os)	5	Political (politico/a/as)	6
European (europeo/a/os/as)	5	Social (social/es)	5
Historic (histórico/a/os)	5		
Total adjectives of the speech	*166*	*Total adjectives of the speech*	*125*

Table 6. ***Nouns and adjectives that co-occur the most with the adjective 'proud' (orgulloso/s) in Pablo Iglesias' speeches at the closing rally for the 2016 and 2019 general elections***[22]

2016		2019	
Nouns and Adjectives	*Frequency*	*Nouns and Adjectives*	*Frequency*
Spain (España)	**6**	**Spanish (español/a/es)**	**5**
Patria (patria)	**4**	**Country (país)**	**3**
Social (social)	3	**Spain (España)**	**3**
Spanish (español)	**3**	Family (Familia/s)	2
Encounter (encuentro)	2	**Patria (patria)**	**2**
Europe (Europa)	2		
History (Historia)	2		
Institution (Institución)	2		
Struggle (Lucha)	2		
People (Pueblo)	2		
Total nouns and adjectives of the speech	*837*	*Total nouns and adjectives of the speech*	*573*

In triggering the emotional dimension of nationality, the party leadership has not merely drawn on the idea of 'constitutional patriotism';[23] it has, rather, opted for an idea of the national community perceived as something moral and capable of fuelling an emotional collective identity in the public sphere, in a similar vein to the Latin America's Bolivarian Left (Burbano de Lara 2015, 22–23). As Iglesias has provocatively argued, "being constitutional patriots is not so sexy after all" (Iglesias 2016b). Rather than simply defining their patriotism in constitutional terms, they did so in emotional and moral terms, thus associating it with the moral aspect of their populist strategy: the decent people are the nation, while the corrupt elite are not really Spaniards (Errejón 2018b).

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[21] All adjectives that recur at least 5 times are shown in the table.

[22] The frequency refers to the number of sentences in which the adjective 'proud' co-occurs. Only nouns and adjectives whose frequency is ≥2 are listed. Evidently, the division in sentences of an oral speech is open to question; therefore, the absolute value of the frequency should be taken with a grain of salt. However, the relative value of the frequency is highly indicative, and it clearly shows that Spain (España), Spanish (español) and patria (patria) are among the most co-occurring words for the adjective 'proud'.

[23] I refer here to the concept developed by Jürgen Habermas that places emphasis on collective identification to the norms, values and procedures that constitutes a liberal-democratic political community (Müller and Scheppele 2007).

However, this is an aspect where the analysis also indicates a certain degree of change over the years. Although I found scarce references to the Spanish constitution in the discourse of Podemos during the years 2014-2018, this changed in 2019. During the electoral campaign for the 2019 election, there was a novel attempt to include the constitution in their patriotic discourse. In the same way that they claimed to be proud of Spain and of being Spaniards, they also added pride in the Spanish constitution, seemingly taking a position of constitutional patriotism; but they did so without breaking from the emotional and moral dimensions of populism. In fact, the constitution was always framed as something that belongs to real patriots and to working people, while the Spanish Right and the corrupt elite were labelled not only as anti-patriots, but also as enemies of the constitution (Iglesias 2019a, 2019c, 2019d). This is one of the very few aspects where I encountered qualitative changes in the nationalism of Podemos. There is, however, a *quantitative* change: although the reduction of the discursive centrality of populism from 2016 onwards has initially left the centrality of patriotism untouched, from 2020 onwards there can be seen in the party discourse a gradual loss of saliency of patriotism, which does not disappear or change in its meanings, but rather tends to be less recurrent in the party narrative. The reasons of this reduction of saliency go beyond the analysis of this thesis, as most of the data collected are from previous years. However, given the strong link that exists in Podemos between populism and patriotism (which has been discussed in the previous section), it is reasonable to suppose that the reduction of the former has, although not immediately, led to a gradual reduction of the latter, too. Yet, this is a question where further research is still necessary.

This being said, the elements around which Podemos imagines the national community remained the same throughout the years I focused the empirical analysis on (2014-2020).[24] As the coding procedure of the discourses indicates, these elements can be grouped in specific semantic fields within which Podemos develops its signification of nationality (see section 3.3.1). Remarkably, the European dimension is not one of them. In all the texts I analysed, Podemos' criticisms of the European Union are never framed within a nationalist narrative. This finding is also confirmed by the responses I got in almost all interviews I conducted [with the sole exception of the ES-INT.7 interview]. Although Podemos does express some mild (and often-secondary) Eurosceptic stances, these are rarely linked to their patriotism; instead, they are usually framed through the traditional narrative of the radical Left's *alter-Europeanism* – as a call for a social Europe Union and for European solidarity, against the neoliberal policies of the EU (see Damiani and Viviani 2019; Holmes and Roder 2019; García Agustín 2021). In fact, Podemos' leadership always uses a patriotic rhetoric within the arena of national politics, in opposition to internal and not external adversaries. The frontiers of the imagined national community are thus internal rather than external: those who betray Spain are within the territorial boundaries of the country, not outside. When they talk about European affairs and criticise EU-led austerity policies, their patriotic rhetoric fades away and references to national identity become almost non-existent. This indicates that the supposed link between left-wing Euroscepticism and nationalism, as argued by Halikiopoulou et al., does not hold true in the case of Podemos (see Halikiopoulou, Nanou, and Vasilopoulou 2012).

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[24] Although this is what emerged from the analysis of the texts, I must say that sometimes conflicting opinions on the evolution of Podemos' patriotism emerged in the interviews I conducted. Yet, I reckon this has something to do with the ways different political stances affect memory in years of active militancy. For instance, Raul Camargo, an exponent of Podemos' internal left, who never particularly liked the idea of resignifying the concept of patria, told me that patriotism was not very present in Podemos at the beginning, while it became much more so in later years [ES-INT.6]. On the contrary, Nagua Alba, an exponent of the wing close to Errejón, very supportive of the populist strategy and the resignification of nationality, told me that patriotism was very present at the beginning, but lost its importance in the following years [ES-INT.5]. It is interesting to note that they both supported Podemos in the early years, only to become more critical (for different reasons) in the following years.

Rather than international politics, the three semantic fields around which the nationalism of Podemos emerges and acquires meanings are (a) welfare policies and solidarity; (b) history from below and people's mobilisation; and (c) cultural and national pluralism. I will now proceed to discuss each of them in turn.

5.2.2.1 (a) Welfare policies and solidarity

The attempt to establish a link between national pride and welfare policies is central to Podemos' definition of national identity. The welfare state is "the central axis" of their patriotism [ES-INT.1, ES-INT.12]. In this resignification, hospitals, schools, welfare policies and the social protection provided by the State become the material expression of the patria (Iglesias 2016a). As Luis Alegre, the former Podemos Head of Communications, explains, the welfare state has been an important part of the construction of Podemos' patriotism since the beginning [ES-INT.2]: patriots are "those who are willing to take care of each other and to generate a community in which we are not apathetic towards each other and we commit ourselves to take care of each other. This goes through the maintenance and expansion of public services such as the health and education systems" [ES-INT.2].

Accordingly, in his speech at the first party congress in 2014, Iglesias recalls that Podemos was criticised for using the word patria, but he defends this choice, insisting that speaking about patria means

> speaking about the dignity of the people […]. It is speaking about the need for schools where people could bring their children. It is speaking about the need for hospitals, the need for the best health professionals. It is being proud of your country, proud of having the best public schools, proud of having the best hospitals. (Iglesias 2014a)

Along a similar line, he frames the idea of patria in social terms during his speech at the 2015 party demonstration Marcha del Cambio. There, he defines the patria as the community which ensures that patients are treated in the best hospitals with the best medicines, and adds in outraged tones that "his patria" has been "humiliated" by "this scam that they call austerity" (Iglesias 2015a). Similarly, in the closing rally of the 2015 electoral campaign, he states that he wants to be the president of a country where any of its citizens, when s/he travels to the United States and sees how someone there can die for lack of health insurance, can feel proud of being a Spaniard, proud of being from a country where the best healthcare is public and looks after everyone (Iglesias 2015c).

In doing so, Podemos links its request for a greater intervention of the State in the economy – framing the State as a supportive and protective institution – together with a patriotic identification with the country, as exemplified by the slogan for the 2015 national electoral campaign, "a country with you" (*un pais contigo*). Commenting on right-wing activists who were screaming 'long live Spain' in the attempt to interrupt a Podemos meeting, he says: "of course, long live Spain! But defending Spain is defending public services. Defending Spain is to defend public companies, defending Spain is to defend public health, it is to defend the public pension system, it is to defend the dignity of workers. This is what defending Spain means, and no jingoist *de charanga y pandereta*[25] with the ideas of Margaret Thatcher, running dog of rich people, is going to give us lessons on what being a Spaniard means" (Iglesias 2019b).

Such a dichotomisation between true and false patriotism is recurrent in Podemos and it is often made around welfare claims: real patriotism is the one of "workers' rights" (Iglesias 2018a) and "making ends meet" (Iglesias 2018b); *false* patriotism is the one "of those who have the biggest flag" (Iglesias 2018b) and "have bank accounts in tax havens" (Iglesias 2016a). As Pablo Echenique (the former Podemos Head of Organisation) summarises, the party fights for "the patria of the fridge", against "the patria of the bracelet" (Echenique 2018), trying with this metaphor to symbolise the differences between a concrete and social patriotism, and a flaunted and hypocritical one.

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[25] A *charanga* is a small amateur musical band with wind and percussion, while a *pandereta* is a tambourine. *De charanga y pandereta* is an idiomatic Spanish expression that evokes an idea of Spain as folkloric, festive and frivolous.

5.2.2.2 (b) History from below and people's mobilisation

History from below is a type of historical narrative which accounts for historical events from the perspective of the ordinary people, the oppressed, the poor, or those who take part in social struggles (Thompson 1966). It is a form of narrative that Podemos uses frequently to present its idea of Spain. For example, when Iglesias delivers speeches to large audiences, references to heroic moments in the people's history of Spain often acquire a central position in the resignification of national identity (Iglesias 2015a, 2015c, 2016a). Popular events of Spanish history are thus explicitly connected to pride in and love for Spain. For instance, in 2016, as sources of national pride, he lists the popular uprising against Napoleon's occupation in 1808, the Spanish working class that defended social rights and suffrage, the Spanish women involved in the feminist struggles of the past, the fighters against fascism during the civil war, the contribution of Spaniards in liberating Paris during the Second World War, the resistance during the Francoist dictatorship and, lastly, the 15-M movement (Iglesias 2016a). The same pattern is traceable in his speech at the party demonstration *Marcha del Cambio* in 2015, in which he recalls with pride the popular uprising against Napoleon in 1808, the Second Spanish Republic, the resistance against Franco and the 15-M and explicitly links these historical moments to the greatness of Spain. This allows him to state that "we love our country, which has its roots in a history of struggle for dignity", against those "false patriots" who consider Spain as a "brand" and "believe that everything can be bought and sold" (Iglesias 2015a). This pattern is repeated at the closing rally of the 2015 electoral campaign, where once again he connects his 'pride in being a Spaniard' to the same list of historical events (Iglesias 2015c).

Furthermore, the link between national pride and the celebration of popular mobilisation is not only limited to historical and past events, but also refers to contemporary social movements. For instance, Podemos' leadership claims that the contemporary feminist movement is not only a bulwark against right-wing nationalists, but it is also an expression of the real Spain (Errejón 2018a) and it performs a republican and social patriotism (Iglesias 2018c). Along similar lines, people active in various social movements, from student movements to animal right movements, are defined as "heroes who build the patria" (Iglesias 2015c). In 2019, while attacking what he calls 'the hypocritical patriotism' of the Spanish Right, Iglesias claims that the true patriots are the women who demonstrate on International Women's Day, the young people who fight against climate change, and the pensioners and the workers who are mobilising to defend their rights (Iglesias 2019a, 2019d).

5.2.2.3 (c) Cultural and national pluralism

In specular opposition to Spanish right-wing nationalism, Podemos' nationalism aims at untying Spanishness from any link to monoculturalism. The real patria, Iglesias claims, is "the community that ensures that all citizens are protected and that national diversity is respected" (Iglesias 2015a). The unity of the nation is not undermined by the existence of different national groups inside its territory, but by "Spanish businessmen who own bank accounts in Switzerland and Andorra" and "have no other patria than their bank account" (Iglesias 2014a). According to Podemos, Spain is a "plurinational country" (ES-INT.1) – "a patria made out of different languages, cultures and feelings" (Iglesias 2016c), "a country of countries where citizens have different national attachments" (Iglesias 2016d). Accordingly, the political program of *Unidos Podemos* (the alliance between Podemos and United Left in the election of 2016) is defined by Iglesias as "social-democratic, patriotic and plurinational", and also recognises the right of Catalonia to hold an independence referendum (Podemos 2016, 13).

Whereas terms such as *patria*, *Spain* and *country* are central in the architectonics of Podemos' nationalist discourse, the term *nation* is never used, due to the party's recognition of the plurinationality of Spain. Podemos' frequent use of the term 'plurinational' resembles the debate over plurinationalism in Bolivia, which eventually led the Bolivian president, Evo Morales, to change the name of the country to the 'Plurinational State of Bolivia' in 2009. It is not surprising that Errejón was very familiar with the use of this term in Bolivian politics, since his Ph.D. thesis was about the struggle for hegemony in the first Morales government (Errejón 2012).

Furthermore, linguistic and cultural differences are not only acknowledged as defining features of Spain, but they are also presented by the Podemos leadership as sources of national pride [ES-INT.1, ES-INT.2]. Iglesias claims to be "proud of a diverse and plurinational Spain" (Iglesias 2016c): "I am proud to be Spanish and I like Spain. I like how Spain sounds in Basque, how it sounds in Spanish, how it sounds in Galician, how it sounds in Catalan. I like my country because it is diverse" (Iglesias 2019d).

When discussing policies towards minorities and/or migrants, the plurinationalist vein of Podemos' nationalism also goes beyond the recognition of different Iberian nationalities within Spain and includes people who are not native to the Iberian Peninsula. As Gerbaudo and Screti rightly emphasise, Podemos not only stresses the diversity of national cultures of the Spanish State but also endorses hospitality for migrants and refugees, opting for an inclusive understanding of the State with a welcoming attitude towards migrants (Gerbaudo and Screti 2017). According to Iglesias, patria is the community that protects all its citizens, regardless of the colour of their skin (Iglesias 2015c), and that looks after discriminated-against minorities, such as Roma children, through "inclusive patriotic policies" (Iglesias 2016a). A Spaniard is "everyone who lives and works in Spain, regardless of his origin, regardless of the colour of his skin, regardless of his mother tongue, regardless of the national identity he identifies with" (Iglesias 2018d). Therefore, patriotism can be shown by migrants too: as Iglesias claims, "there is more dignity and more patriotism in the nail of any migrant worker who goes to work every day for the life of his family than in all the MPs of the ultra-right" (Iglesias 2020b).

In endorsing this pluralist and inclusive conceptualisation of Spanish identity, Iglesias asserts that what really torments fascists is to see Senegalese and Bangladeshis proudly wrapped in the Spanish flag, and that fascists must not be permitted to have the privilege to lecture anyone on what it means to be a Spaniard (Iglesias 2018d). Similarly, the fact that Spain did not experience any substantial xenophobic backlash during the migrant crisis is framed as a source of national pride: "we must be very proud of being Spaniards", Iglesias claims in mid-2018, "because in Spain there has not been a xenophobic response to refugees and migration flows such as in other countries" (Iglesias 2018e).

5.2.2.4 A counter-hegemonic approach to nationality

The analysis indicates that Podemos is not simply referring to the naturalness of the nation for legitimising itself, but it is actively attempting to modify its meanings. As outlined in the theoretical section, nationalist politics can also challenge previous images of the national community and put forward new ones. This is exactly what Podemos does: it challenges the association of nationhood with right-wing values typical of Spanish politics and it proposes another identification with the nation along left-wing lines. As explained in section 5.2.1, this was seen by Podemos leadership as a way to hinder the electoral growth of the Right among popular classes, impeding rightists to put forward, uncontested, their own view of what the country stands for; and, at the same time, putting forward a progressive and inclusive idea of Spanish identity that "leftist people and people from other nationalities within Spain could feel part of" [ES-INT.5].

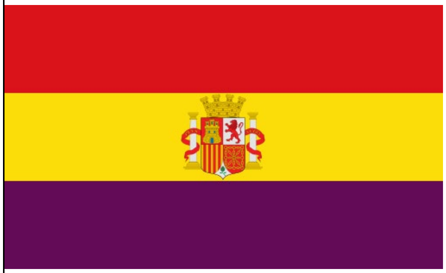
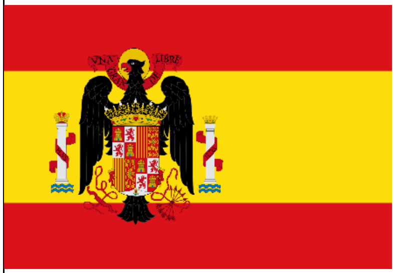
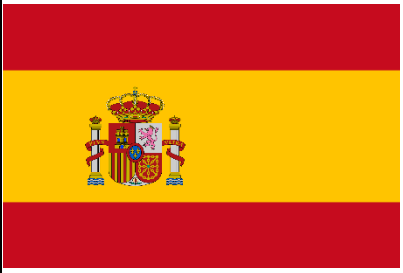
It is a type of *sui generis* nationalism that I contend can be readily defined as *counter-hegemonic*, because it it is openly conceived to shape an alternative form of national identification that challenges the dominant one on its own terrain. By defining it as *counter-hegemonic*, I borrow the Gramscian idea of hegemony (Cox 1983) and the reflexion on counter-hegemony developed in social movement and globalisation studies (e.g. de Sousa Santos 2002; 2003; Evans 2008; 2012). Although Gramsci never used the term 'counter-hegemony', this is generally used among neo-Gramscian scholars to describe attempts to challenge a hegemonic construct by opposing an alternative hegemony on its own ground (e.g. Pratt 2004). Exemplary of this idea is the concept of counter-hegemonic globalisation, which identifies a stance different from anti-globalisation, because it does not oppose globalisation per se, but instead aims to reverse all aspects of the dominant [neoliberal] globalisation, putting forward another form of globalisation that challenges the dominant one on its own terrain (Evans 2012). Along similar lines, Podemos' nationalism is counter-hegemonic because it deliberately attempts to put forward an idea of nationality that challenges the dominant [right-wing] one on its own terrain.

It is not surprising that such a counter-hegemonic approach emerges in Podemos as part of a populist strategy: populist actors often exploit folklore, popular culture and traditional identities for political purposes, through an abundant use of emotions and feelings (Mazzolini 2020), but within different configurations of meanings than those that are dominant (Caiani and Padoan 2020). In fact, the national community imagined by Podemos differs radically from the one typical of the Spanish Right. Through a resignification of national pride and belonging, Podemos' leadership constructs an image of Spain that refers to an inclusive welfare state, to people's mobilisation, and to a moral community that is not delimited by linguistic or ethnic particularisms.

5.2.3 A flagless patriotism

Imagining a national community is a complex thing. It is not something that can easily be reduced to written texts or public speeches. It requires the presence of collective identification symbols – a visual and symbolic dimension that fuels the emotional identification with the nation (Billig 1995). Certainly, even a passionate speech can warm hearts and inflame collective identification, but how far can it go without even a flag that embodies and symbolises that feeling? That was the problem that Podemos had to face since the beginning. If resignifying the idea of 'patria' seemed like a difficult task for the party leadership, resignifying the flag was even harder. This was due to the specificity of Spanish history: for the radical Left the only legitimate flag has traditionally been the one of the Spanish Republic (1936-1939), abandoned by Francoism and never reinstated with the democratic transition. According to the radical Left, the flag that emerged from the democratic transition of the 1970s was not only too reminiscent of the Francoist flag, but it was also the expression of the Spanish monarchy that they had always opposed (for a visual evolution of the Spanish flag see Figure 3). In a nutshell, it was a clear and deeply-rooted *right-wing* symbol.

Figure 3. ***Flags of Spain***

Republican flag	**Francoist flag**	**Current flag**
		
It was the official flag of Spain between 1931 and 1939 and the flag of the Spanish Republican government in exile until 1977. It is known in Spanish as *la tricolor*.	It was the official flag of Spain between 1939 and 1977 (with only a small change in the coat of arms in 1945).	It is the official flag of Spain since 1981, as it is defined in the Spanish Constitution of 1978. Its popular Spanish name is *la Rojigualda* (red-weld).

However, something changed in 2010, when Spain won the soccer World Cup. In that moment, the Spanish flag became for the first time a mass flag among Spanish people, losing its connection with the political tensions that it had always embodied. As César Rendueles remembers,

> when Spain won the Football World Cup in South Africa, suddenly a lot of us began to realise that we had a problem. Literally millions of people waving the Spanish flag, with their faces painted with the Spanish flag. For us it was like if millions of people from the far right had taken to the streets. […] Here in Madrid in the nineties if you saw a guy with a Spanish flag in the subway you knew you were in danger and you had to be very careful. Then suddenly you see millions of people with the very same flag that scared my generation! But these people were not skinheads, they were normal people very excited that their national team had won. There is an anecdote that Miguel Urbán [a *leading figure of Anticapitalsitas*] tells a lot: he lived in Lavapiés, which is a traditionally leftist neighbourhood in Madrid, where almost nobody celebrated the World Cup, and there was not a single Spanish flag in the street. Then at 11 PM he suddenly heard through the window "Spain, Spain" and saw two hundred people waving the Spanish flag ... it was the Senegalese community! Two hundred black people walking through Lavapiés celebrating Spain. They were the only ones in Lavapiés to celebrate the victory of the Spanish team. [ES-INT.11]

Various members of Podemos with whom I spoke during my fieldwork in Spain remembered this event as an important moment in their personal political evolution. As Luis Alegre, the former Podemos Head of Communications, recalls,

> it is a decisive moment because for the first time the flag of Spain becomes the flag of all, without exclusions. It is one of the few relevant moments in which the flag stopped being used as a flag against one another and became everyone's flag. [ES-INT.2]

Pablo Iglesias too has frequently remembered when, for celebrating Spain's victory in the World Cup, he decided to take to the streets with the republican flag together with few of his comrades, and there he realised how ridiculous they were looking: the people in the street were celebrating all together using the monarchical flag, including numerous immigrant people who lived in Spain, and Iglesias and his friends remained at the margins waving a flag that many people there did not even know (Iglesias 2014b).

In a way, the Spanish victory in the World Cup worked as a minor *critical juncture* (Capoccia 2016) for many Spanish left-wing people, forcing them to reconsider their opinions on the national flag. In sum, it made Podemos future leadership realise two things. First, the republican flag was not an emotionally-charged symbol anymore and it made little sense to keep claiming it, as the traditional radical Left had been doing until that moment. Second, that the current Spanish flag had been (partially) losing its association with far-right ideologies among the Spanish people. Yet, this fact did not imply that it could then be resignified. It was still the symbol of the Spanish monarchy, as well as deeply rejected by virtually any radical left militant, including the militancy of Podemos. As Nagua Alba explains:

> That is the flag that the Franco regime used and we have had many times debates about whether that flag could be resignified or not, and if a new flag was needed or not, but we were aware that it would be quite impossible to do. It is a problem that has not actually been solved. [ES-INT.5]

Consequently, at the beginning Podemos preferred to leave the question of 'monarchy vs. republic' in the background of its discourse, as well as the respective flags, avoiding the use of both. In light of my participant observation in several Podemos events in the years 2015-2019, I can confirm that the monarchy flag was very rare but not non-existent, while the republican flag was certainly more present and frequent, but still both could be seen only in the crowd.[26] Neither of the two was ever used on stage by the organisers. As Sarah Bienzobas insisted, this has been a clear weakness of Podemos' patriotism, but also one that could not be easily solved:

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[26] As explained in the methodological chapter, I have participated as an observer in several Podemos events, in Madrid and Barcelona. The first was *La Marcha del Cambio*, in Madrid, on January 31, 2015; the last was *Vuelve* on March 23, 2019, also in Madrid.

> You don't have a flag, you don't have a hymn... you don't have anything. You have nothing that national identities are built on. You go to Catalonia and they make *castelleres*, they take out the same flag, they all sing the same song. They have their national and popular holidays. Here the national holiday is on October 12 and the Left refuses to celebrate it. The only alternative to all this is what the Left has done many times: to raise the flag of the old Republic. But this only adds a problem to the problem, because most of the people do not recognise it either. That flag does not work if you want to build up a project that aspires to be prevailing in the country. [ES-INT.3]

Recently, and especially with the entry of Podemos into the Spanish government in 2020, the situation has partly changed. On the one hand, the Spanish flag became slightly more frequent in Podemos events, if only for the institutional role of various exponents of Podemos that imposes the presence of the flag in public communications. On the other hand, Podemos has become much more explicitly republican and openly claims a republican horizon for the country (but without using the republican flag) (Iglesias 2020a).

The symbolic dimension of Spanish patriotism has thus continued to be a core limit for Podemos and it is a problem that the leadership never fully resolved. On a rhetorical level, this gap between the abundance of patriotic references and the absence of national symbolism (first and foremost the flag) is tentatively justified by Podemos leadership by claiming that it is the *meaning* of patria that matters for them, whereas for the Right it is only the *symbol*. In saying so, they attempt to highlight the difference between substance (meanings) and appearance (symbols) with regard to the nation, praising the former and criticising the latter. As Echenique puts it,

> we are not proud of the symbols as such but of what the symbols represent or should represent. For the corrupt and for those who defend the privileges of the privileged [...] the patria is only the symbols. [...] [But the patria] is an idea that threatens its privileges and its capacity to plunder. That is why they decide to […] empty it of content and turn it into a product of marketing. (Echenique 2018)

5.3 Old and New Competitors

Up until now I have centred the analysis almost exclusively on Podemos, being, as argued at the beginning of this chapter, the main actor of the contemporary Spanish radical Left. But it certainly is not the only one: a typical feature of the European radical Left is its fragmentation in numerous different political subjects (March and Keith 2016) and Spain is no exception. Among the numerous subjects *of* (or *coming from*) the radical Left, I would like to briefly address the three most relevant ones, before concluding this chapter. An in-depth analysis of these three political actors goes beyond the scope of this section, in which I will only state their position on national identity, and briefly illustrate how they differ from Podemos in this regard.

The first is United Left (*Izquierda Unida*, hereafter IU), which has been the main subject of the Spanish radical Left, until it was overshadowed by the growth of Podemos. However, it managed to survive, and from 2016 onwards it became an organic ally of Podemos at the national level (in the electoral coalition *Unidas Podemos*). The second is *Anticapitalistas* (Anticapitalists), in 2014 one of the founders of Podemos (with the former name of *Izquierda Anticapitalista*), who then became increasingly critical of the party leadership, until its official withdrawal from the party in 2020. The third is *Más País* (More Country), the party founded by the number two of Podemos, Íñigo Errejón, who entered on a collision course with the Iglesias leadership and definitively left Podemos in 2019, to then create *Más País*, which however did not take off in the elections, taking only 2.41% of the votes in 2019. Simplifying as much as possible, we could say that IU is a traditional Eurocommunist force – 'democratic socialist', according to the classification of March and Keith (see section 2.3) – albeit with different tendencies within it, since IU was born as an aggregator of various forces, with the Spanish Communist Party as the dominant actor. *Anticapitalistas*, on the other hand, is an anti-capitalist and movementist force, which comes from the Trotskyist tradition[27] and, when it was part of Podemos, it regularly positioned itself on its left. Finally, *Más País* is a party that aims to recover a transversal and national-popular spirit inspired by the populist hypothesis that characterised the first years of Podemos, and it was lunched by former exponents of Podemos who sided with Íñigo Errejón.

5.3.1 Izquierda Unida

As noted in section 5.1, the Spanish radical Left increasingly rejected Spanish national identity from late Francoism onwards and this can be perfectly seen in *Izquierda Unida* (IU), the traditional Spanish radical left party. César Rendueles notes how this is evident even in the name itself of the party:

> [Spanish identity] was such an uncomfortable topic that we literally quit using the word

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[27] It is a member of the Fourth International, the one usually referred as the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

> Spain.... 'United Left': it was the Communist Party of *Spain* and now it is the United Left and the word Spain does not appear anywhere anymore. We talk about the Spanish State, we say 'this country', 'the peninsula' but we do not say Spain. [ES-INT.11]

Yet, within IU there is also a part of old militants that does not necessarily refuse Spanish identity, because it still associates it to the Republican Spanish identity and thus has no problem pronouncing the world 'Spain' [ES-INT.9]. This is a more traditional workerist Left, closer to the legacy of the Spanish Communist Party and who did not incorporate the discourse of Spain's peripheral nationalisms. This faction

> is willing to dispute the idea of Spain a little bit, it is very hostile to the independentist movements in Spain, very hostile, to the point that when you ask what perception they have of the independentist movements they are as critical as the Right, even though they later vote for *Izquerda Unida*. So, there is a generational gap, they are older people, and their idea of nationality is the republican one, they do not claim the current Spanish flag but the republican flag. [ES-INT.11]

Sira Rego, MP of IU at the European Parliament (2019-ongoing), agrees that this is an issue on which in fact generational differences clearly emerge. As she explains,

> when we [members of IU], for example, talk to survivors of the Civil War, from the Communist Party, and they identify as patriots, it makes it very difficult for us to reject and condemn this. That is to say, curiously, that younger generations are more attached to the political position of older people, than perhaps the intermediate generations that have lived through the transition and completely refuses Spanish identity. [ES-INT.4]

She goes on saying that the discussion on nationality is actually an open one within IU, and she recognises that the outbreak of Podemos and its use of patriotism positively forced her party to reflect on it:

> we must recognise that Podemos opens many debates that we have not addressed in the past and that are necessary. And in that sense, I am very grateful to them because they have also allowed the window to be widened a bit. And this is always interesting. I think they put the question of national identity on the agenda and although I personally do not share many of the positions they have […], I do believe they give an opportunity for us on the left to reposition ourselves in the country. […] We have also had a small *catharsis* within *Izquierda Unida*, deciding that now we are not going to leave the signifier Spain to the Right and the extreme Right, but we can also put forward our different notion of Spain. [ES-INT.4]

After allying with Podemos, the leadership of the party (that represents the internal faction closer to Podemos) has at times shyly started using Spanish identity in its speeches, with a narrative virtually identical to Podemos’ one, although without any bold or recurrent patriotic rhetoric. If in early 2016 Alberto Garzón, the current national leader of IU, claimed that “I don’t believe in any patria […] The poor have no country” (Garzón 2016), in 2019 he said:

> I am proud of my country, which for me is Spain, because I am proud of the women who came out on March 8th. I am proud of the values and principles of the majority of this country, which is one of the most advanced in all of Europe, in defence of civil rights, in defence of same-sex marriage, in defence of aid to migrants. I think this is patria: public health, public education, public pensions. (Garzón 2019)

And then went on attacking the false patriotism of the right-wing Partido Popular:

> those people who wear the flag of Spain on their bracelets but then hold the bank account in Switzerland… [...] Their patria is a fetish, it is a lie, it is only for the wealthiest. […] They are breaking up Spain. (Garzón 2019)

5.3.2 Anticapitalistas

The patriotic rhetoric of Podemos has not been adopted by *Anticapitalistas*, neither when they were part of Podemos nor after they left the party in 2020 (Fernández and Urbán 2020). And, in general, Spanish identity is hardly present in the discourse of *Anticapitalistas* [ES-INT.8]. Criticising the patriotism of Podemos, Raul Camargo, a leading figure of the movement, says:

> The idea of patria is linked to a concept of national unity that does not exist in this country. Why have they tried to resignify the word patria and did not try to resignify the word Left, which is a much richer concept and where you can find allies? Or why haven’t they tried, for example, to resignify the concept of socialism that we see now is popular even in the United States? [ES-INT.6]

Similar to Podemos, however, they also do not use the republican flag very much. According to Camargo:

> The republican flag is not used much [*by us*], unlike for *Izquierda Unida* or *PCE*, where they do have a strong identity with that. No, neither do we [*similarly to Podemos*], the Anticapitalists do not use it either, because it is an old flag, although we respect it and we believe it is true that that flag was the democratic flag against which a group of fascists rose. Nor would we care if it would be the flag that Spain will have at some point, since we have no problem with it, but we believe that more than claiming the republican flag, what must be claimed is a confederal republicanism. […] And this differentiates us from some republican sectors that use that flag, but then they say “there is only one Republic of Spain”. [We want] a confederal model where nations join the

> future Spanish State through a process of dialogue, and only if they want to do so. […] The only flag that we like is the red flag, plus green and purple for environmentalism and feminism, which are our colours. [ES-INT.6]

Among different Spanish radical left groups, they are one of the most supportive of peripheral nationalisms, and have many political relations with radical leftist independentist movements, whose discourse they mirror at times (for instance, it is not uncommon to hear members of *Anticapitalistas* still using the expression 'Spanish State' rather than 'Spain'). As Jorge Sola said with a bit of irony, speaking of the Catalan question:

> *Anticapitalistas* was the only party that had believed the independence of Catalonia, when not even the Catalan nationalists believed it. Those of *Anticapitalistas* made a statement totally in favour of the declaration of independence that produced an internal crisis, with people within *Anticapitalistas* criticising the statement because it fully supported the declaration of independence without any reservations. [ES-INT.12]

Interestingly, their refusal of Spanish identity and their sympathy for peripheral national identities has at times led them to endorse a strong national-identitarian discourse based on peripheral national identities. This is for instance what happened in Andalusia, where Teresa Rodríguez – a leading figure of *Anticapitalistas*, as well as Secretary-General of *Podemos Andalucía* (2014-2020) and currently the leader of *Adelante Andalucía* – has highly drown from Andalusian identity in her speeches, fighting for "a clearly-leftist Andalusianism" (Rodríguez 2020). In the Andalusian election of 2018, the electoral campaign of *Adelante Andalucía* – that had Rodríguez as candidate for President of the Regional Government of Andalusia – made full use of the Andalusian national flag, the Andalusian colours and the Andalusian national hymn, and references to "the Andalusian people" and to "the pride for being Andalusian" were abundant (Rodríguez 2018), as if they were trying to seize the *andalucismo* for themselves (Asuar Gallego 2018), in a very similar way as Podemos has done with Spanish identity.

5.3.3 Más País

Recalling the early years of Podemos and criticising its evolution, Errejón, who left Podemos in 2019 and founded *Más País* in the same year, says:

> Looking back on it today, we can say that there were two intellectual and political currents that coexisted in Podemos and fought an intellectual and political dispute over the orientation of the project: a national-popular soul and a leftist soul. Significantly, the two were both cornered and purged until they both found themselves out of Unidos

> Podemos, as it is the case nowadays [*he is referring to Más País and Anticapitalistas*]. As in other cases in history, the current leadership – biographically and politically formed in the PCE and its youth movement, and promoted as a clique of Iglesias – oscillated between both poles with more intellectual easiness and surely with more skill in party life, subordinating their positions to the maximization of internal power: unlike the other two, its difference with the traditional left was not so much strategic but rather "communicative" and about who should be the ones in charge. (Errejón 2020)

According to Errejón, at the beginning Podemos was positively able to build "a typically populist and non-leftist identity, filling it with democratic, patriotic and social justice content, rather than racist or reactionary", but later the party "turned away from the early 'national-popular' hypothesis and from its transversal discourse, and (re)located itself in the identitarian space of the traditional Spanish Left", and this had also the effect to produce "a loss in the capacity of resignifying the Spanish national identity" (Errejón 2020).

Yet, if we look at more recent discourses of Podemos and Pablo Iglesias, as done in section 5.2, in reality we see that the national-popular dimension has not disappeared, but has rather changed its role: it went from being a central element of a transversal populist project – where the national popular was almost its 'ideology', according to the political scientist Javier Franzé (see section 5.2.1) – to become the communicative vehicle of an openly leftist project, as in the *Unidas Podemos*' discourse.

The aim of *Más País* is thus to get back to the former use of a national-popular discourse, which was typical of the first Podemos. They insist in using a *less leftist* and *more transversal* national-popular discourse, while at the same time trying to connect it to the most recent environmentalist and feminist claims. According to Errejón, these new instances – feminism and environmentalism – are central for constructing an up-to-date national-popular discourse: they serve to "*translate in terms of the future* the national-popular as a proposal to rebuild the community, in order to take care of ourselves and the planet, against disruptive, predatory and unsustainable neoliberalism" (Errejón 2020).

5.4 Summary

This chapter presented the first case study: the Spanish radical Left and its relation with national identity. As explained, Francisco Franco, in his more than thirty years of fascist dictatorship (1939-1975), was very successful in seizing the idea of 'Spain', articulating it with far-right political values, monoculturalism and administrative centralism, and ultimately with the regime itself. Despite the fact that during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) patriotic claims and references to the «patria» were frequent within the anti-fascist and leftist Republican front, from the late years of Franco's regime onwards the radical Left began to avoid any positive reference to Spanish national identity or to Spanish patriotism in its discourse. With the democratic transition (1975-78), the profound connection between Spanishness and Francoism initially survived, but over the years nationality gradually lost its automatic association with Francoism and began to be normalised in public and political discourse, However, such a sedimentation of meanings survived within the radical Left milieu, who maintained its deeply-felt antipathy towards Spanish identity.

The turning point came in 2014, with the breakthrough of a new radical left populist party, Podemos. Although most of Podemos leaders had shared the same radical Left's refusal of nationality (with the party leader Pablo Iglesias still claiming a year before founding Podemos that he personally could not even pronounce the word 'Spain'), by 2014 they had reconsidered their position, arguing that it is not possible to win your country over to your political project without laying claim to national belonging. Since the foundation of Podemos in 2014, Iglesias and the party's other leaders thus started to draw from a national-popular vocabulary and to openly reclaim state-wide patriotism for their party. They frequently labelled their politics as patriotic and repeatedly claimed to be proud of Spain and of them being Spaniards, while labelling political adversaries (from tax-evading businessmen to corrupt politicians) as 'enemies of the fatherland' and 'anti-patriots', unworthy to even pronounce the name of the country. Inspired by the theory and practice of populism, Podemos' leaders used a dichotomic division between the people and the elite as a calculated discursive strategy, and, in order to strengthen it, they embraced patriotism. Thus, the nationalist elements of Podemos' discourse are not traces of banal nationalism, but they were intentionally used by the party's goal-oriented political leadership as a means to reinforce their populist project and their political legitimisation – they deliberately embedded patriotism in the party populist strategy. However, Podemos has not simply referred to the naturalness of the nation for legitimising itself, but it has actively attempted to modify its meanings. As outlined in the theoretical chapter, nationalist politics can also challenge previous images of the national community and put forward new ones. This is exactly what Podemos did: it challenged the association of nationhood with right-wing values, and it proposed another identification with the nation along left-wing lines. It is a type of patriotism that can be readily defined as counter-hegemonic, because it was openly conceived to shape an alternative form of national identification capable of challenging the dominant one on its own terrain. In fact, the national community imagined by Podemos differs radically from the one typical of the Spanish Right. As the analysis shows, through a resignification of national pride and belonging, Podemos leadership attempted to construct an image of Spain that refers to an inclusive welfare state, to people's mobilisation and to a moral community that is not delimited by lingual or ethnic particularisms.

As for secondary actors under empirical scrutiny, *Izquierda Unida* gradually drew near to Podemos' positions, but without displaying any bold patriotic rhetoric; *Anticapitalistas* maintained the hostility for Spanish national identity typical of the Spanish radical Left (although it endorsed peripheral national identities); and *Más País* tried to revamp the national-popular vocabulary that characterised the Podemos project.

6. THE ITALIAN CASE. ITALY’S WHEEZING LEFT BETWEEN THE SHADOW OF ITS PAST AND NEW CHALLENGES

> *Io appartengo all’Internazionale da quando servivo la Repubblica del Rio Grande e di Montevideo, cioè molto prima di essersi costituita in Europa tale Società; ho fatto atto pubblico di appartenere alla stessa in Francia nell’ultima guerra. E se avessi saputo in febbraio, quando lasciai l'Assemblea di Bordeaux, ciocché in marzo doveva aver luogo a Parigi, io certamente mi sarei recato in quella capitale per propugnarvi la causa della giustizia.*
>
> **Giuseppe Garibaldi** (Letter to G. Pallavicino. 14 November 1871)

This chapter presents the second case study of the research: the Italian radical Left. As discussed in Chapter 2, the investigation conducted in this empirical chapter is based on *elite* and *expert* interviews; discourse analysis on leaders’ speeches and party documents; and participant observation. Primary data are reinforced by drawing on secondary literature, especially as regards to history, and by using visual analysis to corroborate findings. In light of the fact that up to this day there is no academic study on the issue of nationality in the contemporary Italian radical Left, the analysis provided in this chapter must be understood as primarily exploratory.

In order to facilitate the reading of the chapter, Table 7 summarises the main Italian parties analysed.

Table 7. *Radical left parties in Italy*

Party name	**Year of Foundation**	**Party typology (indicative)**	**Electoral strength (selection)**
Partito della Rifondazione Comunista-Sinistra Europea or simply *Rifondazione* (Communist Refoundation Party,	1991	Democratic socialist	8,57% at 1996 national election, 5,84% at 2006 national election (then it never contested national election with its own symbol anymore)

PRC)			
Potere al Popolo! (Power to the People!, PAP)	2017	Revolutionary extreme Left / Left-populist	1,13% at 2018 national election (with PRC, PCI and *Sinistra Anticapitalista* as part of the party)
Partito Comunista (Communist Party, PC)	2009 (as *Comunisti – Sinistra Popolare*) 2012 (as *Comunisti Sinistra Popolare – Partito Comunista*) 2014	Conservative communist (Stalinist)	0,88% at 2019 European election
Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian Communist Party, PCI)[28]	1998 (as *Partito dei Comunisti Italiani*) 2014 (as *Partito Comunista d'Italia*) 2016 (as *Partito Comunista Italiano*)	Reform Communist	Never contested alone at national elections (2,32% as *Partito dei Comunisti Italiani* in 2006)
Sinistra Anticapitalista (Anticapitalist Left)	2007 (as *Sinistra Critica*) 2013	Revolutionary extreme Left (Trotskyist)	Never contested alone at national elections (0,46% in 2008 as *Sinistra Critica*)

The chapter proceeds as follows:

The first section (6.1) briefly maps the various actors involved. It provides an overview on the contemporary Italian radical Left and introduces the problem of national identity.

The second section (6.2) scrutinises how the Italian radical Left has related to nationality from the Second World War until recent years, centring the focus on how the legacy of different moments of the past still impacts on contemporary radical left actors.

The third section (6.3) deepens the analysis by looking at how the radical Left has responded to new challenges related to national belonging, namely the debate on European integration, the defence of the Italian constitution and the growing support for the nationalist Right among popular classes.

The Conclusion (6.4) summarises the empirical findings of this chapter.

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[28] Not to be confused with the historic Italian Communist Party (1921-1991), which is also abbreviated as PCI.

6.1 What's Left of the Italian Radical Left?

Recent academic studies centred on the radical Left in Europe most frequently leave Italy out of the analysis (see, for instance: March and Keith 2016; Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis 2019; Charalambous and Ioannou 2020). The rare times when the contemporary Italian radical left is actually scrutinised in academic works, it is either done by scholars who are themselves politicians from the Italian radical left (e.g. Forenza 2015), or presented with titles that leave no room for doubt, such as "The Italian radical left. The story of a failure" (Chiocchetti 2017, 123–61). The reason for this academic disinterest arguably reflects the electoral difficulties that the Italian radical Left currently faces. In the last national (2018) and European (2019) election, no Italian radical left party has won any parliamentary seat.[29]

This is in sharp contrast with Italy's recent history, where the Italian Communist Party, which existed from 1921 to 1991 (*Partito Comunista Italiano*, hereafter PCI), was the strongest communist party in Western Europe during the Cold War (it reached up to 34% of the votes in 1976), boasting a strong network of cultural organisations; and where the radical Left continued to show political energy and intellectual vitality also after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It was the Italian radical Left who gave impetus to European coordination among leftist parties, founding the Party of the European Left in 2004 (Dunphy and March 2013) and it also played an important role in the transnational alter-globalist movement, especially from 1999 to 2004 (Broder 2016, 80). Back then, many European leftists were looking at the Italian radical Left as a positive point of reference. For instance, Pablo Iglesias declared that "politically, I am an Italian. My political head was made in Italy" (Iglesias 2016e). Besides its activism on the European and international front, the Italian radical Left had also carved out a role in national institutions. As Chiocchetti recalls, in the nineties and the noughties "its electoral strength fluctuated around mid-range levels, but was big enough to make it a vital element for the formation of centre-left majorities and entrusted it with a disproportionate amount of governmental strength at both regional and national levels" (Chiocchetti 2017, 123).

But all this would soon be over: since the late 2000s, the Italian radical Left "failed to consolidate its positions" and "progressively fell prey to fragmentation, strategic helplessness, and political marginality” (Chiocchetti 2017, 123). In fact, in Italy the radical Left “struggled more than in other countries with typical dilemmas on identity and strategy” and was torn by political disputes over “the relationship with the moderate left”, favoring party splits and party fragmentation (Chiocchetti 2017, 136). Following the electoral debacle of 2008, it entered into a phase of decreasing electoral strength and increasing party fragmentation that has continued to worsen to this day. Understanding why this happened is not the goal of this thesis (for an analysis of the electoral collapse of the Italian radical left, see: Broder 2016; Chiocchetti 2017, 123–61); yet, it is necessary to briefly present its actual fragmentation into several minor parties in order to advance the analysis of its relation with nationality. Contrarily to Spain and Portugal (see Chapter 5 and 7) in Italy there are no definite leading parties within the radical Left, and actors often change alliances and names.

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[29] The left-wing party *Sinistra Italiana* actually holds 3 MPs, elected in 2018 within a centre-left electoral alliance called *Liberi e Uguali*, which today only exists as a parliamentary group. *Sinistra Italiana* comes from *SEL*, now dissolved, which was a split of the more moderate wing of the PRC. According to the categorisation set out in chapter 2, *Sinistra Italiana* – which is fully integrated in the orbit of the centre left – does not fit the status of 'radical left party', and thus it is not analysed in this chapter.

An episode from the field research I conducted in 2019 can help give an idea of how the Italian radical Left shattered into pieces and it provides a sketched picture of the actors in play. In December 2019, several radical left actors gathered all together in a meeting they named “Unitary national assembly of the opposition left” (*Assemblea nazionale unitaria delle sinistre d’opposizione*), where I was granted access as an academic researcher. The event was organised by the leaders of Anticapitalist Left (*Sinistra Anticapitalista,* a new-left Trotskyist party), Workers’ Communist Party (*Partito Comunista dei Lavoratori*, a far-left Trotskyist party) and Italian Communist Party[30] (*Partito Comunista Italiano,* a traditional communist party based on twentieth-century communism). The meeting took place in an underground theatre in Rome, filled with the different parties’ red flags for the occasion. The gathering aimed at settling some loose coordination for future political campaigns, although the organisers stated clearly that the assembly “will not be the embryo of an electoral alliance or a new political party” (Ferrando 2019). Virtually all of Italy’s national radical left parties attended,[31] and the two most structured parties were also present with their national leaders: Communist Refoundation Party (*Partito della Rifondazione Comunista*, or simply *Rifondazione*, hereafter PRC) and Power to the People! (*Potere al Popolo!*, hereafter PAP). Before continuing with the recall of this episode from the field research, I briefly present here these two parties, as they are the most analysed actors in this chapter.

The PRC is the oldest Italian radical left party, founded in 1991 by those within the PCI opposing the dissolution of that party; and by Proletarian Democracy (*Democrazia Proletaria*), a party of the *new left* that was at the left of the PCI and dissolved in 1991 to join the nascent PRC (de Nardis 2011). At the beginning, the PRC represented "the great hope of the European left" (Broder 2016, 80): a radical left party *par excellence*, inserted in the communist tradition but close to the demands of new social movements, from environmentalism to feminism (March 2011, 57). Although it never achieved double-digit results at national elections, it always had a good patrol of parliamentarians from 1992 to 2008, and, until 2011, also had a national daily newspaper, *Liberazione*. Yet, despite a relative electoral success in the first 15 years of existence, since 2008 it has been outside the Italian parliament and has never again participated in national elections with its own symbol alone, but within always-new electoral coalitions, none of them effective in exceeding the threshold and bringing the party back to the national parliament.[32]

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[30] Not to be confused with the historical Italian Communist Party, dissolved in 1991. This one emerged in 2016 from the merger of the Communist Party of Italy (*PCdI*) – up to 2014 known as Party of Italian Communists (*PdCI*) – with splinters from the PRC and minor groups.

[31] With the exception of Communist Party (*Partito Comunista*), Left Class Revolution (*Sinistra Classe Rivoluzione*) and Party of Communist Alternative (*Partito di Alternativa Comunista*).

PAP was launched in 2017 by grassroots activists from a squatted social centre in Naples, *Ex OPG Je so' pazzo,* that aimed at creating a "popular, grassroots, young, female, internationalist, anti-fascist and anti-racist list" in order to participate in the national elections of 2018 (PAP 2017). It was initially conceived as a joint list composed by a plurality of radical left organisations and parties, including PRC, Anticapitalist Left and Italian Communist Party, who were all part of PAP during the campaign for the 2018 elections. Yet, they all broke with PAP and left the group at different times in the following months after the 2018 elections, where the list only reached 1.13% of the votes and failed to elect any MP. The breakup, especially with the PRC, was quite hostile, producing public accusations and resentments on both sides (Forenza 2018, Prinzi 2018). Despite the abandonment of almost all the participating parties, PAP has continued to exist and, under the leadership of Naples social centre's activists, it soon moved from a united electoral list to a political party, with a focus on grassroots mobilisation.

Going back to my participant observation at the unitary assembly of 2019 in Rome, shortly before the meeting began, I exchanged a few words with the person sitting next to me, who presented himself as a member of the Workers' Communist Party. Since I said that I was there as a university researcher, he asked me if I knew who the other two people on the stage with his party leader were. They were the respective leaders of the other two parties who launched and organised the event together with his party, but he did not know them. Once the event started, the leader of Anticapitalist Left was in charge of moderating the talk and giving the floor to the various speakers. Yet, not even the moderator himself properly knew all the actors participating and their respective acronyms, and in his introduction, he misspelled the name of the co-organising party, calling it Communist Party instead of Italian Communist Party (the Communist Party does exist, but had refused to participate at the gathering). Later, he got some other acronyms wrong (for instance mixing the young federation of the Italian Communist Party with the one of PRC) to the point that, when giving the word to a minor Stalinist group – the Italian Marxist-Leninist Party – and misnaming it as "Leninist Communist Party", he added with gestured discomfort: "Did I say it right? I don't know".

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[32] The lists through which the PRC participated in national elections are "The Left the Rainbow" (2008), "Civil Revolution" (2013) and "Power to the people!" (2018). To them should be added the "Anticapitalist Communist List" (2009 European elections), "The Other Europe with Tsipras" (2014 European elections) and "La Sinistra" (2019 European elections). Of all these lists, only The Other Europe with Tsipras went just beyond the threshold, electing three MEPs.

This may seem just a colourful anecdote due to the encounter between numerous actors that are now politically irrelevant and frequently change not only alliances, but also their own party name, to the point that even their allies lose track of the changes (for instance the Italian Communist Party has changed its name three times in the last few years[33]). Yet, leaving aside some micro groups of extremists (such as the misnamed minor Stalinist party), most of these parties are actually led by politicians who were MPs in the past, when they were all member of PRC and the party was present in the national parliament and in many local and regional councils.[34] Remarkably, all three organising parties are in fact old splits of the same party, the PRC. In the words of Maurizio Acerbo, the current national leader of the PRC who also attended and spoke at the gathering, "it seemed to me to be in a PRC meeting of about 15 years ago, when we were all part of the same party" [IT-INT.6].

6.1.1 What about the nation?

The image of the Italian radical Left sketched above is the one of a party family that recently shattered into pieces, being increasingly pushed to the margins of Italy's politics, despite its past political and cultural relevance. In the words of Broder, the last two decades "ha[ve] been characterised by the slow-motion car crash of the radical left, increasingly reduced to a kind of 'people of the Left' subculture that lacks a clear positive vision of Italy's future" (Broder 2016, 85). This political marginality is likely to have repercussions also on the relationship with national identity, given that this identity, however cultural and territorial it might be, is also closely linked to the idea of *politically* belonging to the country, of being part of a public sphere and a national political framework (Miller 2020, 182–83) – of which the radical Left now finds itself at the fringes.

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[33] See footnote 29.

[34] In 2006, the Italian radical Left had 56 MPs, 41 for the PRC and 17 for the Party of Italian Communists – an old split of the PRC, now rebranded as the Italian Communist Party.

Although there is no literature on this, it is not hard to imagine that the gradual sliding of the Italian radical Left towards a 'people of the Left' subculture, outside mainstream politics, favoured a detachment of radical Left militants from Italian national identity. To put it bluntly, if a radical Left activist is pushed to the margins of Italian political life, no longer belonging to the Italian public sphere, and, on top of that, Italianness is brandished by the Right against migrants and ethnic minorities, it is unluckily that s/he would proudly feel Italian. Yet, this issue points at a psychological dimension of activism that is difficult to trace within the methodological perimeter of this research project, and it indicates a research area that – although promising – goes partly beyond the scope of this thesis.

As the analysis provided in this chapter will disclose, it is a matter of fact that today's Italian radical Left is much more dismissive of Italianness than it used to be in the past, when it was politically stronger, and that there has been a gradual evolution over the years from a more national-popular character towards a primarily cosmopolitan one. A simple quantitative analysis can help give a first sense of its current detachment from nationality: as Table 8 illustrates, in the speeches of Viola Carofalo (leader of PAP, 2017-2021) and Maurizio Acerbo (leader of PRC, 2017-ongoing) at the PAP closing really for the 2018 national election, national signifiers (such as terms related to nationality or the country) are simply not used, and thus play no role in the architectonics of their discourse (Carofalo 2018b; Acerbo 2018).

Table 8. ***National signifiers in Viola Carofalo (PAP) and Maurizio Acerbo (PRC)'s speeches at the PAP closing rally for the 2018 national election***

Viola Carofalo (PAP)		**Maurizo Acerbo (PRC)**	
Terms	*Frequency*	*Terms*	*Frequency*
Italy (Italia)	0	Italy (Italia)	**1**
Italian/s (Italiano/a/e/i)	0	Italian/s (Italiano/a/e/i)	0
Patria (patria)	0	Patria (patria)	0
Country (paese)	**1**	Country (paese)	**1**
People (popolo)*	0	People (popolo)*	0
Total words of the speech	*1692*	*Total words of the speech*	*1078*

* Excluding when the word is said in the party name (Power to the *People*). See also footnote 46 at page 147.

However, as the analysis carried out in this chapter will detail, the relation between nationality and the radical Left in Italy is more nuanced and less linear than this. In fact, the findings point at differences among parties and also records a return of patriotism within some minor groups. As the next section (6.2) illustrates, contemporary actors largely draw from the history of the Italian Left in the meanings they assign to nationality, but different actors tend to draw from diverse historical moments. Moreover, as it will be shown in the last section of this chapter (6.3), new political challenges related to national belonging have created new rifts over the nation within the radical Left, favouring further fragmentation.

6.2 A Long Journey from Patriotism to Cosmopolitanism

When looking at the European radical Left, a difference between Italy and other countries that immediately catches the eye is that in Italy the contemporary radical Left has found it much harder to renew itself, remaining deeply attached to its traditional practices and symbolic repertoires (Chiocchetti 2018). Quite tellingly, neither the 2011 *Indignados* protests nor the left-populist wave that renewed the radical Left in Southern Europe have successfully caught on in Italy (Zamponi 2012; Mazzolini 2019). In fact, the legacy of its long-gone political strength combined with its current electoral weakness, have made the Italian radical Left much more ideologically trapped in its historical past compared to other European countries [IT-INT.11]. As Chiara Capretti, founding member of PAP, admits, in Italy the Left always tends to look back to its past: renewing leftist politics is made "more difficult compared to other countries" by the fact that "anyone who attempts such enterprise must deal with a rich, complex and controversial tradition and legacy" (Capretti 2018). In light of this, it is essential to dwell more on how the Italian radical Left considered the nation historically, and to study how this impacts its heirs today. In this section I thus combine chronological and thematic narrative analysis, by singling out three main historical phases that characterise the relationship between the Left and the nation in Italy from the Second World War until today, analysing for each of them its legacy on contemporary actors. As I show, contemporary actors frequently hark back to past stances in order to justify their current ideological positions on the nation.

6.2.1 Antifascist patriotism

According to renowned historian Claudio Pavone, the Italian Resistance against Mussolini and Nazi-fascism was made out of three simultaneous and interconnected wars: a *patriotic* war, a *civil* war and a *class* war (Pavone 1991). In fact, 'patriotism' was a central signifier for the antifascist struggle (the Resistance, *Resistenza*), especially in the years of highest intensity (1943-45): Italian partisans made extensive use of patriotic rhetoric, accusing the fascists of being "traitors to the homeland" (Pavone 1991, 512). This was the case for Communist partisans too, perhaps even more clearly: Communists organised themselves into the 'Garibaldi Brigades' and the 'Patriotic Action Groups', drawing largely from the sedimented patriotic imagery of the Italian unification (*Risorgimento*), as the use of the name of the Italian Unification hero Giuseppe Garibaldi indicates. In the words of Adorni, "the proof of the symbolic continuity between the Risorgimento and the Resistance is given by the whole iconographic, imaginary, literary and artistic complex that binds together the movements for national liberation and independence to most of the aesthetic, political and moral codes of anti-fascism: a perfect example is the extraordinary continuity of the fortune of the Garibaldian myth among the left parties and the workers' movement" (Adorni 2020). Quite tellingly, at the end of WW2 the Resistance was often labelled as 'second *Risorgimento'* (ANPI 2010b). In the partisan and communist movement, the struggle against fascism produced a social-national synthesis in which national and social liberation were deeply interconnected.

As Pavone recalls, "one of the highest aims of the Resistance [was] precisely that of regaining national identity" (Pavone 1991, 74), giving it a new face opposite to the fascist one. Yet, this was not just about pragmatism and strategy of Partisan leaders: the private letters of common partisans sentenced to death by fascism were filled with poignant phrases of love for Italy and for their belonging to the patria (Malvezzi and Pirelli 2015). Giorgio Marincola was an Italo-Somali partisan who, after being captured by the Nazi-fascists in 1945, was forced to denigrate the Resistance live on the fascist radio. Instead of sticking to the script, he suddenly said: «I feel the patria as a culture and a feeling of freedom, not as any colour on the map… The patria is not identifiable with dictatorships similar to the fascist one. Patria means freedom and justice for the peoples of the world. For this I fight the oppressors… ». He could not finish his thought because the transmission was interrupted, "with atrocious noise of beating" (ANPI 2010a). The idea of national redemption and national pride that partisans' patriotism referred to was far from an association with race or national borders: "the 'patriotic war' of the Resistance was not a war over borders. In fact, implicit in the reconquest of national identity was the principle of respect for the wishes of all peoples, who must no longer be "traded in the gaming house of diplomacy" (Pavone 1991, 205).

This type of antifascist patriotism continued to characterise the Left also after the victory against Nazi-fascism in 1945, turning the anti-fascist Resistance into the foundational myth of the post-war Republic. The newly-legalised PCI put the Italian flag in its symbol (see Figure 4) and largely resorted to national-popular symbolism and to a patriotic vocabulary (L. Ciampi 2014). In the words of Palmiro Togliatti, party leader from 1938 to 1964, the PCI in the new democratic context had to be "an Italian national party, that is, a party that poses and solves the problem of the emancipation of work in the framework of our national life and freedom, making all the progressive traditions of the nation as its own" (Togliatti 1945). As an example, Figure 5 shows the front page of *l'Unità*, the newspaper of the PCI on the day of the first democratic elections after WW2, which concerned the institutional form to be given to the country (a referendum on monarchy or republic), and the election of the members of the constituent assembly. The Communist Party declared from the pages of its newspaper: "Italian! If you want peace, freedom and work for your Patria, vote for the Republic, vote for the Communist Party!". Two years later, the Communist Party allied with the Socialist Party for the 1948 first parliamentary election; as Figure 6 illustrates, the symbol of that alliance, named Popular Democratic Front, was the face of Giuseppe Garibaldi with the colours of the Italian flag: green, white and red.

According to the 1966 PCI party statute, the Italian flag had to be present in all party events together with the party flag, and the national hymn (*Inno di Mameli*) was described as an official party hymn, together with *L'Internazionale* and others (PCI 1966: 46). As Pietro Secchia, a long-standing PCI figure, famously wrote in the sixties: "there is no tension between the spirit of the party of the working class, which is a national class, and the national spirit" (Secchia 1977: 129).

Figure 4. ***Symbol of PCI (1943-1991)***

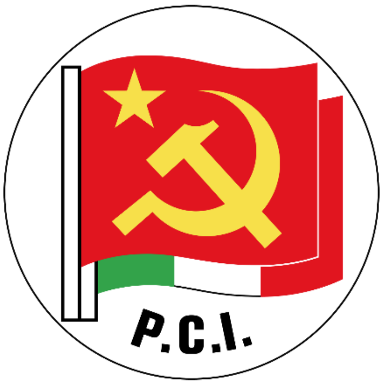
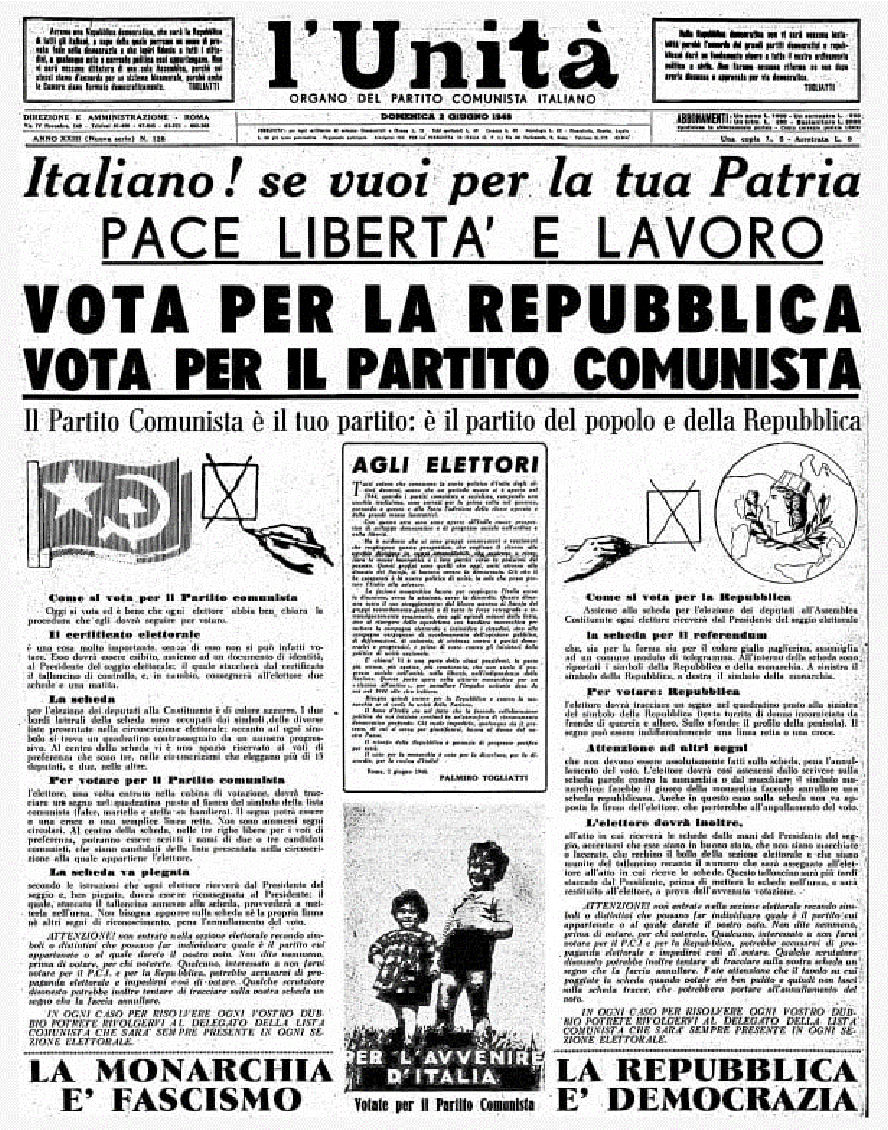


Figure 5. ***Front page of "l'Unità", newspaper of the Italian Communist Party, 2 June 1946***



TOLIATTI

l'Unità

ORGANO DEL PARTITO COMUNISTA ITALIANO

TOGLIATTI

DIREZIONE E AMMINISTRAZIONE - ROMA

ANNO XXIII (Nuova serie) N. 128

DOMENICA 2 GIUGNO 1946

ABBONAMENTI:

Italiano! se vuoi per la tua Patria

PACE LIBERTA' E LAVORO

VOTA PER LA REPUBBLICA
VOTA PER IL PARTITO COMUNISTA

Il Partito Comunista è il tuo partito: è il partito del popolo e della Repubblica

Come si vota per il Partito comunista

Oggi si vota ed è bene che ogni elettore abbia ben chiara la procedura che egli dovrà seguire per votare.

Il certificato elettorale

è una cosa molto importante, senza di esso non si può infatti votare. Esso dovrà essere esibito, assieme ad un documento di identità, al Presidente del seggio elettorale: il quale staccherà dal certificato il talloncino di controllo, e, in cambio, consegnerà all'elettore due schede e una matita.

La scheda

per l'elezione dei deputati alla Costituente è di colore azzurro. I due bordi laterali della scheda sono occupati dai simboli delle diverse liste presentate nella circoscrizione elettorale; accanto ad ogni simbolo si trova un quadratino contrassegnato da un numero progressivo. Al centro della scheda vi è uno spazio riservato ai voti di preferenza che sono tre, nelle circoscrizioni che eleggono più di 15 deputati, e due, nelle altre.

Per votare per il Partito comunista

l'elettore, una volta entrato nella cabina di votazione, dovrà tracciare un segno nel quadratino posto al fianco del simbolo della lista comunista (falce, martello e stella su bandiera). Il segno potrà essere o una croce o una semplice linea retta. Non sono ammessi segni circolari. Al centro della scheda, nelle tre righe libere per i voti di preferenza, potranno essere scritti i nomi di due o tre candidati comunisti, che siano candidati della lista presentata nella circoscrizione alla quale appartiene l'elettore.

La scheda va piegata

secondo le istruzioni che ogni elettore riceverà dal Presidente del seggio e, ben piegata, dovrà essere riconsegnata al Presidente: il quale, staccato il talloncino annesso alla scheda, provvederà a metterla nell'urna. Non bisogna apporre sulla scheda nè la propria firma nè altri segni di riconoscimento, pena l'annullamento del voto.

ATTENZIONE! non entrate nella sezione elettorale recando simboli o distintivi che possano far individuare quale è il partito cui appartenete o al quale darete il vostro voto. Non dite a nessuno, prima di votare, per chi voterete. Qualcuno, interessato a non farvi votare per il P.C.I. e per la Repubblica, potrebbe accusarvi di propaganda elettorale e impedirvi così di votare. Qualche scrutatore disonesto potrebbe inoltre tentare di tracciare sulla vostra scheda un segno che la faccia annullare.

IN OGNI CASO PER RISOLVERE OGNI VOSTRO DUBBIO POTRETE RIVOLGERVI AL DELEGATO DELLA LISTA COMUNISTA CHE SARA' SEMPRE PRESENTE IN OGNI SEZIONE ELETTORALE.

LA MONARCHIA E' FASCISMO

AGLI ELETTORI

Roma, 2 giugno 1946.

PALMIRO TOGLIATTI

PER L'AVVENIRE D'ITALIA

Votate per il Partito Comunista

Come si vota per la Repubblica

Assieme alla scheda per l'elezione dei deputati all'Assemblea Costituente ogni elettore riceverà dal Presidente del seggio elettorale

la scheda per il referendum

che, sia per la forma sia per il colore giallo paglierino, assomiglia ad un comune modulo di telegramma. All'interno della scheda sono riportati i simboli della Repubblica e della monarchia. A sinistra il simbolo della Repubblica, a destra il simbolo della monarchia.

Per votare: Repubblica

l'elettore dovrà tracciare un segno nel quadratino posto alla sinistra del simbolo della Repubblica (testa turrita di donna incorniciata da fronde di quercia e alloro. Sullo sfondo: il profilo della penisola). Il segno può essere indifferentemente una linea retta o una croce.

Attenzione ad altri segni

che non devono essere assolutamente fatti sulla scheda, pena l'annullamento del voto. L'elettore dovrà così astenersi dallo scrivere sulla scheda parole contro la monarchia o dal macchiare il simbolo monarchico: farebbe il giuoco della monarchia facendo annullare una scheda repubblicana. Anche in questo caso sulla scheda non va apposta la firma dell'elettore, che porterebbe all'annullamento del voto.

L'elettore dovrà inoltre,

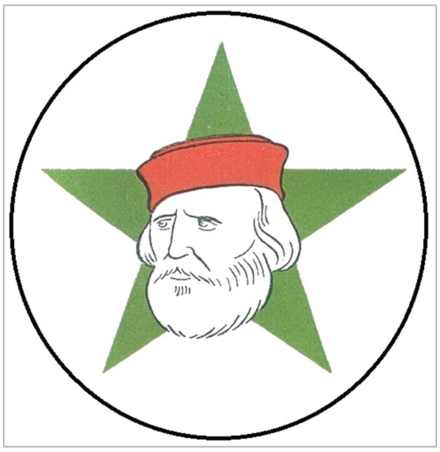
all'atto in cui riceverà le schede dalle mani del Presidente del seggio, accertarsi che esse siano in buono stato, che non siano macchiate o lacerate, che rechino il bollo della sezione elettorale e che siano munite del talloncino recante il numero che sarà assegnato all'elettore all'atto in cui riceve le schede. Questo talloncino sarà più tardi staccato dal Presidente, prima di mettere le schede nell'urna, e sarà restituito all'elettore, a prova dell'avvenuta votazione.

ATTENZIONE! non entrate nella sezione elettorale recando simboli o distintivi che possano far individuare quale è il partito cui appartenete o al quale darete il vostro voto. Non dite a nessuno, prima di votare, per chi voterete. Qualcuno, interessato a non farvi votare per il P.C.I. e per la Repubblica, potrebbe accusarvi di propaganda elettorale e impedirvi così di votare. Qualche scrutatore disonesto potrebbe inoltre tentare di tracciare sulla vostra scheda un segno che la faccia annullare. Fate attenzione che il tavolo su cui poggiate la scheda quando votate sia ben pulito e quindi non lasci sulla scheda tracce, che potrebbero portare all'annullamento del voto.

IN OGNI CASO PER RISOLVERE OGNI VOSTRO DUBBIO POTRETE RIVOLGERVI AL DELEGATO DELLA LISTA COMUNISTA CHE SARA' SEMPRE PRESENTE IN OGNI SEZIONE ELETTORALE.

LA REPUBBLICA E' DEMOCRAZIA

Figure 6. ***Symbol of the People's Democratic Front (1947-48)***



How much of this legacy has remained to this day? Some traces are to be found among actors more linked to the partisan history (at least rhetorically). For example, ANPI (National Association of Italian Partisans) – which is an important and respected actor within the Italian Left – publishes[35] a magazine entitled Independent Patria (*Patria Indipendente*), to the surprise of young militants, who do not expect to see the word 'patria' on a left-wing and anti-fascist publication [IT-INT.10, IT-INT.11]. In the left-wing demonstrations which I attended as an observer during the years 2017-2019, the few times that I saw an Italian flag in the crowd it was almost always[36] carried by members of the ANPI. Other small traces of antifascist patriotism can be found among organisations that are more nostalgic of Italian twentieth-century communism, such as the very small Italian Communist Party which, having copied the symbol and the name of the twentieth-century PCI (despite having no direct link to it), is today the only radical left party to have the Italian flag in the party symbol. Also the small Communist Party (*Partito Comunista*, PC, an anti-EU Stalinist party) – headed by Marco Rizzo, a former MP who enjoys a certain degree of media visibility for his participation in television talk shows and for his controversial and right-leaning statements on migrants and feminism (Pucciarelli 2020) – is quite tied to this rhetoric. Their narrative on April 25 (the day of liberation) often refer to the 'struggle for Italy', 'Italian people' and the like (PC 2017; Rizzo 2019). In public events, *Partito Comunista*'s members sometimes hold Italian flags with the red star in the centre (which was the partisan flag of the communist *Brigate Garibaldi* during WW2).

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[35] Since 2016 it has been released only in digital version, online at https://www.patriaindipendente.it/.

[36] The others were members of the small Stalinist party *Partito Comunista,* who sometimes also use the Italian flag, but with the red star in the centre. The one of the ANPI has the ANPI symbol in the centre instead.

Finally, the patriotism of the partisans has been claimed in recent years by an area of the Left, which seeks to combine patriotism and left-wing values. A *sovereignist* Left (see also section 6.3.1) whose best-known group is Patria and Constitution (*Patria e Costituzione*), founded in 2018 by Stefano Fassina, a MP from *Liberi e Uguali* (a centre-left list formed by a left-wing split of the Democratic Party for the 2018 election which disappeared shortly after). This is not a "radical left party", but rather a political grouping to which some radical leftists have turned their interest to, and therefore deserves to be discussed, especially because it has the rediscovery of patriotism as one of its *raison d'être*. As Fassina explains, the Resistance represents the "rebirth of the patria" that creates "a national community defined not only by historical, cultural and linguistic traits, but by freedom, democracy, social justice, solidarity, openness, that is to say the ethical, political and programmatic structure imprinted, through the Constituent Assembly, in our Constitution" (Fassina 2018a).

Whilst growing, these exceptions do not reflect the general trend: among the parties of the radical Left, the partisan struggle is certainly remembered with pride, but it is usually not treated as an element of national identity. As Marco Damiani, scholar on the radical Left at the University of Perugia, explains:

> Despite the historical legacy and the importance that such historical period [*the Resistence*] has had in the formation of the parties of the Italian Left, national identity has later become somehow detached from that period, and nowadays the Left refers to that historical period more for other reasons than seeing it as an element of national identity. [IT-INT.9]

Indeed, it is rare to see references to partisans' patriotism among Italian RLPs nowadays. The partisan struggle is certainly still celebrated, but not much as a *national* struggle. It is rather framed within a symbolism based on social antifascism and class struggle (a legacy of the 70s, as we will see in section 6.2.2) or on democracy and internationalism (a legacy of the 90s, as sketched in section 6.2.3).

6.2.2 Class comes first

The tie between anti-fascism and national identity that characterised the Resistance and the post-WW2 years – synthetised in the rhetorical intertwinement between social liberation and national redemption – began to fade in the seventies. The leftist grassroots political activism of the sixties and the far-left political radicalism of the seventies mark a change of pace from the patriotism of the partisans, shifting the focus more to class identity. There is a left-wing protest song from those years that neatly illustrates the beginning of a paradigm shift on this matter. The song is called *Nove Maggio*, and was written in 1965 by Ivan della Mea, a left-wing Italian singer. In the song, the author talks about his participation in the celebration for the the twentieth anniversary of the victory against fascism. There, della Mea is annoyed by the widespread presence of the *tricolore* (the green-white-red Italian flag), which is heralded by the partisans in the crowd, but also by class adversaries. He sings:

Tricolore is the square
Tricolore are the partisans
«We are all Italians»
«Long live the new unity»
[...]
And there is my boss
the one who fired me
that dirty liberist
even him tricolored.

Therefore, Della Mea decides to get rid, for the first time, of his Italian flag:

I took off my kerchief
the white green and red one
and I put on my neck
the one that is only red.
And they called me "Chinese"
they told me "defeatist"
I answered dryly
"I was and am a communist"

This passage exemplifies the beginning of a paradigm shift that took place within the Italian radical Left of those years, following the new ideological trends of the 1960s and 1970s: the celebration of the partisan saga through the lens of the communist symbolic repertoire of those years and no longer as a national founding myth (Cooke 2011, 113–25).

According to Damiani, the detachment from national identity was not only due to the new ideological radicalism of these years, but it was also a consequence of the neo-fascists' attempt to repoliticise national identity in an ethnonationalist sense. As he explains:

> The seventies were the years in which the declination of national identity in a nationalistic sense returns to be markedly right-wing, specifically neo-fascist, and the

> struggle against neofascist movements carried out by the parties of the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary radical Left determines a new distance from nationality. [IT-INT.9]

However, this claim should not be overestimated: in those years national identity was not a very salient issue in Italian politics, despite the attempt by the neo-fascists to politicise it (Rinaldi 1999). In general, the radical Left's detachment from the identification with the nation in favour of the sole working-class identity typical of the seventies should be understood as a gradual and often-secondary ideological trend, rather than as a net change. For instance, *Canzoniere delle Lame*, another radical left music band of those years, could still sing in 1973:

Fascists, this Italy
the partisans made it
stay in the sewers
your place here is not
(Always partisans also for tomorrow)

As much as a shared sense of belonging to the national community was part of popular consciousness, references to nationality actually played a marginal role in the articulation of political conflicts in those years (Barbé 1997). Other types of identity, such as religion and social class, created a sense of belonging with a much stronger political impact than the one resulting from national identity (Crouch 2017a). Quite tellingly, the two largest Italian parties back then – the Christian Democracy (*Democrazia Cristiana*) and the PCI – referred to these two identities respectively. However, this does not mean that the PCI was hostile to national identity: even though in the seventies it had actually reduced its patriotic rhetoric compared to the post WW2 years, it was still a party with the Italian flag in its symbol and, most importantly, with a solid institutional profile, and it never developed a feeling of hostility towards national belonging (Romano 2020). Quite the opposite: as Luciana Castellina, a renowned and long-standing communist politician, argues

> The best explanation [of the strength of the Italian Communist Party] remains for me the one Jean-Paul Sartre gave, after having studied our country of which he was very curious: «Now I understand - he said - the PCI is Italy!». He meant that this party was not a separate vanguard, but a body mixed with the same blood, the same emotions, behaviors, memories, of the Italian people. Not a foreign organism. (Castellina 2021)

In fact, the radical Left's refusal of nationality in the name of the sole class identity, typical of the seventies, concerned the more radical movements, often with a strong student component, usually to the left of the Italian Communist Party.

Quite tellingly, this approach is nowadays traceable in those contemporary radical Left actors that are closer to the legacy of extra-parliamentary grassroots activism (at least ideologically), such as PAP. The case of PAP is particularly interesting, because, on the one hand, the party drew some inspiration from European left-wing populism (Chiocchetti 2018), especially by looking at the French experience of Mélenchon [IT-INT.2], but on the other hand at the level of ideology (and, to a certain extent, at the level of rhetoric too), PAP appears much closer to the Italian extra-parliamentary radical Left than to Europe’s left-populism. And in fact it has little to share with the positive appreciation of nationality often showed by left-populists (see section 3.3). PAP founders come from social movements or from grassroots trade unions, they proudly claim they never had any party membership (Carofalo 2018a) and to the term ‘leftists’ they prefer that of ‘communists’ (Carofalo 2018a). As Giuliano Granato, leading figure of PAP explains, “the tradition which most of PAP militants come from is that of the extra-parliamentary class-based Left [....]. The discontinuity we have with respect to this tradition of ours is in the language, in the construction of a less-identitarian discourse, or at least in the attempt to do so” [IT-INT.8].

In this tension within PAP between the tradition of the extra-parliamentary far Left and the influence of left-wing populism, it is often the first to prevail. For instance, they openly reject the figure of the mediatic party leader, typical of left-wing populism. As Viola Carofalo, the leader of PAP, explains, “there is a great risk that populism always runs into when it is framed to the left and that we do not want to run into, which is that of *leaderism*” [IT-INT.2]. The ideological legacy of the extra-parliamentary Left emerges clearly also as regards to nationality: when asked if the Resistance can be seen as a “progressive founding myth of Italian identity”, in the same way as the 1789 French Revolution is for Mélenchon’s up-front patriotism, Carofalo explains that the Resistance

> is not a myth that works in that sense and that has that function. I think this is also because I believe that even the history of the Resistance was partly a history of betrayal. While you were asking me this question, a famous song came to my mind, where the partisan who wears a tricolored kerchief rather than a red one feels it as a sort of betrayal [*she is referring to* Nove Maggio*, the song presented above*]. The Resistance did not only represent the national rebirth or the expulsion of the invaders but also the attempt to bring a certain type of values and also a certain type of social model to Italy, which evidently was not realised neither fully nor partially. [IT-INT.2]

Whereas Mélenchon in the 2017 election campaign rallied only with French flags, Carofalo insists that, as much as she respects Mélenchon’s choice, she would never do that in Italy, and that she has “little affection, little closeness to the patria” [IT-INT.2]. The problem with this choice, she explains, is that it would not be understood by the people:

> Those who use the Italian flag to refer to the history of the Resistance, who are they talking to with that symbol? Surely they are speaking to people who already know that this is the association they intend to make. But if my mom sees the Italian flag, either she thinks she is staying under a big hotel that has the flags of the various states, or she obviously thinks of right-wing nationalism. [IT-INT.2]

6.2.3 Beyond the nation

At the turn of the eighties and nineties, the situation of the Italian radical Left changed yet again. By then, the experience of the left radicalism of the seventies was over, the Cold War ended and the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and elsewhere fell. Two new factors that are relevant to our analysis came into play in Italy in the 1990s.

First, the sense of belonging to the national community began to strengthen in Italian politics and society, after a phase of weakness that characterised most of the second half of the twentieth century (Barbé 1997; Patriarca 2001). Yet, the connection between national pride and the Liberation was by now very loose. Although the public memory of the war and the Resistance had been able to activate deep identification processes in the country, assuming the traits of a collective memory, it began to be profoundly questioned and challenged from the 1990s, gradually losing the features of a national shared memory (Focardi 2005). Simultaneously, the use of the *tricolore* became much more widespread, even in commercial marketing (Raimo 2019), and national identity returned to play an important and conflicting role in the articulation of political claims. Examples of this new paradigm were the foundation of the centre-right party *Forza Italia* by Silvio Berlusconi in 1994, whose discourse was heavily laden with Italian identity, without any reference to anti-fascism, and the "nationalist discourse" of the President of the Republic Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, who abundantly drew from constitutional patriotism and Italian pride during his presidential mandate (1999-2006), unlike previous presidents (C. A. Ciampi 2009; Thomassen and Forlenza 2011; Raimo 2019). Faced with the anti-Italian secessionism promoted at the time by the Lega Nord (which sought to break away the country's wealthier northern regions), Ciampi pushed back using public communications laden with Italian constitutional patriotism. Yet, in the quest to mould the most widely acceptable Italian identity, the Resistance's values were hurriedly abandoned by the institutional discourse (Raimo 2019; Focardi 2005).

Second, the rise of the 'global justice movement' (GJM) – which avoided a national symbolic repertoire and saw the global and/or local arena as the central battleground (Gerbaudo 2017, 113–34) – had a strong impact on the Italian radical Left, orienting it in a more internationalist and *movementist* sense, especially after the 1999 Seattle WTO protests. The PRC, although still a *communist* party with one foot in institutional politics, incorporated many elements of the GJM's discourse into its own (March 2011, 60). It embraced the focus on globalisation typical of the GJM and it invested a lot of energy in projecting the party to the international dimension, from creating the European Left Party in 2004 to strengthening its international alliances. For instance, Fausto Bertinotti, leader of the PRC from 1994 to 2006, was the only Western Communist leader to officially meet the *Subcomandante Marcos* in the autonomous Zapatista territories in Mexico, where he went in 1997, shortly after meeting with Fidel Castro in Cuba (Cannavò 2009).

In a sense, while Italian politics moved closer to national identity, the radical Left drifted away from it. The PRC, which was the leading party of the radical Left in those years, was a clear expression of this new tendency and much of its current stances are still based on this. Those were the years when the party acquired its "third worldist calling" (*vocazione terzomondista*), as the leader of that time, Fausto Bertinotti, named it (Bertinotti 2016). As Eleonora Forenza, the only MEP of PRC (2014-2019),[37] explains:

> I think that PRC is, among the parties of the radical Left in Italy, the one furthest away from nationality. PRC was founded by people from Proletarian Democracy and from the Communist Party's minority. Neither of these two political traditions is linked to an element, let's say, of the "Italian" communist tradition. Furthermore, the presence of younger leaders, let's say those of my age, played a lot in this regard, because they were politically trained in the movement of movements, in the no-global movement, in the protests of Genoa… which obviously expressed a thought that was not only markedly internationalist, but globalist. So, the PRC is very far from any reference to the national element. [IT-INT.1]

The new symbolic repertoire of the GJM – at least in its Italian declination, also influenced by the autonomist ideas of Italian post-*Operaismo* (Wright 2008; March 2011, 60) – contributed to distance the PRC from the national element, and this happened within an already-fertile terrain, because, as Forenza points out, many politicians who founded the PRC came from political wings which were more distant from the national element compared to the main wing of the PCI. This also led to a discussion on whether to maintain the Italian flag present in the PCI symbol or not (for a visual evolution of the PRC symbol, see Figure 7 in section 6.3.1). As Paolo Ferrero, leader of the PRC from 2008 to 2017 (and Italian Minister from 2006 to 2008) recalls,

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[37] Forenza was elected within the "Altra Europa con Tsipras" coalition, which the PRC was part of. Among the three politicians elected, she was the only one coming from the radical Left.

> When PRC was born, we had an internal discussion about whether or not to put the colours of Italy, albeit tiny and stylised, in the symbol. Because the symbol of the PCI had the Italian flag on it and it was called the “Italian” Communist Party.... So, we had a debate on that. For example, there were some comrades in particular who came from the New Left who posed the theme of having the peace symbol or other things instead of the red and the green [*the colour of the Italian flag*]. [IT-INT.7]

In addition to all this, there was also the increasing control of the national elements by the Right. As Maurizio Acerbo, national secretary of the PRC, recalls, in the nineties national symbolism was controlled by Berlusconi (“in the 90s we had the *tricolore* seized by Berlusconi”) and this favoured a detachment of the Left from this symbology (“the fact that the Italian flag has also been used against us... that is exploited by the Right... obviously matters”) [IT-INT.6].

Eventually, this produced a feeling of detachment from national belonging that has continued to characterise the PRC up to recent years, favouring its Europeanist agenda (see section 6.3.1). At times, this reached peaks of *anti-Italianness*, higher than the one of the 70s presented in the previous section. For example, Forenza, soon after being elected as MEP in May 2014, was invited at the Puglia Region Council and, when the national anthem started, she refused to stand up, sparking controversy among those present. When some people in the room drew a peace flag, Forenza then stood up, saying “this is the only flag I stand up for”; then, due to the escalation of the controversy among those present, she opted for leaving the Council (Forenza 2014). As she recalls,

> I was expelled from the Puglia regional council, where I had been invited as a MEP residing in Bari, because the national anthem started – in a way that was unexpected for me because I did not expect that in a session of the regional council the national anthem would start – and I did not feel like standing up. I think that having reacted instinctively was the right choice: I am a communist and therefore an internationalist, I am a feminist and as a woman I have no homeland and therefore I feel totally uncomfortable with any national reference. [IT-INT.1]

As for the relationship with the patriotism of the partisans, the rift between the Resistance and national identification that emerged the 1970s survives also in this phase. In the words of Acerbo,

> the other day I was in Tuscany to bring flowers to the memorial stone of a killed partisan and it was written “killed by the Germans and by the traitors of the patria”. The traitors to the patria were the fascists! Now... well, let’s say that among us it is not like that... the idea is that for us our internationalism is a strong element of identity. [IT-INT.6]

Yet, compared to the framing of the antifascist struggle as class struggle typical of the 1970s, here the focus is more on internationalism (but also on the democratic defence of the "Partisans-made Constitution", as it will be discussed in the next chapter). An example of this attitude, albeit in its most radical declination, are the words of Wu Ming 1, a renowned left-wing Italian writer: according to Wu Ming 1, the "Italian" Resistance was in reality "multi-ethnic, Creole, internationalist and migrant" and *therefore* not truly Italian. The author puts the word *Italian* in quotation marks, contesting the adjective commonly associated with the Resistance (Wu Ming 1 2019).

Quite tellingly, in the final document approved at the 2017's 10th congress of the PRC, the word 'Italy' is mentioned only once (in the sentence "our class and internationalist point of view, our Communist horizon, we put them at the disposal of the struggle to build an alternative in Italy and Europe") and the document ended with the motto, in the last line of text, "Our patria is the whole world" (PRC 2017).

What has been said so far traces the perimeter of a general trend, illustrating how there has been in Italy a gradual change in the relationship between the radical Left and nationality from the Second World War to today, which can be summarised in three distinct phases that still influence the whole radical Left. The first phase (*antifascist patriotism*) is no longer a clear source of inspiration for the radical Left, except in some minor groups that are attempting to rediscover it. The legacy of the second phase (*class comes first*) can instead be traced in grass-roots and radical actors, such as PAP. Finally, the third phase (*beyond the nation*) is best represented by the 'historic' Italian radical left party, the PRC, who was the central actor in that phase and has kept its key elements up to this day.

This being said, this overview requires further problematisation, as the relationship with nationality cannot be measured only on a linear ideological scale that goes from 'patriotism' to 'cosmopolitanism', but also concerns the ways parties react to related political issues, such as the relationship with European integration, the defence of the Constitution and the challenge posed by the hegemony of right-wing nationalism, which in Italy in recent years has been much stronger than in Spain and Portugal.[38] I will deal with all this in the next chapter.

6.3 New Rifts over the Nation?

Section 6.2 showed how much historical legacies still affect and shape the ideological positions of the radical Left in regard to national identity. Yet, in recent years the role of nationality in politics has changed widely, returning to be highly present in Italy's political debate, with some related issues assuming higher political salience. Consequently, in this section I scrutinise how the radical Left has responded to recent debates over national belonging, focusing on three prominent issues: the debate over European integration (6.3.1), the defence of the Italian constitution (6.3.2) and the discussion on how to react to the hegemony of the nationalist Right, especially over popular classes (6.3.3). This enables a more complete view of the Italian radical Left's outlook on the nation, and allows me to show how contemporary positions are also shaped by political contingency. As this section illustrates, new disagreements between groups originate from these issues at times, paving the way for further rifts within an already-fragmented radical Left.

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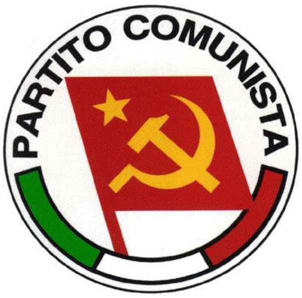
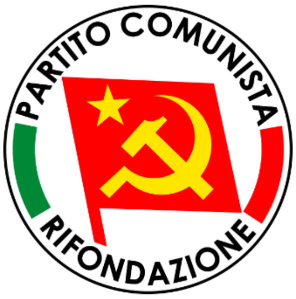
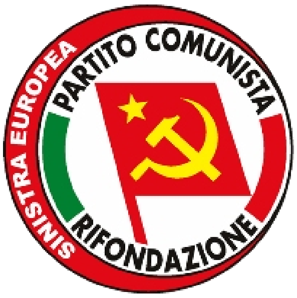
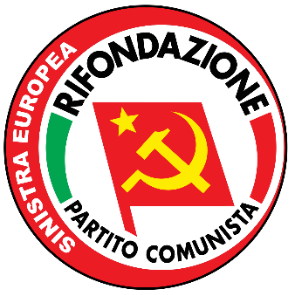
[38] For instance, in the European elections of 2019, Matteo Salvini's Lega, a right-wing populist and nationalist party, took 34.26% of the votes; Brothers of Italy, a radical right nationalist party, 6.44%, and Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* 8.78%.

6.3.1 The European question

Although critical of EU policy and EU treaties for being 'neoliberal', the PRC has been investing heavily in the attempt to project itself into the European political arena and not just the national one. Analysing the 'Europeanisation' of the PRC, Charalambous shows that the party "bears solid signs of Europeanisation since the mid-1990s", presenting the EU as a necessary terrain of struggle. As he points out, "electoral campaigning, policy formulation, internal discussion and international-level networking" have all been affected by the party gradually-increasing Europeanisation (Charalambous 2011b). The Europeanism of the PRC is in part also a product of *Eurocommunism*, an ideological trend started by the Italian PCI between the seventies and eighties, mainly in alliance with French and Spanish communists, as an attempt to distance themselves from Soviet hegemony over Communist doctrine (García Agustín 2021, 177–79). Eurocommunism was not an adhesion to the European Economic Community (the PCI voted against the founding treaty) but rather a new political repositioning in relation to the USSR. Yet, it also began to project the PCI more into the European dimension, and the party started considering Europe as a political arena and favoured European integration (Pons 2006). The Europeanism of the PRC, however, went beyond the old Eurocommunism of the PCI. Indeed, the PRC was the main sponsor of the European Left Party, which was formed in Rome in 2004, and the party leadership of those years aimed at transforming the PRC into "the Italian section of the Party of the European Left" (Bertinotti 2006). Europe thus became a central signifier in the discourse of the PRC, even visually: in 2005 the party changed its symbol, in order to include a reference to Europe, as shown in Figure 7. Moreover, in 2008 the party officially changed its name in the party statute, adding 'European Left' to its official name

(Communist Refoundation Party – European Left, *Partito della Rifondazione Comunista - Sinistra Europea, PRC-SE*) (Rifondazione 2008).

Figure 7. ***Evolution of the PRC symbol***

1992-1998	1999-2004	2005-2008	2008-ongoing
 	 	 The phrase on the left, *Sinistra Europea*, means “European Left”.	

In the words of Forenza, the PRC “was the first party in the European scenario of the radical Left to have a fully Europeanist approach” [IT-INT.1]. This emerged clearly also in 2014, when the PRC, together with other political forces, promoted the joint list The Other Europe with Tsipras (*L’altra Europa con Tsipras*) in order to participate in the European elections of the same year – opting for the unusual choice of naming the party after a foreign political leader, Alexis Tsipras (PRC 2014). Coherently with the party’s emphasis on the importance of the European dimension, when asked whether the term ‘patria’ had space in the party’s discourse, Acerbo replied

> I have a stance similar to the one of the Latin American Left, who frames the term patria in terms of *patria grande* [big patria, *ndr*], that is, to propose an idea of Latin American patriotism against North American imperialism, acknowledging that in the space of the single nation-state the risk is not having the strength to withstand the clash with the empire. I am convinced that this also applies to the European case, and we should decline Europe in the same way. [IT-INT.6]

This is an issue that has created important rifts on the radical Left in recent years, due to the EU-led austerity measures after the 2008 financial crisis and the growth of anti-Europeanism in the country. As Tarditi and Vittori point out, critical stances towards European Union have spread and radicalised in Italian politics after the start of the 2008 Great Recession (with populist parties like M5S and radical right parties like *Lega* making it their workhorse), and this renewed hostility has also affected the radical Left (Tarditi and Vittori 2020). The PRC strengthened its criticism towards European economic institutions, but remained committed to the left-Europeanism that always characterised it, campaigning for the "Europeanization of social policies" (Tarditi and Vittori 2020, 134).

Other radical left forces have shown a clearer Euroscepticism instead: PAP presents a much more critical and radical stance on Europe compared to the PRC. For example, Giorgio Cremaschi, co-leader of PAP and head of the PAP member group *Eurostop*, openly claims for Italy's exit from the EU. He says:

> The ideas that have fascinated some sectors of the left, the "United States of Europe" now taken up by Renzi, or the "socialist states of Europe" claimed by those most radical, are nonsense with no connection to reality. [...] The EU is against the peoples, but the peoples are not yet against the EU. We have to work for this to happen. [...] Without breaking with the EU the Left will never be reborn. It is not an opinion; it is a fact. (Cremaschi 2018)

A similar stance is shared also by Marco Rizzo's Communist Party, for which Italy's exit from the EU is of foremost importance. As Rizzo explains,

> We reject the European cage. We are perhaps beyond the sovereignists, who are let's say a little phony, in the sense that they speak against the European Union but then in practice... we saw just today that Salvini said that Draghi can become the president of the republic... well, we are really for the exit from the European union, for the exit from the euro, from exit from NATO, with a great addition: for socialism. [IT-INT.3]

As for PAP's Euroscepticism, this is an issue where internal divisions exist, between those who wants to leave the EU and those who are leaning more towards soft-Euroscepticism [IT-INT.8]. This was perhaps more evident in 2018, when the PRC was also part of PAP, and PRC's leaders opposed both leaving the EU and the eurozone, while *Eurostop* pushed for campaigning for exiting the EU (Eurostop 2018). For the 2018 elections, the compromise was reached adding to the party electoral program a deliberately-ambiguous phrase on Europe, namely that PAP wants to "break the European Union *of treaties*" (PAP 2018a, *emphasis added*).

However, it is relevant to point out that PAP's Euroscepticism has not turned into a return to the identification with the nation. As Carofalo clarifies,

> I cannot imagine that the response to the unjust, even dictatorial, policies of the European Union is to confine myself within my national borders, because I believe this is against my vocation as an internationalist activist who has an internationalist perspective. [IT-INT.2]

This emerges clearly even in the more anti-Europeanist wing of PAP, namely *Eurostop*, whose slogan is "an alternative Euro-Mediterranean area to break the cage of the European Union" (Eurostop 2017). As Cremaschi explains,

> The break with the EU is not a nationalist regression. [...] [Rather], it would open up the space and the possibility for the construction of new economic integration projects, in particular for the Mediterranean. A project of integration and common development between the two shores of the Mediterranean, a Euro-Mediterranean project, would be much more useful for economic growth and peace than the construction of a European fortress which wages war on migrants and threatens war on Russia. (Cremaschi 2018)

This notwithstanding, the debate over European integration is where an identification with the nation has re-emerged in recent years in Italy's radical Left, albeit mostly outside of the 'major' parties, such as PRC and PAP. As Damiani explains:

> This is the *cleavage* that makes it easier to recover the national dimension even on the Left. If the EU is seen as the supranational subject that somehow usurped the political sovereignty of states by imposing neoliberal economic policies, then recovering national identity becomes easier, in a similar vein as Mélenchon did in France. In Italy, too, this dynamics enters the picture: the opposition to the European Union grows among the parties of the radical left and that is when a recovery of national identity emerges, but it occurs only in very few cases. The majority of the radical left frames the clash with the EU in purely economic terms or around their leftist identity, rather than as a clash over the recovery of the national dimension. [IT-INT.9]

Starting from anti-EU stances, some new actors emerged claiming Italian patriotism, Italian identity and the importance of the nation-state – a new ideological trend that might be labelled as "sovereignist Left" (Fontana 2019). As mentioned in section 6.2.1, the most known actor of this trend is Patria and Constitution (*Patria e Costituzione*), a political group founded in 2018 by Stefano Fassina, former PD politician elected in the parliament with LEU, a centre-left alliance to the left of the PD. Together with two other actors – *Senso Comune* and *Rinascita! Per un'Italia Sovrana e Socialista* – they signed the "Manifesto for the Constitutional Sovereignty", a left-sovereignist document in which it is written that

> the unsustainability of globalisation, certified by the return of protectionism and inter-imperialist competition, is the proof that the presumed end of the Nation-State exists only in neoliberalist propaganda and in the blabbering of a left that has replaced socialist internationalism – which is solidarity between national popular classes – with capitalist cosmopolitanism. In this context, in order to defend themselves from liberalist policies, popular interests demand protection and security from their respective Nation-States, conscious that they alone can offer them the chance to recover a minimum of influence over their own destiny. The Nation-State is once again indispensable for promoting full occupation, restricting and regulating the market, and ensuring the social function of private property. (Patria e Costituzione 2019)

As Fassina recognises, their opinions on the European Union and on the importance of the nation-state are often a source of conflict with other actors of the radical Left:

> our analysis of the EU is certainly one of the issues where difficulties in establishing a relationship with the left-wing actors around us are most clearly manifested. [IT-INT.4]

However, tensions do not arise only on this issue, but at times they also involve other themes, such as civil rights and solidarity with migrants. For instance, Fassina attacks radical leftists for having turned into "NGOs, engaged on shore and off shore for migrants" (Fassina 2018b). This tension with the 'traditional' radical Left emerges even more sharply when looking at those actors who went further in this sovereignist path compared to Patria and Constitution. Newspapers defined this new emerging area as *rossobruna* (red – dark brown), in order to indicate the ideological leaning from communist *red* towards fascist *black* (Russo Spena 2018, Forti 2018). It is a very small political subculture, yet in recent years it has increased its cultural production and political proselytism, attracting people disaffected with the radical left. As the historian Forti explains:

> *rossobrunismo* is a rather indistinct magma composed by various political cultures who share, sometimes without admitting it, some basic ideas: sovereigntism, the fight against globalisation and capitalism, hatred towards the social democratic left, harsh criticism towards Euro and the European Union, marked anti-Americanism, sympathy for Putin's Russia, the condemnation of the so-called bleeding heart [*buonismo*] of the left, especially on issues such as immigration, the more or less severe criticism of feminism, gender theory and LGTBI struggles. (Forti 2018)

Groups like Rebirth! For a Sovereign and Socialist Italy (*Rinascita! Per un'Italia Sovrana e Socialista*), New Direction (*Nuova Direzione*) and Popular Liberation Movement (*Movimento Popolare di Liberazione*) all have radical left backgrounds but, after embracing radical Euroscepticism and sovereigntism, they became harsh critics of the radical Left, accusing it of submission not only to EU-led 'rootless cosmopolitanism', but also to gender theories, Greta Thunberg-inspired environmentalism and no-border ideology. Some emblematic figures of this ideological current have ended up by allying with the Right – such as Thomas Fazi, former Fassina's supporter and now a founding member of a Nigel Farage-inspired right-wing party called *Italexit* (Fazi 2020); or even with *tout court* neo-fascism – such as Diego Fusaro, a radical Eurosceptic who now writes for the fascist magazine *Il Primato Nazionale* and advocates for an alliance between Marco Rizzo's Communist Party and *Casa Pound* (the most-known fascist party in Italy) (Fusaro 2018). Quite tellingly, this is how Fusaro defines radical leftists on the pages of *Il Primato Nazionale*:

> they have identified communism with the deportation by sea of African slaves for the benefit of the cosmopolitan no border bosses. From red to fuchsia, from hammer and

> sickle to the rainbow, from the fourth state to the third sex. [...] Their false rebellion is the fuchsia side of the deregulation loved by globocrats and the hooded stateless people of finance. (Fusaro 2019)

6.3.2 Constitutional «patriotism»

If we accept, as Habermas famously argued, that the defence of the Constitution and the democratic institutions is a form of patriotism (Müller and Scheppele 2007), then, in this sense, but *only in this sense*, the Italian radical left is actually highly patriotic. In fact, the defence of the Constitution, always adjectivised as 'republican' and 'anti-fascist', is a *leitmotif* of the Italian radical left. The identification with the Constitution is very much present in radical left discourses, especially when claimed together with the firm opposition to the numerous attempts by the major Italian parties to modify it. Key episodes have been the inclusion of a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution in 2012, a constitutional referendum in 2016 about reforming the composition and powers of the Parliament (rejected by popular vote), and another constitutional referendum in 2020 about the reduction of the size of the Italian Parliament (approved). Especially (but not only) in these three moments, a large part of the radical Left, and particularly the PRC, have put the defence of the Constitution at the centre of their political discourse.

If the European question has been, especially in recent years, a divisive issue within the Left, the defence of the Constitution has been much less so and it is a political goal shared by virtually the entire milieu of the radical Left, albeit with some differences in intensity and rhetoric between the various actors.

Among radical left actors, PRC is arguably the one who has insisted the most on the importance of defending the Constitution. For the party, "the battle for the defence and, even more, for the implementation of the Constitution is a task of primary importance" (Greco 2015). The defence of the Constitution has characterised PRC's public discourse in framing its opposition to Berlusconi's governments and to the various attempts to change the Constitution carried out over the years by the centre-left and the centre-right. For instance, commenting the 2012 constitutional reform decided by Mario Monti's government (which added a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution), the PRC stated that "Berlusconi was the clear danger for republican democracy and for the maintenance of constitutional principles. Mario Monti and his government are the execution of that danger" (PRC 2012). As Acerbo explains:

> We can say that the patria for the PRC is the Constitution. The narrative [*immaginario*]

> in which most of PRC militants see themselves is that of the people defending the constitution. [IT-INT.6]

In the public discourse of PAP this rhetoric is slightly less frequent, probably due to the more *movementist* and less institutional background of its militants, but it is shared in its substance. "Defence and relaunch of the Constitution born from the Resistance" was the very first point (*punto uno*) in the flyer's version of PAP's electoral program for the 2018 election (PAP 2018b). Moreover, the official slogan of the whole campaign was "where there was a NO, we will build a YES", whose 'NO' referred to the *no* that pro-Constitution activists campaigned for during the constitutional referendum that aimed at changing many articles of the constitution (PAP 2017).

Even those left-wing actors who – in opposition to the supposed cosmopolitanism of the traditional radical Left – have embraced sovereigntism, have done so by subordinating the national identitarian element (although present) to a rhetorical insistence on constitutional law, as the name of Fassina's group already indicates (Patria and Constitution). As their 'Manifesto for Constitutional Sovereignty' sets out, their idea of patria is "at the same time, people, state and nation: a unity that is the result of political construction and not of an ancestral blood heritage" and their patriotism is "for an intransigent defence of the constitution of 1948" (Patria e Costituzione 2019).

Leaving aside the more extremist actors (the so-called *rossobruni*, presented in the previous section), in the sovereignist Left 'patriotism' is primarily framed in anti-EU and constitutional terms, and only secondarily, and quite shyly, as an identitarian cultural reference to the nation. As Fassina explains,

> We define our patriotism in a constitutional sense. In line with article 52 of the constitution, which indicates that the defence of the homeland is the sacred duty of every citizen, and with article 67, which indicates that every member of parliament represents the nation. [...] Our movement believes in the primacy of our constitution, and therefore in national democracy as an indispensable political space to affirm the primacy of our constitution. [IT-INT.4]

Of the same opinion is Alessandro Somma, a professor of law politically close to Patria and Constitution. According to him, "left-wing patriotism does exist in Italy, we find it in the Constitution" [IT-INT.10]. On this issue, the difference with the traditional radical Left (PRC and PAP) is tiny and nuanced: it emerges only in regard to the identitarian bits that the sovereignist Left add to its constitutional patriotism. As Forenza explains in controversy with Fassina, she fully agrees on the need to insist in the defence of the Constitution, even in opposition to EU neoliberal policies, but this must not include any identitarian reference to the nation, not the terms *patria* or *patriotism*. As she explains:

> I share the defence of constitutional democracy, even if it is framed against the European establishment. I have defended the Constitution all my life. However, this is something different than inserting it into a neo-patriotic discourse. [...] This, for me and my Marxist culture, is an unacceptable political backlash. [IT-INT.1]

The repeated insistence on defending the Constitution by RLPs has often been criticised by leftist intellectuals outside the parties. In Broder's provocative words,

> Habitually invoking the need to "defend the constitution" that came out of the antifascist resistance, or protesting that Berlusconi or the Right transgress some mystical "republican ethics," much of Italy's once-mighty Communist movement seems unable to break with the decades-old rhetorical preoccupations of the PCI […] The Italian Constitution states that Italy is a "democratic republic founded on labor," and trade union officials seem never to tire of reciting this incantation. […] The radical left's age-old rearguard defense of "republican ethics" or "the constitution" has little to say to today's dispossessed and marginalized, those without a stable place in society or even the hope of one. Pious laments for the past, or attempts to regroup the votes of old PCI supporters, are a guaranteed route to political death. (Broder 2016)

This criticism, however, seems to frame the issue as if it were only the result of senseless choices from the party leaderships, thus forgetting a structural problem that emerged recurrently in this chapter's analysis: the inability of Italy's radical Left to influence (not to say *to set*) the political agenda of the country. This, as explained before, pushed RLPs at the corner of Italy's national political community, fuelling their hostility for national belonging, and forcing them to "talk" about themes and issues put on the table by others, such as the liberal centre Left and the radical Right. The radical Left's reiterate insistence in defending the Constitution, rather that showing a puzzling agency of RLPs, points at the *absence* of agency, with party leaderships often acting with a sort of inertia – as spectators of Italian politics, trapped in myths of the past and in purely defensive political positions.

6.3.3 Reacting to the nationalist Right

While there had already been a resurgence of national identity in Italian politics in the 1990s (see section 6.2.3), it reached a new level of intensity in more recent years, with the growth of xenophobic right-wing populism and the sovereignist Right. Over the years, the Italian Right increasingly managed to seize the signifiers related to national belonging, and to fill them with meanings consistent with its ideology. Parties such as the League (*Lega*) led by Matteo Salvini (whose slogan is "Italians first!") and Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy (*Fratelli d'Italia*) (with the slogan "Let's defend Italy!") greatly increased their political popularity and their influence in society, obtaining new votes even among the popular classes. In the 2019 European elections, for example, the League obtained 34.3% of the total vote, which reached 40.3% among blue-collar workers (*Operai e affini*), while The Left (a short-lived electoral alliance between PRC and the more moderate Italian Left) took only 1.7% of the votes, which dropped to 1.6% among blue-collar workers (IPSOS 2019). Faced with the hegemony of the nationalist Right over public discourse, and, to some extent, over the popular classes, the radical Left has often found itself taken aback, unsure how to react to this threat. An anecdote told by Franco Turigliatto, current leader of Anticapitalist Left and former Member of the Senate for the PRC (2006-2008), is indicative of this issue. He recalls

> We stay far away from the national symbols. We certainly do not carry the Italian flag. We are terrified by it… Unfortunately, the other day we were at a demonstration of desperate workers at the Embraco factory in Turin, previously owned by Whirlpool, and they started singing the national anthem… they should have sung instead some other song: *Bandiera Rossa*, *l'Internazionale*, *Bella Ciao*! They are desperate workers who have suffered so many defeats and they are currently headed by moderate and submissive union leaders who are just asking the government to find them a new boss... [*And when they sang the national anthem, what was your reaction?]* We were just witnessing; it is not like we have a strength inside the factory. If we had had a presence in that factory, it would not have been like that. The demonstration would have been different. [IT-INT.5]

The common reaction of the radical Left, faced with the hegemony of the nationalist Right, has been to strongly reaffirm left-wing internationalism as an essential value to be preserved and defended, even at the cost of losing popular support. This has been the typical answer of the PRC, openly claimed by the party leadership. As Acerbo admits

> We felt that it was necessary to avoid a strategy of adaptation to the discourse of the Right and to choose a clear opposition; that is, to not legitimise it at all. […] We have tried to resist. National identity has been brandished against immigrants and so we decided to go against the tide. We have made at least two party-membership cards in recent years with the slogan "our patria is the whole world", which was a beautiful old anarchist song. We chose it, at a time like this, for two reasons. First, to reiterate that the identity of a communist and of a leftist is first of all the identity of a citizen of the world, and only secondarily it is of a condominium or a nation-state. Second, to claim what is the cornerstone of the communist movement: "Workers of the world, unite!". We knew that it would not pay off in electoral terms. I am very convinced that many in the working class who voted for us are now voting for the *Lega* because they do not understand this point. But there are historical phases in which it is necessary to emphasise this point regardless of everything else. [IT-INT.6]

In the cultural debate, this radical left tendency to reject national identity in the face of rising right-wing nationalism has at times taken on even more radical traits among the progressive intellectual and cultural milieu; including a sentiment of *anti-Italianness* that, in today's European radical Left, can perhaps find a counterpart only in the German *Antideutsche* tendency of some small grassroots groups (Erdem 2006). An example is the 2019 book "Against Italian identity" (*Contro l'identità italiana*), written by Christian Raimo, an influential left-wing intellectual, who argues in the book that the Left must reject, and oppose, the identification with Italy, because Italian identity is intrinsically colonialist, machoist and reactionary (Raimo 2019). This same position is adopted – perhaps even more radically so – by progressive historian Francesco Filippi in his book "Italians First! (Okay, But Which?)" (*Prima gli Italiani! Si ma quali?*). In the attempt to "debunk" a common right-wing slogan (*Italian First!*), Filippi ridicules Italian identity as false, ahistorical, and imposed from the top down: something only the naive could identify with (Filippi 2021).

However, these extreme stances do not usually characterise the leadership of any Italian RLP. No matter how internationalist and Europeanist the PRC is: with rare exceptions, its leadership did not go as far as to openly deny "being Italian"; but rather refused to articulate this aspect politically.

On this matter, PAP is very similar to the PRC: in the face of right-wing nationalism, it did not claim Italian identity or try to resignify it. Rather, it further insisted on class identity and, as the PRC did, it reaffirmed its internationalism. Faced with Salvini's slogan "Italians first!", PAP has often counterposed a slogan born in grassroots trade unionism, "the exploited first!" (PAP 2019), counterposing class identity to national identity. Yet, the party appeared slightly keener than the PRC at using certain mild references to the nation, as in phrases like "Our country, our people, deserve more than all of this!" (PAP 2021a) or "help us narrate the Italy that does not give up" (PAP 2021b). Francesca Fornario, a journalist who had a prominent role in PAP at the beginning, attacked the *sovereigntism* of the Right on stage during the closing rally for the 2018 PAP electoral campaign by saying: "let's remember that the partisans had the *tricolore* around their necks, they made the Garibaldi brigade, let's remember that the patria that we want is this one" (Fornario 2018). However, expressions of this kind are the exception rather than the norm in the party discourse: they are not recurrent and, at best, they suggest the existence of mild differences at the rhetorical level between PAP members more sympathetic to a left-populist vocabulary and those closer to the class-based *movementism* of the extreme Left (the latter being the one further from the national element).

Expectedly, the leadership of PRC and PAP are equally critical of Podemos' patriotism and, more generally, of the possibility to wrest nationality from the Right. When confronted with Podemos' populist strategy on nationality (see section 5.2.1), Carofalo explains

> It does not convince me, it seems to me ineffective [...]. I believe that not only this is not a winning strategy, but that using this type of content is dangerous, especially when it comes to migrants. [IT-INT.2]

On a similar line, Ferrero says

> I am very doubtful about the ultimate effectiveness of that stuff. I do not want to sound like an excessive determinist, but Podemos was born by placing that theme on the spotlight, and then we saw the birth of Ciudadanos and Vox, that use elements that were already in Podemos’ narrative, although in a different way... Then Podemos shrinks and those others grow. So, in my opinion that strategy does not work. [IT-INT.7]

Interestingly, the leaders of the two parties agree that, even if we assume that pulling patriotism to the left might be the right strategy for the radical Left, there is a binding problem which prevents its implementation in Italy: resignifying the vocabulary of the Right and contending the meanings of national symbolism require a hegemonic force and a political visibility that they do not possess. As Acerbo admits, strategies of this type are impossible *a priori* for them, because “unlike Podemos we do not go on television, so we march to our own drum, talking to only few people” [IT-INT.6]. Similarly, Carofalo explains

> Unlike PAP, Podemos was born from a great popular mobilisation and therefore has a much stronger hegemonic force, and it also has a consistent electoral strength and therefore obviously has the opportunity to speak to many people. It is like if you have a megaphone always on. [IT-INT.2]

This, she argues, is what allowed Podemos to “steal” and resignify some terms of the Right in order to challenge it politically. But without a similar political strength, in Italy this strategy would simply result in “being mistaken for Matteo Salvini” [IT-INT.2].

A small part of party members coming from the radical Left, however, disagreed over the choice of distancing themselves from nationality in face of rising right-wing nationalism, and joined the sovereignist Left presented in section 6.3.1. According to this political area, the Right has gained ground by representing demands for “identitarian protection” that are true and legitimate, but that the “1968-inspired Left” and the “*no border* culture” refuses to recognise, thus leaving room for the Right among popular classes (Fassina 2019). Therefore, according to Fassina, the Left should embrace the popular need for “identitarian protection” in a progressive way, starting from the Constitution” (Fassina 2019).

This being said, the supposed progressive resignification of patriotism carried out by the sovereignist Left remains doubtful. As sketched in this chapter, the sovereignist Left has often ended up producing a patriotic narrative that is based on frames present also in the discourse of the Right (albeit with different tones), namely the hostility towards cosmopolitanism, the European Union and mass immigration. If we exclude the occasional reference to the partisans (see section 6.2.1) and the insistence on the Constitution (see section 6.3.2), the sovereignist Left articulates its patriotism around frames similar to those of the Right. When Fassina accuses the radical Left of having turned into "NGOs, engaged on shore and off shore for migrants" (Fassina 2018b), there is not a counter-hegemonic challenge posed to the Right. Rather, there is a certain degree of internalisation of the right-wing discourse, given that the attacks against NGOs and the Left for being 'pro-migrants' is very typical of Matteo Salvini's discourse. This differs from Podemos' patriotic strategy: as discussed in Chapter 5, Podemos aimed to wrest patriotism from the Right not by endorsing some of its meanings, but rather by resignifying them in a counter-hegemonic attempt. Unlike the patriotism of the Italian sovereignist Left, the counter-hegemonic nationalism of Podemos does not articulate the attack on cosmopolitanism, anti-Europeanism, the insistence on protecting people's identities in the face of European liberalism, or the need to control migratory flows.

6.4 Summary

This chapter presented the second case study: the Italian radical Left and its relation with national identity. In the late 2000s, the Italian radical Left progressively fell prey to party fragmentation and political marginality, struggling more than in other countries with typical dilemmas on identity and strategy. Especially after the electoral debacle of 2008, it entered into a phase of decreasing electoral strength and increasing party fragmentation that has continued to worsen to this day. This political marginality had repercussions also on the relationship with national identity, given that this identity, however cultural and territorial it might be, is also closely linked to the idea of politically belonging to the country, of being part of a public sphere and a national political framework – of which the radical Left has increasingly found itself at the fringes. The gradual sliding of the Italian radical Left towards a 'people of the Left' subculture, outside mainstream politics, favoured a detachment from Italian identity.

Moreover, the legacy of its long-gone political strength combined with its current electoral weakness, have made the Italian radical Left much more ideologically trapped in its historical past compared to other European counterparts. This means that contemporary actors have frequently harked back to past outlooks in order to justify their current ideological positions on the nation. As the analysis suggested, it is thus essential to dwell more on how the Italian radical Left considered the nation historically, and to study how this impacts its heirs today. The relationship between the radical Left and nationality from WW2 onwards can be summarised in three distinct phases: the first phase (*antifascist patriotism*) is no longer a clear source of inspiration for the radical Left, except in some minor groups that have attempted to rediscover it. The legacy of the second phase (*class comes first*) can instead be traced in grass-roots and radical actors, such as *Potere al Popolo!* (PAP). Finally, the third phase (*beyond the nation*) is best represented by the 'historic' Italian radical left party, *Rifondazione* (PRC), who was the central actor in that phase and has kept its key elements up to this day.

Furthermore, in recent years the role of nationality in Italian politics has changed widely, returning to be highly politicised and thus pushing the radical Left to cope with it. This can be seen especially in some of the issues that have been dominating the country's political agenda in recent years, namely the criticisms of the European Union, the reforms of the Italian Constitution and the increasing strength of the nationalist Right. Raising Euroscepticism in Italian politics has also affected the radical Left, creating new rifts within it. Some actors, such as the PRC, much as they criticised EU economic institutions, remained committed to left-Europeanism and to European identity; others, such as PAP, engaged with Euroscepticism, but without displaying any political identification with the nation. If the European Union turned out to be a divisive issue on the radical Left, the defence of the Constitution over attempts by mainstream forces to change it has been much less so, being a political goal shared by virtually the entire milieu of the radical Left, albeit with some differences in intensity and rhetoric between actors. In this sense, the radical Left came close to constitutional patriotism, but without articulating it with any reference to national pride or belonging. Finally, with the hegemony of the nationalist Right over public discourse, and, to some extent, over the popular classes, the radical Left has found itself taken aback, unsure how to react to this threat. The most common reaction has been to strongly reaffirm internationalism as an essential value to be preserved and defended, and to take further distance from nationality. Yet, some minor groups within the left-Eurosceptic camp have attempted to rediscover patriotism as a way to counter the radical Right, but this happened without any comprehensive effort of resignification as done by Podemos in Spain.

7. THE PORTUGUESE CASE. LEFT-LEANING BANAL NATIONALISM IN PORTUGAL?

> *Quando se pede a um português uma definição breve do seu País, as explicações previsíveis, pondo de parte alguma diferença de pormenor, são, invariavelmente, duas: a primeira, ingénua, optimista, proclamará que jamais existiu, debaixo do Sol, outra terra tão notável e tão admirável gente; a segunda, pelo contrário, corrosiva e pessimista, nega essas sublimadas excelências e afirma que, últimos entre os últimos no continente europeu desde há quatro séculos, nessa situação ainda hoje nos comprazemos, mesmo quando protestamos dela querer sair.*
>
> **José Saramago** (Cadernos de Lanzarote - Diário II, Caminho, pp. 254- 259, 20/12/1994)

This chapter presents the third and last case study of the research: the Portuguese radical Left. As stated in the methodological chapter, the investigation conducted in this empirical chapter is based on discourse analysis on leaders' speeches and party documents; *elite* and *expert* interviews; and participant observation (see section 3.3). Primary data are reinforced by drawing on secondary literature, especially with regard to history, and by using visual analysis to corroborate findings.

In order to facilitate the reading of the chapter, Table 9 summarises the main Portuguese parties analysed.

Table 9. ***Radical left parties in Portugal***

Party name	**Year of Foundation**	**Party typology (indicative)**	**Electoral strength (selection)**
Partido Comunista Português (Portuguese Communist Party, PCP)	1921	Reform communist	7.91% in 2011 national election, 8.25% in 2015 national election, 6.33% in 2019 national election[39]
Bloco de Esquerda (Left	1999	democratic socialist	5.17% in 2011 national

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[39] The PCP's election results listed are those of the Unitary Democratic Coalition (*Coligação Democrática Unitária*), the electoral alliance hegemonized by the PCP and that the party contests elections with (see section 7.1).

Bloc, BE)			election, 10.19% in 2015 national election, 9.52% in 2019 national election

Lamentably, the analysis of this empirical case was complicated and negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which compromised the ability to work for a number of well-known reasons, including travel bans, which impeded normal field research and physical interviews. The pandemic arrived just as I was about to collect fieldwork data for this last empirical chapter, thus compromising it. This chapter presents therefore fewer primary data than the other two chapters, which I apologise for. However, the smaller number of interviews compared to the other two empirical chapters was offset by a broader corpus of political texts and speeches.

Finally, it ought to be noted that during the course of the analysis there has been a profound change in Portuguese politics: I started this whole research project in November 2017, looking at national identity in the Portuguese radical Left at a time when the nationalist Right was virtually non-existent in Portuguese politics, only to see its modest appearance in October 2019 (when it gained 1.3% of the votes, reaching its best result ever up to that point) and its subsequent fast exploit (11.9% in the presidential elections of January 2021), seemingly overturning many academic discussions on nationalism in Portugal. It is still too early for assessing how this new trend in Portuguese politics affects the radical Left. Yet, I tried to briefly acknowledge this contextual change in the last section of the chapter, suggesting some elements that may help future studies on this matter.

The chapter proceeds as follows:

The first section (7.1) provides a contextual introduction to the Portuguese radical Left with regards to nationality, pointing at the main specificity of this case study: the Revolution of 1974.

The second section (7.2) goes deeper into the research question, analysing the specific forms that nationality assumes in the discourse of the radical Left, and focusing on the differences *within* the Portuguese radical Left, namely between the Portuguese Communist Party and the Left Bloc.

The third section (7.3) tries to reflect on some recent developments that have been affecting Portuguese politics in most recent years, potentially impacting the relationship between the Left and the nation.

The Conclusion (7.4) summarises the empirical findings of this chapter.

7.1 Seizing the Nation: The Portuguese Radical Left and the Echoes of the Revolution

As recalled in the introduction of this manuscript, on the 25th of April 2020 the streets and the squares of Lisbon are almost empty, as the country is facing a rigid lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, similarly to many other European countries. Looking at an empty Lisbon would be unusual any day of the year, but it is even more so on April 25. In fact, April 25 is the anniversary of the Portuguese Revolution, the so-called Carnation Revolution (*Revolução dos Cravos*), that burst on the 25th of April 1974 against the fascist regime *Estado Novo*. For Italy and Portugal alike, the 25th of April is the day when the fascist regime fell (in 1945 in Italy, in 1974 in Portugal), yet in Portugal this date does not simply represent 'the liberation' (as in Italy's terminology), but something statelier: 'the revolution'. It is an important Portuguese national holiday, and on this day people usually take to the streets to commemorate the anniversary of the revolution. They do so both with institutional events and mass demonstrations that retell the story of April, identify its lessons, and underscore its implications for democracy and for Portugal (Fishman 2019, 199).

Due to the pandemic, in 2020, for the first time ever, there are no mass commemorations, although it is possible to hear *Grândola Vila Morena*, the symbolic song of the Revolution, sang by people from the balconies of their homes. Yet, on the downtown boulevards, there is a man walking alone, whose photos will soon reach newspapers worldwide (see Figure 8): he is an elderly trade unionist and member of the radical left party Left Bloc (*Bloco de Esquerda*). He walks on his own through the city, raising his fist *and* holding a giant Portuguese national flag to commemorate the Revolution.[40]

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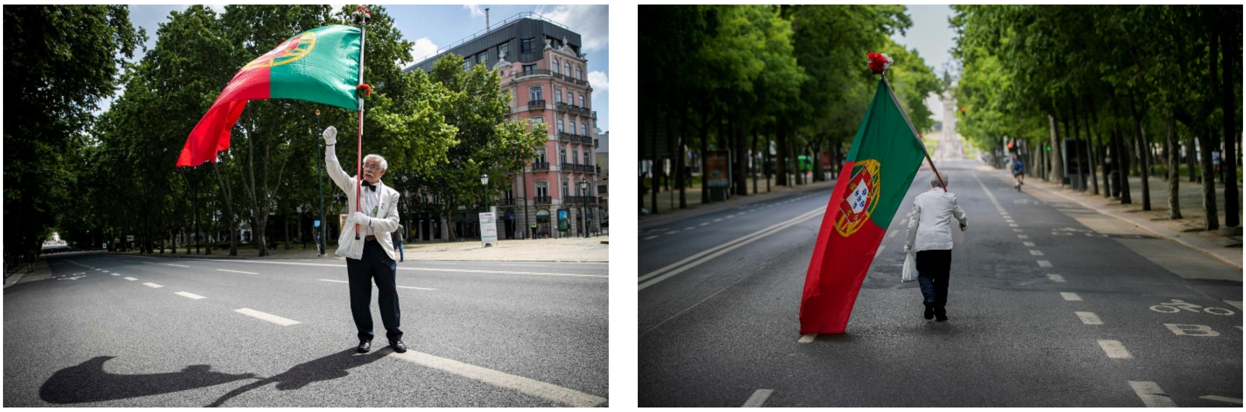
[40] The man was called Carlos Alberto Ferreira. He died in 2021, and his story can be read on *Esquerda.net*, the online news channel of the *Bloco de Esquerda* (https://www.esquerda.net/artigo/faleceu-carlos-alberto-ferreira/74751, accessed 20/04/2021).

Figure 8. ***Ph: José Sena Goulão/Lusa***



This small anecdote is very illustrative, as it gives us a glimpse into the Portuguese nexus between the Left and nationality: contrary to Italy and Spain (see Chapter 5 and 6), the Portuguese radical Left is much more at ease with Portuguese identity. And this is true, albeit with differences that we will discuss, for both major parties[41] of the Portuguese radical Left: the Portuguese Communist Party (*Partido Comunista Português*, hereafter PCP) and the Left Bloc (*Bloco de Esquerda*, hereafter BE).

The PCP is the historical party of the Portuguese radical Left, it was founded in 1921 and since 1987 is in alliance with a tiny green party, the "Ecologist Party 'The Greens'" (*Partido Ecologista 'Os Verdes'*).[42] At first sight it may seem a traditional Marxist-Leninist party, which historically has not been part of the Eurocommunist tradition,[43] yet it is also a party well integrated into institutional politics, that does not claim particular nostalgia for the USSR,[44] being very tied to the specifically-Portuguese workers and communist tradition instead (Neves 2008; 2021).

The BE was founded in 1999, shortly after radical left parties and movements had suffered an unexpected defeat in the 1998 Portuguese abortion referendum.[45] It emerged from the union of groups that originated from different traditions of the radical Left, namely Maoism (*People's Democratic Union*), Trotskyism (*Revolutionary Socialist Party*) and democratic socialism (*Politics XXI*). Since its foundation the party has shown close links to social movements and to the New Left's progressive culture, trying to represent a more modern and less ideological anti-capitalist politics than that of the PCP (Garí and Egireun 2019).

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[41] Compared to other European countries, the Portuguese radical Left is relatively less fragmented. Obviously, there are some radical left parties outside of BE and PCP, but they remain very small and without parliamentary representation. For instance, in late 2011, some people from the most left-wing sector of the BE quit the party and announced a new party in March 2012, the *Movimento Alternativa Socialista*. One year later, others from the right wing of the BE likewise withdrew, rebaptising themselves as *Forum Manifesto* in July 2014. Under the name *Tempo de Avançar*, the latter merged with the *Livre* (Free) party, a pro-EU left-wing party.

[42] The alliance is called the Unitary Democratic Coalition (*Coligação Democrática Unitária*) and it is with this coalition that the PCP usually contest elections. Generally, to refer to the coalition the initials of the coalition (CDU) or the initials of the two parties (PCP-PEV) are used.

[43] For a brief description of Eurocommunism, see section 6.3.1.

[44] 1961-1992 PCP leader Àlvaro Cunhal is very critical on the mistakes of the USSR: lack of democracy, excessive economic centralism and party bureaucratisation (Cunhal 1993).

[45] On 28 June 1998 a referendum on a new abortion law was conducted in Portugal; the YES was supported by the

Both parties are present in parliament (see the introductory section of this chapter for election results) and they are well integrated into the country's political debate, to the point that the Portuguese radical Left has been labelled as "a success case in the European context" (Lisi 2013, 22). From 2015 to 2019, both parties gave parliamentary support to a minority government of the centre-left Socialist Party, after reaching an agreement over a list of social policies to be implemented (the so-called *Geringonça*, literally 'contraption'). They are two different and independent parties, which always participate separately in elections, be they local or national. They also have partially different electorates: in a nutshell, the PCP scores better among low-skilled workers and in agricultural and poor areas, while the BE is more popular among young people and educated urban people (Lisi 2019a; Cancela and C. Magalhães 2020). However, the two parties maintain relatively cordial and collaborative relations with each other, especially in the national parliament.

As for their relation with the nation, the analysis conducted in this chapter will show that the two parties hold substantially different positions, yet they also share some similarities, because national identity is actually present in the discourse of both parties. A simple quantitative analysis can help give a first sense of the presence of Portuguese nationality in their discourse: Table 10 illustrates the presence of national signifiers in the speeches that João Ferreira and Marisa Matias gave in September 2020 announcing their candidacy for the 2021 Portuguese presidential election, for the PCP and the BE respectively (Ferreira J. 2020; Matias 2020). As the table suggests, references to the country and nationality are clearly present in the architectonics of their discourses, much more than in Italy (see Table 8 in section 6.1.1), but without the rhetorical and strategic insistence that has been used by Podemos' leadership (see Table 4 in section 5.2). In this regard, it is worth noting the absence of the term *patria* (which has been central in Podemos) and, in the case of the Left Bloc, the absence of the reference to the "Portuguese", opting instead for the reference to the country itself, which thus turns to be an important signifier for a few-minutes speech of only 1267 words. These are aspects that will be examined in the next section (7.2).

PCP and by large sectors of the Left, both movements and parties. However, the NO won by a narrow margin and thus the right to abortion was not legalised. It will then be legalised in 2007, after a new referendum was held.

Table 10. ***National signifiers in João Ferreira (PCP) and Marisa Matias (BE)'s announcement of their candidacy in the 2021 Portuguese presidential election***

João Ferreira (PCP)		**Marisa Matias (BE)**	
Terms	*Frequency*	*Terms*	*Frequency*
Country (país)	**15**	Country (país)	**13**
Portugal (Portugal)	**7**	Portugal (Portugal)	**6**
Portuguese/s (português/a/es)	**8**	Portuguese/s (português/a/es)	0
National independence (independência nacional)	**3**	National independence (independência nacional)	0
National sovereignty (soberania nacional)	**2**	National sovereignty (soberania nacional)	0
National interest (interesse nacional)	**1**	National interest (interesse nacional)	0
Patria (patria)	0	Patria (patria)	0
People (povo)[46]	**8**	People (povo)	**1**
Total words of the speech	*2658*	*Total words of the speech*	*1267*

The key reason for this presence of nationality in their discourses ought to be found in the legacy of the Revolution. If the anecdote presented above, about the leftist man marching with the national flag on the anniversary of the Revolution, suggested a certain easiness of the radical Left in relating to Portuguese identity, it also pointed towards its main reason: the Revolution. In fact, it is impossible to study the Portuguese radical Left without considering the Revolution of April 1974 and its legacy: it has been – and still is – a central element in the DNA of the Portuguese radical Left.

Started by a coup d'état by left-wing militaries opposing the colonial war, backed by vast civilian support, and soon followed by massive people's mobilisation, the Portuguese Revolution of April 1974 democratised the country through one year and a half of socialism-leaning turbulent revolutionary phase. It represents an exemplary case study of a social revolutionary pathway to democracy (Fishman 2019) and, among all the democracies that emerged from the so-called Third Wave of democratic transitions, Portugal is the one whose constitution is "most anchored to the left" (António Costa Pinto 2018).

As we will see in more detail in the next section (7.2), the party mostly drawing from the symbolic repertoire of the Revolution is the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) – being it also the one which more explicitly and frequently lays claims to patriotism. As Jorge Cordeiro, former MP and member of the Central Committee of the PCP explains, the legacy of the April Revolution is of foremost importance for Portuguese communists, whose key goal is "to open the way to policies linked to the values of April" (Cordeiro 2014). Yet, this is not something limited to the Communists alone. For instance, during the large anti-austerity protests of the 2010s, left-wing oppositional actors largely drew from the country's revolutionary past by "seeking to mobilise support against reforms that would supposedly go against the 'conquests of the Revolution'" (Carvalho and Ramos Pinto 2019, 219). As Portuguese historian Fernando Rosas writes: "it is from the defense, consolidation and expansion of [the Revolution's] heritage that the Portuguese Left still defines itself today" (Rosas 2020, 84). Indeed, the leaders and militants of the PCP and the BE are equally present and active in the yearly celebrations of the April Revolution.

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[46] Even if the term "people" is not necessarily a national signifier (see the theoretical discussion in sections 2.2 and 3.3), it is interesting for analysis and comparison and thus I have decided to keep it in the table.

Yet, what is important to stress here is that April 25 is by no means an exclusive heritage of the Left: it is also a *national myth*, in the sense of being perceived and treated as an inspiring narrative about the nation's past and identity, that contains a symbolic meaning for the country itself (Spencer and Wollman 2002, 83). In fact, Portuguese national identity is still heavily influenced by the Carnation Revolution: April 25 of 1974 was a watershed moment in national history, and the memory of the Revolution has been deeply incorporated within the country's popular culture and self-conception (Fishman 2019, 204). Accordingly, most of the current narratives on Portuguese national identity consider the Revolution as an important reference (Ribeiro 2018). As Fishman argues, "many Portuguese see the Carnation Revolution as being part of the national essence – part of what it means to be Portuguese" [PT-INT.6]. Moreover, the Revolution is at the basis of the national political system: it represents the foundational moment of the current democratic nation-State, i.e. "the genetic imprint of Portuguese democracy" (Rosas 2020, 111). As historian of Portuguese communism José Neves explains, "the mark of the Revolution is still felt in the Portuguese political system, giving it a soft left-leaning inclination" [PT-INT.5].

It is through this overlapping of the Carnation Revolution as a *national* myth and as a *leftist* myth that the peculiarity of the Portuguese case takes shape.

Whilst fundamental to understanding the Portuguese case, this semantic overlapping should not be overstated. We are far from the years of the French Revolution, when "left" and "nation" were virtually equivalent (see Chapter 3). In 21st century Portugal, the overlapping of 1974 Revolution as a *national* and *leftist* myth remains partial and incomplete. This is due to two main reasons which it is worth to briefly present.

Firstly, the collective memory of the Revolution is made up of multiple meanings and interpretations and, as scholars of nationalism well know, this is typical for national myths, whose significance is not univocal but often disputed. What political scientists and historians have pointed out in studying the legacy of April 25, is that the memory of and the support for the Revolution are present transversally in the population and still encompass a large part of the political spectrum, but the Revolution's legacy is perceived and understood in very different ways by the Left and the (centre)-Right (Royo and Pinto 2018; Cavallaro and Kornetis 2019; Fishman 2019). Indeed, the Portuguese Revolution represents many different things all together: it has "a plurality of meanings" [PT-INT.5]. As Robert Fishman summarises,

> From its inception, the captains' coup of 25 April was an episode of political revolution that successfully inaugurated a process of democratic transition, yet at the same time the uprising of 'April's Captains' also initiated a social revolution that would soon take a turn toward a socialist transformation of the economy. The historical import of Portugal's 25 April encompasses all of these components: political revolution, democratic transition, social revolution and socialist transformation. Over four decades later, however, political forces and scholars obviously differ in the degree to which they are comfortable embracing this entire package of historical elements of the 25 April 'story'. Right-of-centre supporters of democracy can easily celebrate the toppling of the *Estado Novo* and the pathway to democratic elections initiated by April, but can hardly be expected to see the Revolution's socialist turn in as positive a light as political forces located to their left. Clearly, the left also feels a greater affinity than the right or centre-right for the Revolution's social dimensions but that is not to say that Portugal's social revolutionary pathway to democracy has been exclusively appropriated by the left. (Fishman 2018, 23)

Secondly, as much as the Revolution was capable of 'seizing the nation' (that is, becoming a constitutive element in defining the Portuguese nation-state)[47] it has not been capable of exhausting the whole semantic field of Portuguese identity, which is also made up of previous and older legacies, including those from the long-lasting fascist regime *Estado Novo*, that ruled over Portugal (and its colonies) from 1933 to 1974. Portugal is a very ancient nation, small in size and relatively homogeneous in terms of territorial identity (at least compared to other European countries), with a national identity that is thus ancient, sedimented and little politicised (Birmingham 2018). On the one hand, this is likely to facilitate the identification of the radical Left with nationality, as a non-conflictual and historically sedimented identity. On the other hand, however, it makes it more difficult for the national myth of the Revolution to fully determine Portuguese identity.

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[47] As Fishman explains analysing the long-lasting effect of the Revolution, the rapid transformation of Portugal after April 25 led to "the emergence of new symbols, types of expression and discourse. Revolutionary songs, posters and poetry, along with the rapid adoption of red carnations as a symbol of the revolution, all contributed to the speedy transformation of meanings, practices and values. Cultural change proved to be far more widespread and enduring than in the case of more conventional political transitions in other national cases" (Fishman 2018, 26).

As these two points indicate, the overlapping of the Revolution as a national myth and leftist myth remains partial and incomplete; yet it does exist: it is a long-lasting particularity that Portugal experiences, whereas Italy hardly has anymore with its 25th of April (see section 6.2) and Spain never had (see section 5.1). The difference at stake here is between the Spanish transition to democracy negotiated with the Francoist elite, and the Portuguese social revolutionary transition, something that will be better scrutinised in the comparative discussion (see section 8.1.1).

7.2 The Patriotism of the Communists and the New Left

The section above provided a general introduction, highlighting some underlying trends. We have seen that both the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and the Left Bloc (BE) praise and refer to the Revolution of 1974 and how this 'eases' their relationship with Portuguese identity. Moreover, the fact that it is the PCP the one who refers the most, and more vigorously, to the Revolution, has already been touched upon. Likewise, it is also the party drawing most strongly from a patriotic rhetoric. In this section I thus analyse the differences between the two parties with regard to nationality, focusing first on the PCP (7.2.1) and then on the BE (7.2.2). Finally, I discuss a specific element that they hold in common and is highly relevant for this discussion: Euroscepticism (7.2.3). As it will emerge in the empirical analysis within these three sections, there is a presence of the national-popular element in the discourse of both the BE and the PCP, albeit with different forms and intensity (for the concept of national-popular, see section 3.3.2). In fact, both parties positively identify with the nation and the people, and articulate them together. Interestingly, national-popular references are present without either party being a left populist actor (see section 3.3). A national-popular discourse here is not the product of a rediscovery due to populist reflections, as it was in the case of Podemos (see section 5.2), but it rather reflects a certain level of left-leaning banal nationalism in the country, due in the first place to the legacy of the Revolution, as explained in the previous section (7.1). This left-leaning banal nationalism implies that even parties which, from an ideological point of view, are very distant from the idea of nation, such as the BE, partially internalise it in their daily political life.

7.2.1 The patriotism of the PCP

When looking at the discourse of the PCP with regard to Portuguese identity, there is a *trinomial* articulation that recurrently emerges: "Revolution – left-wing policy proposals – patriotism". This is a well-established articulation in the discourse of the party leaders: not only do the Communists often hark back to the legacy of the Revolution when presenting their policy proposals, but they also frame them with a patriotic rhetoric.

According to the Communists, the 25th of April was a glorious moment of *national sovereignty* and this is how the Revolution lays the foundations for their patriotism. In the words of Communist MEP Pedro Guerreiro,

> Our history demonstrates that the great moments of progressive advance were carried out and reached by the popular masses, always having as base and aspiration the affirmation of national sovereignty and national independence – so it was with the April Revolution and the Constitution that consecrated it, so it is now with the patriotic and left-wing alternative that is necessary for the country. (Guerreiro 2014)

According to the PCP, it is national sovereignty the needed ingredient to put forward a *Revolution-inspired* left-wing alternative to right-wing policies. That is *why* the Left must be patriotic. As he goes on:

> If the right-wing policy considers the weakening of national sovereignty and independence as one of its fundamental pillars, then a break with this policy and an alternative left-wing politics must be necessarily based on the affirmation and full exercise of national sovereignty and national independence – that is, left-wing politics must be patriotic or it will not be. (Guerreiro 2014)

In the party's belief that left-wing patriotic policies are necessary to build a better future for the country, the legacy of the April Revolution is abundantly present. In the words of Communist MP Diana Ferreira, "April belongs to the people [and] it is with the values of April that the future of Portugal must be built" (Ferreira D. 2019). As Jerónimo de Sousa, the party Secretary-General (*Secretário-Geral*), argues, not only is the April Revolution a "patrimony of the people and a patrimony for the future" that has been "built by the struggle of the workers and the people" to which Communists "have made a matchless contribution" that makes them "proud" (de Sousa 2021a); but nowadays the "values of the Revolution" are "part of the PCP project, and translated into a concrete political program – the program for an advanced democracy that the PCP proposes to the Portuguese people and that can only be achieved through a patriotic and left-wing policy" (de Sousa 2021a).

According to the historian Neves, since the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the communist bloc, the April Revolution is likely to have become an even more central reference in the discourse of the PCP, after foreign communist references lost their symbolic strength [PT-INT.5]. Remarkably, the lengthy speech that the leader Jerónimo de Sousa gave on 7 November 2017, at the party commemorative event for the centenary of the Bolshevik Revolution, was held on a stage decorated with red carnations, the symbolic flowers of another revolution, the Portuguese Revolution of April 1974. The placing of red carnations suggested an effort to "nationalise" the revolutionary idea, and also to create a connection between the two revolutions (Neves 2018).

By drawing its legitimacy and fixity from the legacy of April 1974, the party narrative matches up the interests of the nation, the people and the workers. The articulation of these three interests (and these three identities) is indeed frequent in the discourse of the party, which often defines itself as a force "in defence of the workers, the people and the Country" (de Sousa 2019b). In the words of João Ferreira, number two in the party leadership: "to fix the April values in the present and future of Portugal means fighting today for concrete achievements in favour of the workers, the people and the Country" (Ferreira J. 2019a).

This is, in sum, the core of the PCP narrative: to move forward for a better Portugal, through leftist policy and with the patriotic values of the Revolution at heart. This idea of 'moving forward' (*avançar*) is also a *leitmotiv* for the PCP, even if it means to move ahead only one step at a time – as for the measured pro-workers policies achieved by the party through the parliamentary bargaining with the Socialist Party. Coherently with this formula, the Revolution is also presented as "the most advanced (*avançado*) act and process in our contemporary history" (de Sousa 2018). Accordingly, some of the popular slogans that have been used the most by the PCP go along this line, such as "Moving forward is necessary" (*Avançar é preciso*, de Sousa 2019a), "for a Portugal with Future" (*Por um Portugal com futuro,* PCP 2004) and "a patriotic and leftist politics" (*uma política patriótica e de esquerda*, PCP 2017) – often used together in the propaganda, as the party manifesto "Patriotic and left-wing alternative: For a Portugal with Future!" exemplifies (PCP 2018). In the words of de Sousa: "The patriotic and left-wing policies, which the PCP defends, constitute a condition to ensure Portugal with a future of social justice and progress, to make it a sovereign and independent country" (de Sousa 2016a). It is around this discursive macro-architecture that much of the party's discourse with regard to nationality revolves.

However, we must be careful not to make the mistake of seeing the Carnation Revolution as the only source of the patriotism of the PCP. In fact, Portuguese Communists, like many of their European counterparts, in the first half of the twentieth century had already gradually embraced a much more national approach to the communist struggle. Furthermore, in a similar way to other European countries (see section 6.2.1), the anti-fascist struggle against the Salazar regime had increasingly assumed patriotic tones, with abundant references to the nation (Museu do Aljube 2016: 29-37). And the PCP, which was a key actor in that anti-fascist opposition, was no exception, considering the struggle against the dictatorship as "the fight of the nation against the regime, the fight for bringing back workers to the community of the nation" (Neves 2008, 93). Álvaro Cunhal, a Communist political opponent imprisoned and tortured by the regime of Salazar, and from 1961 to 1992 leader of the PCP, explained this point in 1946 in such a tellingly way that deserves to be quoted in full. Speaking of the role of the Communists in the ongoing struggle against Salazar, Cunhal said:

> […] leading the workers to struggle, animating national unity, we reconciled the workers with the nation. It was in the struggles for bread and freedom, it was in the struggles against fascism installed in power that the working classes found their homeland again: Portugal that struggles for freedom and democracy, Portugal that aspires to well-being, progress and culture, Portugal that wants an honorable place in the world of democratic nations. Fighting against fascism, the Portuguese people learn to sing the *Portuguesa* [the national anthem, *ndr*] and learn to wield the national flag. (Cunhal 1997)

What this discourse suggests is that the democratic struggle during the fascist regime was creating a *nationalisation of the masses* – a new national identification which would then be established politically through the Revolution and later cultivated by the communists. Accordingly, the point is not that the PCP suddenly became patriotic through April 25th, but rather that the Revolution allowed the Communists to resume and continue the tradition of antifascist patriotism, and to re-read national history through the interpretative lens of the Revolution [PT-INT.6]. Interestingly, this historical root also implies that the patriotism of the PCP remains somewhat relative – it certainly exists, but it is more sedimented and ritualised than politicised. Continuous references to the patria are missing, unlike in the most inflamed speeches of Pablo Iglesias (see section 5.2). Likewise, recurrent attacks on the Right as being anti-patriotic are also not central (they do exist, but tend to be sporadic and not very inflamed). In short, the patriotism of the PCP fits into a context of low politicisation of the Portuguese identity, as explained in section 7.1.

This observation allows us to move on to another relevant point that needs to be addressed: the ties of the Communists with Portuguese identity are not limited to rhetoric. As we have seen, rhetorical and ritualised phraseologies that revolve around Portuguese identity are certainly present in the political discourse of the PCP, but they rarely are shouted or fought over. Nationality often emerges simply as an expression of what Gramsci called the "national-popular" (see section 3.2) and thus goes beyond political rhetoric. Indeed, the PCP has many ties with national culture and popular traditions, from sports to literature (Neves 2009; 2010, 195–304). José Saramago, the only Nobel-winner Portuguese writer, was a Communist who had been nominated in local and (various) European elections by the PCP. One of the numerous tributes that the PCP dedicated to Saramago, following his death in 2010, deserves to be mentioned here, because it harks back to what has been said before about the importance of the Revolution for the Communists. In paying tribute to Saramago, labelled as “the greatest figure in our history”, the PCP declares:

> José Saramago once said: «I believe that nothing or almost nothing I did after the 25th of April could have been done before» - words that confirm that José Saramago’s Work is, too, an April achievement. (PCP 2010)

Moreover, unlike Podemos (see section 5.2.3), the PCP uses national symbols very commonly. As I noted during my participant observation in Portugal, the two Portuguese national colours, red and green, are at the basis of most of the party’s graphic and multimedia production. The Portuguese national flag is widely used in party events, from congresses to demonstrations, and the communist flag normally flies alongside the Portuguese one on the balconies of party headquarters throughout the country.

Finally, the patriotism of PCP does not coexist with socially conservative or chauvinistic stances. Certainly, the PCP gives less discursive centrality to issues such as anti-racism, anti-sexism and civil rights than the BE (as we will see in the next sections), and its stances in this regard are often more moderate than those of the BE,[48] but the party remains rooted in the *progressive* camp as regards to civil issues. We have seen that in Italy left-wing patriotism often mingles with socially conservative stances (see section 6.3), but this is not the case with the PCP. For instance, the PCP and its small ally Ecologist Party - The Greens were the only parliamentary parties to campaign for YES in the 1998 Portuguese abortion referendum (the centre-left Socialist Party positioned itself as neutral).[49] In 2010, the PCP voted in favour of the law that introduced same-sex marriage, making Portugal the eighth country in the world to allow same-sex marriage nationwide. Also, in regard to migration – which remains a little discussed issue in Portuguese politics, despite some recent attempts by the Right to politicise it (see section 7.3) – the PCP does not share positions with the Right. As the party states, “the PCP defends a national policy of welcoming and integration of immigrants, which values the contribution of their work and respects their civic, social and cultural rights” and calls for “active solidarity with immigrant workers who suffer intense exploitation in the workplace, [...] who are target of discrimination, racism and xenophobia, which the most reactionary forces intend to instill in Portuguese society” (PCP 2008).

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[48] The legalisation of euthanasia is exemplary of this, as the PCP is against, while the BE is strongly in favour.

[49] See footnote 42.

7.2.2 The novelty of the Left Bloc

As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, the Left Bloc (BE) was born in 1999 as a radical left alternative to the PCP. In the words of the party leader Catarina Martins, the BE considers itself as an "anti-capitalist, eco-socialist, feminist, anti-racist and internationalist party" (Martins 2019a). It is a party closer to the demands and practices of new social movements, less attached to the twentieth-century Portuguese communist tradition. However, this does not imply that the party broke with the legacy of the Portuguese Revolution. As the founding document of the party states:

> In 1974, Portugal broke with 48 years of dictatorship and experienced a revolution where rights, freedoms and democracy, opening to the world, decolonization and the socialist hypothesis merged, forever, in one word: April. This is the heritage we claim for the future. (BE 1999)

Similarly to the PCP, the BE also praises and celebrates the Revolution. The party actively participates in all annual events in remembrance of April 1974 and the newspaper of the party's young wing is called "bread and carnations" (*pão e cravos*), echoing the famous left-wing slogan 'bread and roses', but replacing roses with carnations, which are the symbol of the Portuguese Revolution (Jovens do Bloco 2016). As the party leader Caterina Martins explains, "[in Portugal] we have an institutional framework that derives from the revolution, with a constitution that is more open and democratic than other such documents. It defines democracy in terms of social and economic as well as political rights. There is greater pluralism in our institutions […]" (Martins 2017). On a similar line, BE long-standing MP José Manuel Pureza argues that the party's commitment to defend and strengthen public services and social rights "harks back to the dynamic and transforming power that the 1974 Revolution had in this sense. It is in this perspective that we assume the legacy of the Revolution" [PT-INT.1].

This being said, references to the Revolution are not very frequent in the party discourse, nor are they used by party leaders in their daily speeches. Leaving aside the speeches for the yearly commemorations, the Revolution is not a central signifier in the architectonics of the party narrative. And this also emerges on a symbolic level: at 2018 national congress of the BE (*XI Convenção Nacional*) to which I was invited to attend as a university researcher, there were no scenic elements that recalled the Revolution, neither carnations nor national colours, and references to the Revolution in the interventions of the various speakers were scarce. It was thus very different from PCP congresses, where scenic references to the Revolution are typically present. At the national festival of the PCP (*Festa do Avante*), which I visited as an observer in 2019, a large exposition about the

Revolution was set up and it retraced all the key moments with photos and information, highlighting the role of the party in the events around April 1974.

The difference between the PCP and the BE with regard to the Revolution can also be seen apropos of the very idea of Portuguese identity: the BE does not distance itself from nationality, nor is it critical of national belonging; and yet, at the same time, it tends to avoid references to national pride and symbolism. It is in the encounter between these two different aspects that the relationship of the BE with the Portuguese national identity takes shape.

At the basis of the BE position on the nation there is the recognition that the national dimension of politics matters and should not be overlooked or dismissed. As Francisco Louçã, first leader of the BE (1999-2012), explains:

> Of course, if we live in a country and we speak a language, we have a culture and a history […]. I'm very proud and happy to be Portuguese and to live where I live, but I cannot understand that as an opposition to other people. […] Marx wrote that the workers have no homeland, although they have some national origin and national life and national context and national culture. If anyone acting in politics do not understand the national context he is doomed to fail. [PT-INT.3]

However, recognising the importance of the national context does not imply the political use of national symbology. Indeed, the national colours are usually absent in the party's graphic and multimedia production. The Portuguese flag is rarely present in party events, without however there being a hostility towards it. As BE MP Isabel Pires says "It would be very rare to find the Portuguese flag in a demonstration of our party […][However] I personally am not uncomfortable if anyone use the Portuguese flag" [PT-INT.2]. In the words of Louçã,

> we respect the flag because it's a national thing, but we don't use it, we don't use it as an identification of the party […]. We respect the flag because we respect the people who respect that, but it's not a way of presenting the Left. [PT-INT.3]

The same goes for the word 'patriotism', that the BE avoids in its discourse. As Louçã argues:

> We don't use the term patriotic. […] Moreover, it is a concept with very much semantic confusion and we believe that in politics words should clarify and not confuse. [PT-INT.3]

Moreover, the independence of the majority of the party founders from the pro-Soviet communist tradition and their closeness to the alter-globalist movement, makes the BE a party more rooted on an internationalist political culture. As José Manuel Pureza explains,

> The BE has an eminently internationalist genesis: the social forums, the international

> solidarity struggles, from East Timor to the struggles for democracy in Latin America, against the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Soviet tanks, and so on. The BE was born out of this profoundly internationalist culture. [PT-INT.1]

It is, according to Pureza, a party that has "cosmopolitanism and interculturalism has one of its flags" and that considers "feminist, antiracist and class-based internationalism as a central value" [PT-INT.1]. However, Pureza goes on adding that

> we must have the wisdom to be internationalists defending the national. [...] I think this duplicity is absolutely necessary. [...] If the BE were just a patriotic left-wing party or if the BE were just an internationalist party with no attention to the national factor, I would probably not be a member of the BE. [PT-INT.1]

Indeed, the BE is not only a force that comes from heterodox Marxism and internationalist mobilisations, but it is also a party that competes in mainstream politics, which is institutionalised and present in the national political debate – a party that presents itself as a *national* party, aspiring to represent the majority of the people and leading the country. For instance, it is very common to find expressions such as "good for the country" (e.g., Martins 2021b), "solutions for the country". (e.g., Martins 2019b) and "project for the country" (e.g., Martins 2019c), in the speeches of BE leader Caterina Martins, especially while talking about party policy proposals. This is an important point to stress, in order to understand this coexistence in the BE of a radical left cosmopolitan identity and a national-popular profile. It is a point that BE former leader Louçã recognises and defends by referring to Gramsci:

> As Gramsci taught, a class or a social movement fighting for ruling the country must identify itself as the leadership for the country. [PT-INT.3]

Patriotic rhetoric and the flag might be very rare, but the words "the country" (*o país*), and, to a lesser extent, "Portugal", are recurrently used in the party narrative. As Catarina Martins said in the celebrations of May 1st, "it is those who work who build the country. It is in the name of justice for those who work that we build this country" (Martins 2021a).

This narrative of serving the country usually remains little politicised – that is, it is rarely used in the political confrontation against other parties. In fact, in the BE discourse, there is no populist attempt to contend words and concepts related to national identity and belonging and to resignify their meanings, as it has been in the patriotism of Podemos (see section 5.2). As Louçã openly admits discussing the experience of Podemos,

> the leaders of Podemos from the very beginning really believed in populism as a political strategy for creating new meanings and for disputing some general political references.

> That is not our tradition. We were never very much interested in the politics of populism […]. Creating new meanings for words is a game which is not as important in our activity as it is in Podemos. And of course, Podemos tries to create a national identity because they have a problem we do not have, which is the problem of nationalities in Spain. Portugal has instead a very structured and unified national identity and thus creating new meanings for national identity is not as important for us as it is for the political choices in Spain. [PT-INT.3]

However, it is not impossible to find BE leaders to use the signifier 'country' also in more confrontational forms, which resemble a patriotic discourse. For instance, in front of the right-wing vote against a government budget, which, according to the BE, contributed to "restore dignity to the country", Mariana Mortagua, one of BE's leading cadres, attacked right-wing parties by saying "the Right is not just a parliamentary opposition, the Right is precisely an opposition to the country" (Mortagua 2016a). Moreover, in more stately and general party speeches, 'the country' often gains centrality and turns into a main signifier in the discursive architecture, although a rather cosmopolitan identity remains. The electoral speech given in 2020 by Marisa Matias, BE candidate for the presidential elections, is exemplary of how the party displays a positive identification with the nation and the people, and articulate them together. Matias begins by talking about the effects of the pandemic and the importance of public health personnel, but the subject of the speech is always the country (Matias 2020):

> The country had people who looked fear in the eyes and went to fight. [...]
> The country had people of extraordinary dedication. [...]
> The country had people who never gave up when everything seemed to fall apart. [...]
> And the country also had people of immense solidarity.

Shortly after, when she introduces herself, she says:

> I am socialist, secular and republican and I'm going to fight for my ideas, alongside those who do not give up on Portugal.

And this allows her to talk about these three concepts by saying:

> Portugal needs a socialist policy. [...]
> Portugal needs secularism. [...]
> And Portugal needs the Republic, the freedom and equality that makes us all responsible for our people. The Republic is the land of women and men, children and adults, whites and blacks, immigrants and emigrants, without discrimination, without intolerance, without persecution. Freedom and equality are my banners.

The positive identification with the country is thus present in the party narrative, but it is deprived as much as possible of its 'blood and soil' component, and partially deprived of national culture and national tradition too, thus turning into a concept quite empty of semantic meanings. Yet, it remains central as a political community – as the true bearer of democratic and popular sovereignty that the party aspires to represent and to which the party policy proposals are aimed at. Here a certain split between 'nationality' and 'nation' emerges, in which the former is almost absent in the political discourse, while the latter is instead recurrently present.

This is the type of national narrative that characterises the leadership of the party and the majority of its leaders, but not all of them. In fact, the BE is a party with internal pluralism, less 'monolithic' than the PCP, and political differences between internal factions also reflect differences in the approach to the idea of nation. The comparison between the various motions at the BE congress in 2018 is exemplary in this regard. If the mostly-voted motion clarified from the title that the goal is "a stronger BE to change the Country" (*Moção A*), the minority motion claimed that "the strength of the BE cannot be exhausted in the representation of the party within the institutions of the bourgeois state" and insisted on the "urgency of internationalism" (*Moção M*) (BE 2018). As the historian of Portuguese communism Neves explains, there are sectors within the BE, which generally come from the Trotskyist *Partido Socialista Revolucionário*, for which "the whole universe of national imaginary means absolutely nothing" [PT-INT.5]. However, this does not necessarily apply to all those who came from the *Partido Socialista Revolucionário*. Indeed, as Neves recognises, "some others who also came from that Trotskyist tradition, including the first leader of the BE Francisco Louçã, were among the firsts to construct a national discourse within the BE" [PT-INT.5].

7.2.3 A common adversary: the European Union

In the analysis about PCP and BE's outlooks on nationality, there is one further element that needs to be discussed, namely Euroscepticism. Since the two parties have similar (albeit not identical) positions on this issue, which, at least in some of the years analysed, has been central in their political discourse, I opted for treating it separately in this section, for purposes of clarity.

Let us begin with a brief contextual premise: Portugal joined the EU community in 1986 (together with Spain) and support for European integration increased steadily in the 1980s, but at the start of the new millennium the pro-Europe enthusiasm of Portuguese citizens began to fade and this trend accelerated after 2006, reaching a climax in 2013 when only 35 per cent of Portuguese people considered the EU membership positively (Lisi 2020). To understand this change, it must be remembered that in 2011 a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Troika

– consisting of the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Commission – and the centre-right Portuguese government. The 78 billion euro bailout was granted on the condition that the Portuguese government would implement ‘structural reforms’, i.e. unpopular and painful austerity measures with a far-reaching impact on the welfare state and public sector (Moury and Freire 2013; Simões do Paço and Varela 2015). It lasted for three years, up to June 2014, when the bailout programme was over and Portugal exited. The austerity measured encountered vast popular opposition, including the surviving “Captains of April”, united in the April 25 Association, who denounced the externally imposed austerity policies and the “loss of national sovereignty” that the 2011 bailout package represented (Fishman 2019, 201).

In such a context, it is not surprising that Portuguese radical left parties intensified their opposition to the European Union. The PCP has always been showing a plain-spoken Eurosceptic position[50], which however assumed greater discursive centrality in the years of the Great Recession and the implementation of EU-led austerity measures. ‘Troika’s’ impositions were firmly accused to undermine the “conquests” of the Portuguese Revolution (*as conquistas de Abril*) and thus the PCP intensified its contestation of the European Union and the austerity measures by referring to patriotism and the revolution (Accornero 2015). The BE, on the other hand, was closer to the alter-Europeanist tradition[51], even if various positions on the EU coexisted (and still coexist) within the party. As Lisi explains, the BE has always been divided on this issue between a more Eurosceptic faction and a more alter-Europeanist tendency (Lisi 2020). However, during the years of austerity policies imposed by the EU, the discourse of the BE became more radical on this issue, and the party appeared decidedly more Eurosceptic than various other ideologically-similar European parties (e.g., Podemos). For instance, when in 2016 German Minister of Finance Wolfgang Schäuble declared that Portugal must stick to fiscal commitments, he was harshly criticised by the BE. In the national parliament, Mortagua attacked Schäuble by fervently repeating that “it is unacceptable that he slanders Portugal” (Mortagua 2016b). This was a similar reaction to the one of the PCP, whose leader de Sousa accused Schäuble of “treating Portugal as if it were a colony” (de Sousa 2016b). As Isabel Pires, BE MP, explains

> We fight European rules and how they affect the sovereignty of our country, especially

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[50] As the party declares in its party statute: “Portugal’s entrance into the to the European Economic Community, against which the PCP rightly fought and whose negative implications it predicted, created additional obstacles to a democratic policy, provided pretexts for the destruction of the achievements of April and inserted the country into a dynamic that seriously harms national interests” (PCP 2012).

[51] Left-wing alter-Europeanists usually call for a social Europe Union and for European solidarity, against the neoliberal policies endorsed by EU institutions (see: Damiani and Viviani 2019; Holmes and Roder 2019; García Agustín 2021).

> when it comes to economic choices or choices about infrastructure and industry. So when we use or express some feelings connected to the national identity it is mostly in this dichotomy between European rules and how we are unable to make our own choices. [PT-INT.2]

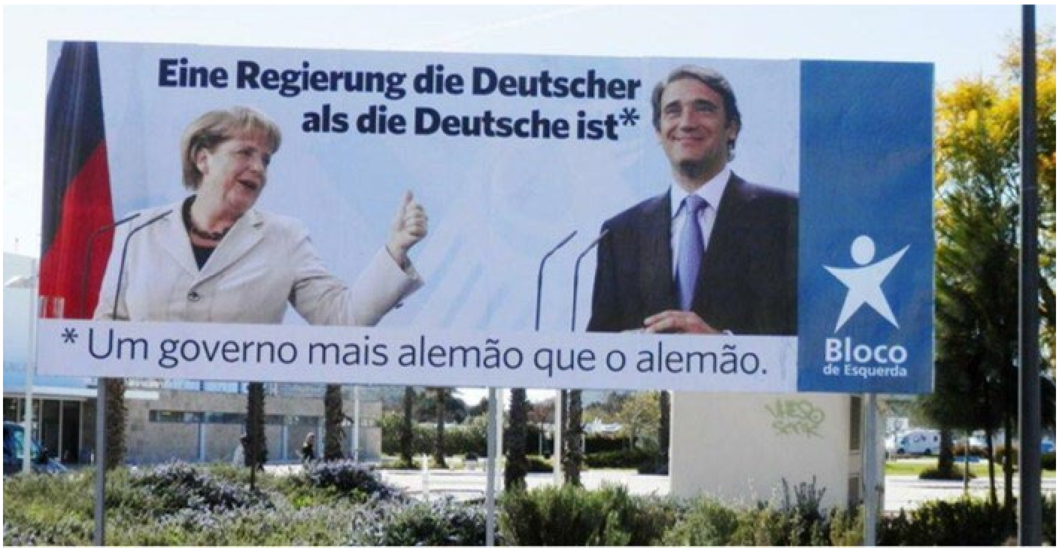
It is in the growing opposition to the EU that the discourse of the BE draws near the PCP's (Lisi 2020). As historian of Portuguese communism Neves explains, "with the presence of the Troika in Lisbon, there is a set of topics in the Left Bloc discourse that turns similar to the ones of the Communist Party" [PT-INT.5]. Quite tellingly, the Socialism Forum of 2015 – a BE yearly congress about socialist politics and theory – hosted a session entitled "Should the Left be patriotic?" (BE 2015). The session did not end with a straight *yes* answer (as it would have been in any PCP event), but the fact that the question was posed without prejudice or hostility signalled the impact of the European question over party stances.

Moreover, the criticism of the EU by the BE is not only economic (against neoliberalism) but also democratic (against the authoritarian imposition of the EU on national choices), and refers to the sovereignty of the democratic nation-state. As former BE leader Louçã puts it in pragmatic terms,

> the Portuguese government is the only structure of power within the European Union that we can directly influence. We have no, no, no influence on Merkel or on Macron or on Draghi. But we can make a lot of pressure, and be effective, on the Portuguese government, because that is where democracy exists. [PT-INT.3]

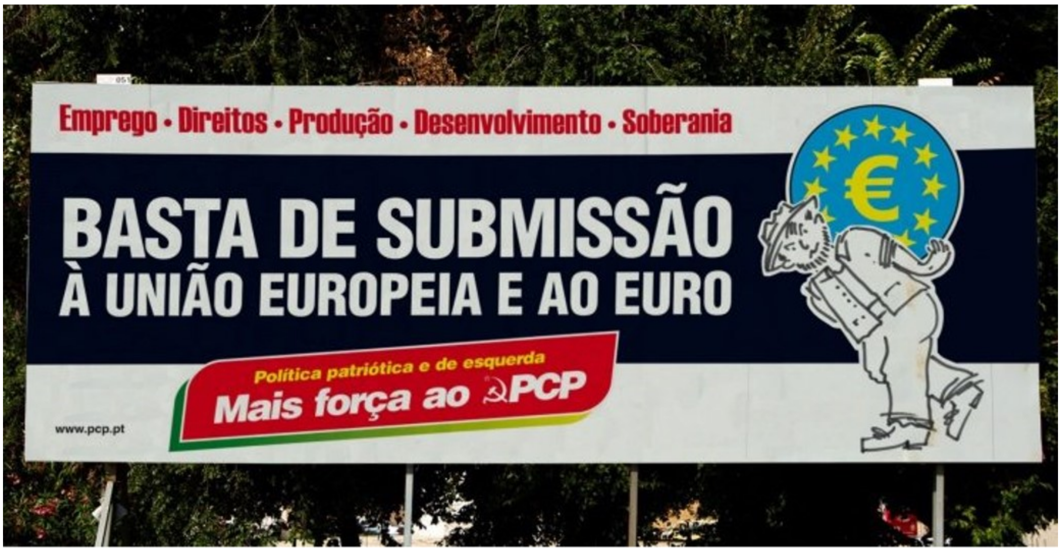
It is interesting, however, to see how a similar opposition to the EU presents itself in different forms in the two main parties of the Portuguese radical Left, according to the different narrative explained in the previous sections. Figure 9 and Figure 10 respectively show two propaganda posters of the BE (2015) and the PCP (2016). Both convey an anti-EU message, but in the first there are no references to Portugal, except in the accusation of the Portuguese government of being pro-German, while in the second there are the national colours (red and green), the reference to 'patriotism' and 'sovereignty'.

Figure 9. Left Bloc's poster (Lisbon, 2015)


Eine Regierung die Deutscher
als die Deutsche ist*
* Um governo mais alemão que o alemão.
Bloco
de Esquerda

A government more German than the German.

Figure 10. ***Portuguese Communist Party's poster (Lisbon, 2016)***


Emprego • Direitos • Produção • Desenvolvimento • Soberania
BASTA DE SUBMISSÃO
À UNIÃO EUROPEIA E AO EURO
Política patriótica e de esquerda
Mais força ao PCP
www.pcp.pt
€

Employment - Rights - Production - Development - Sovereignty
Enough with the submission to the European Union and the Euro
Leftist and patriotic politics. More strength to the PCP

However, it should be borne in mind that in the late 2010s the "European question" has gradually lost centrality and salience for the two parties, to the point that the 2019 European and legislative election campaigns were centred mainly on domestic debate (Lisi 2020; 2019b). Yet, although less salient, it remained in the background: at the programmatic level the strong criticism against the EU has not disappeared.

In the 2019 national election, the BE maintained a Eurosceptic position, albeit with an alter-Europeanist tinge. Point five of the party electoral program was named “a European policy to defend the country”, and stated that

> we maintain the project of a Europe of democracy, freedom and solidarity. It is precisely this commitment that impose us to unbow to the European Union of treaties and Euro rules. (BE 2019)

As can be seen, here the signifier *country* assumes central importance, and, since the topic is the European policy, it is even linked to a harsh term that would be otherwise avoided, “defend”. Moreover, as a side note, the Portuguese term chose by the BE for ‘unbow’ is *insubmissão,* that recalls Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s *La France Insoumise* (who, among the most-known figures of the European radical Left, is relatively more sovereignist and Eurosceptic).

As for the PCP, in 2019 João Ferreira, the party head of the list for the European elections, called for “the organised dissolution of the euro” and, in line with the party narrative, argued that the PCP “always gives great importance to the defence of national productive sectors” and considers “the need to assert national sovereignty” as “a fundamental axis”. However, Ferreira also clarified that “an eventual exit from the European Union is something that is not on the table and it is not included in the PCP’s proposals” (Ferreira J. 2019b).

In conclusion, both the PCP and the BE have shown an openly Eurosceptic position, especially in the years when the European question has been most salient in the national debate. For the PCP it was a continuation of its long-standing Eurosceptic positions, for the BE there was instead a radicalisation of its Euroscepticism. The two parties ended up displaying a similar narrative, although with different tints based on their different stances on the nation, as presented in sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2. Accordingly, the PCP articulated the criticism of EU-led neoliberalism with patriotism, national symbolism and the defence of national interests, while the BE put emphasis on Portugal’s right to democratic and national sovereignty.

7.3 Is Right-wing Nationalism Back in the Game?

All that has been said in this chapter about Portuguese national identity, being it little contested politically and characterised by the existence of a slightly left-leaning banal nationalism, has partially entered into discussion at the turn of the 2010s and 2020s, with a new change in Portuguese politics: the electoral growth of the radical and nationalist Right. Since this is likely to have an impact on the relationship between the radical Left and national identity, in this final section I briefly discuss this issue by looking at some on-going new tendencies, although it is still too recent a phenomenon for a structured academic analysis.

In 2019, *Chega* (Enough), a radical right-wing party inspired by the new wave of European populist and nationalist Right forces, entered parliament for the first time ever in Portugal, in a country with a hard-won anti-fascist consensus, that had proved ‘immune’ to the success of populist radical right parties since the return to democracy (Heyne and Manucci 2021). However, the party entered parliament with only 1.29% of the votes, electing a single deputy, its leader André Ventura. Yet, the entry into parliament generated a certain media hype and a new political visibility for the party. In the presidential elections of 2021, Ventura reached 11.89% of the votes, ranking third. It is an electoral result that seems to undermine the studies on Portuguese politics, which saw the country as an “exception” to the nationalist and right-wing populist wave typical of contemporary European politics. Until recently, scholars agreed that Portugal was a country in which the far Right was confined to small subcultures (Pinto 1995; Marchi 2020) and radical right populism was virtually absent (Carreira da Silva and Salgado 2018; Quintas da Silva 2018; Lisi and Borghetto 2018). Moreover, the question of migratory flows, on which this latter political current has built its electoral fortune, has been completely absent in the Portuguese national debate. As Lisi wrote in 2020, “Immigration has not been a major topic of debate in the domestic arena and has had virtually no impact on the Portuguese political system” (Lisi 2020, 4). Furthermore, as argued in this chapter, Portuguese national identity tends to be a long-lasting established identity, highly shared and little conflictual – that is, a national identity that remains “banal” (Billig 1995), slightly left-leaning as a legacy of the Revolution, and not really politicised, unlike, for instance, in Italy (see Chapter 6.3).

Has all this begun to crumble with André Ventura’s electoral growth? Or is it a media exaggeration? That there has been an undergoing mild process of increasing saliency of Portuguese national identity was something that had been noted also before *Chega*’s breakthrough, in line with the European trend, even if this did not necessarily imply that Portugueseness was framed within a right-wing imaginary (as the analysis conducted in this chapter confirmed). As Sebastián Royo wrote in 2018: “A new generation of young people are taking pride in all things Portuguese, as noted by the powerful emergence of new brands that emphasise ‘Made in Portugal” (Royo 2018, 16). So, is Portugal also experiencing a politicisation of national identity? And if this is the case, how are radical left parties reacting to it? Are they moving away from national belonging, or are they contending it to the Right?

It is difficult to give straight answers to these questions, not to mention academic answers, given that the situation is still embryonic. However, there are two hypotheses which I would like to advance on this discussion, although they require further academic studies to be corroborated.

First, it may be partly misleading to consider *Chega* as a nationalist party. In fact, the party does not seem to make Portuguese nationalism the central lemma of its narrative: it uses national identity frequently, but it does not give it (or fails to give it) the discursive centrality that parties to which it openly draws inspiration from, such as the Italian *Lega*, assigns to it. *Chega* seems to draw more from social conservatism and xenophobia than from nationalism (although it is not always easy to disentangle them), such as in its criticism against feminism and welfare policies to Roma people. Moreover, its 'populism' usually articulates themes such as the fight against corruption, the defence of cultural conservatism and economic freedom, rather than focusing on the greatness of Portugal (which the party mainly praises by cautiously celebrating the colonial past and the pre-1974 war heroes).

Second, there has been a media hype over the success of *Chega* that should be soberly relativised. As Fishman opines,

> *Chega* emerges after the emergence of such parties in other countries. Portugal is a latecomer to this tendency and *Chega* has at least thus far achieved less support than equivalent parties elsewhere. I also think that it needs to be said that *Chega* has so far done well only in presidential elections, and it remains to be seen whether they will be able to reproduce the same level of support in parliamentary elections. […] So, in comparative terms, I do not think *Chega* looks like all that successful: Portugal is a case of late and weak emergence of the far Right. But why did the far Right emerge at all? If we look at the public opinion data, Portugal regularly showed the existence of some people in the public who identified with Salazar and the far-Right tradition. […] I think that the majority of Portuguese people is not racist. It's either anti-racist or post-racial. After all, the Prime Minister of Portugal is a person who in the United States would be described as a person of colour and this is not a matter of discussion in Portugal. But, according to data, for a long time there have been around a certain element of racism and some people who identified with the Salazar legacy. [PT-INT.6]

Although these two contextual hypotheses somewhat relativised the supposed breakthrough of right-wing nationalism in Portugal, the far Right seems nonetheless to be here to stay, and this points at questioning how the radical Left deals with that.

The PCP so far seems to keep the clash with *Chega* quite subdued: they attack the far Right in the debates, but avoid to centre the party communication on the danger of neofascism, or to polarise the clash with it. As the leader of the PCP de Sousa explains: "There is a manifest exaggeration in relation to the systematic reference to this political force. It lives from this, not by initiative, not by proposal, not by answering concrete problems" (de Sousa 2021b). However, it remains to be understood how much this is a deliberate party strategy, or rather reflects a difficulty of the Communist Party in adapting its narrative to new political contexts and new adversaries. Moreover, the risk that *Chega* makes inroads into agricultural and poor areas of the country – often Communist strongholds – seems to be a real (albeit tacit) fear among Communists.

The BE, on the other hand, seems to be more ambivalent in this regard, oscillating among dramatic appeals to the fascist danger; political confrontations in which *Chega's* proposals are scrutinised and debunked; and attempts to ignore it. As Isabel Pires admits,

> At the beginning we were just trying to figure out how we were going to address this new party and his speech […] At first, we tried to ignore that André Ventura was present and try to see if the media did not pay any attention to him. It did not work. So, then we started to try to respond to him only when we knew that we had proof he was wrong, when we caught him. I still don't know whether or not this is the best strategy. [PT-INT.2]

Furthermore, a renewed and stronger attention to current cultural issues seems to be taking place in the BE, mainly among the party's younger cadres, often through a framework derived from the American progressive debate. They point the focus to discrimination of gender identities, to the importance of inclusive and not offensive language, to the problem of systemic racism, proposing a decolonial reading of society. The impression is that this new trend, especially the renewed attention to the Portuguese colonial past and the present racism, are pushing young party members away from identification with Portugal.

Obviously, these are only hypotheses and trends, and it is not yet clear how they will develop. Still, they suggest a potential change of course in Portuguese politics that in the coming years could deeply affect the relation between the radical Left and national identity.

7.4 Summary

This chapter presented the third case study: the Portuguese radical Left and its relation with national identity. As explained, the Carnation Revolution of 1974 represents a leftist *and* national myth, whose legacy still defines Portuguese politics today, making the country's banal nationalism slightly leaning to the left. Furthermore, national identity has not been particularly contested within the political arena, and therefore remains a shared and little-politicised identity. In this context, the Portuguese radical Left has been generally at ease with its own national identity, avoiding anti-national stances and rather displaying a positive identification with the country.

There are, however, some important differences between the two main Portuguese radical left parties, namely the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and the Left Bloc (BE) on the ways they relate to Portuguese identity. Much as they both identify with the nation in their political discourse, it is the PCP the one who clearly displays a patriotic rhetoric and a national-popular symbolic repertoire. In fact, patriotism is central in the discourse of the PCP and it is rooted in the legacy of the Revolution, but also in the national tradition of Portuguese communism. In the discourse of the Communists, national interest coincides with the interest of the working people, which can only be achieved through patriotic left-wing policies. This being said, the patriotism of the PCP remains more sedimented and ritualised than politicised. Cultural, symbolic and political references to Portuguese identity are commonly articulated in the party narrative, but they are not highly confrontational, and thus fits into a context of low politicisation of Portuguese identity.

The position of the BE on the nation is instead more nuanced. Much as the BE is at ease with national elements, be they rhetorical or symbolic, the party does not frequently articulate them in the discourse. The party's political culture remains primarily cosmopolitan and a national symbolic repertoire is mostly avoided. Yet, the signifier 'country' assumes discursive centrality in the party narrative. In fact, the BE presents itself as a national party, aspiring to represent the majority of the Portuguese people and to lead the country – it positively identifies with the country and frequently defines its policy proposals as 'for the country'. In the BE narrative, 'the country' is a concept quite empty of semantic meanings, but that remains central as a political community – as the true bearer of democratic and popular sovereignty that the party aspires to represent and to which the party policy proposals are aimed at.

Furthermore, both the PCP and BE have shown openly Eurosceptic positions, especially in the years when the European question has been most salient in the Portuguese national debate. For the PCP it was a continuation of its long-standing Eurosceptic positions, while for the BE there was a radicalisation of its previously-milder Euroscepticism, that reinforced the presence of national identity in the party discourse. The two parties ended up displaying a similar narrative, although with different tints based on their specific ways of talking about the nation: the PCP articulated the criticism of EU-led neoliberalism with patriotism, national symbolism and the defence of national interests, while the BE put emphasis on the defence of the country's dignity, democracy and sovereignty.

Finally, at the turn of the 2010s and 2020s, there has been in Portugal an electoral growth of the populist Right, which called into question the scholarly view that considered Portugal immune to right-wing nationalism. Although it is too soon for a comprehensive assessment, this change in Portuguese politics is likely to have an impact on the relationship between radical left parties and national identity, forcing these parties to now confront with right-wing nationalism.

8. COMPARING THE RESULTS

> *I know that you and your comrades don't share our opinions. But it's easier for you. You simply can't compare us, proletarians but with equal civil rights as citizens of a western, civilized, constitutional monarchy, with the oppressed Russian proletariat. It is clear that the Russian proletarian is no patriot in the sense that the German proletarian is.*
>
> Tomkin to Friedrich. **Joseph Roth** (The Silent Prophet, 1929)

The previous three chapters empirically inquired into the relationship of radical left parties with nationality, in Spain, Italy and Portugal respectively. Although there are references and connections between one chapter and another, each case study has been treated as an interpretable whole (see Chapter 4 for the methodological reasoning). The three chapters shared the same research puzzle and questions, as well as methodology and theoretical framework, yet each stood on its own. This being said, it would be a mistake to dismiss a comparative look on the case studies: it permits to better discuss the relevance that some factors have in shaping different radical left takes on the nation. As explained in the methodological chapter, and as already emerged empirically in the analysis of the case studies, an interpretivist approach to political phenomena does recognise correlations and causation, but treats them as contingent puzzles rather than social laws.

Accordingly, it is now possible to take stock of these findings from a comparative perspective. This chapter does so by engaging with some commonalities and differences that emerged across cases and by drawing a categorisation out of the empirical findings. It proceeds as follows.

The first section (8.1) singles out some factors that favour an explanation of the differences between the three cases and discusses them in light of the scholarly literature.

The second section (8.2) proposes an innovative analytical typology of the radical Left's stances on the nation.

8.1 Commonality of Factors and Differences in Outcome

Rather than singling out clear and recurring causal variables, the three empirical chapters have shown that the relation between the radical Left and nationality is polymorphic, as well as based on contextual and party agency reasons. Table 11 in the following page depicts together some of the findings from the three case studies, summarised through the conceptual lens of Discourse Theory. It is a partial recap that does not take into account all the actors and elements analysed in the empirical analysis; yet it permits to look at the phenomena under scrutiny from a wider angle – for a complete overview of the findings, please refer to Chapter 5, 6 and 7; for a definition of the theoretical concepts used for this overview, see Chapter 2 and 3.

As Table 11 summarises, the *sedimentation of national identity* is different in the three countries. Both in Spain and in Italy nationality has been mostly leaning towards a right-wing set of value – in Spain from late Francoism onwards, while in Italy from the nineties. On the contrary, in Portugal nationality is not clearly associated to right-wing political values, as the legacy of the Revolution still impacts some of its meanings and overall makes it slightly leaning towards the left. Similarly, the *level of politicisation* of nationality in the political arena varies across the three countries: in Spain and in Italy national identity is highly politicised, which means that is has assumed a political tone, becoming the subject of political claims. On the contrary, in Portugal it remains scarcely politicised: a shared sense of belonging to the national community is doubtless part of popular consciousness, but references to this identity are relatively marginal in shaping political conflict. Yet, the most recent political developments in the country suggest a potential growth in the politicisation of Portuguese identity. Finally, the *level of floating-ness* of national identity is also a key element in picturing the contextual differences in these three countries. In Spain there is a moderate level of floating-ness: Spanish identity does not have a stable meaning in the country's politics, because, much as it remains primarily controlled by the Right, it has also been challenged by left-wing articulations triggered by Podemos, trying to make inroads. On the contrary, in Italy and in Portugal the floating-ness of nationality is low, although for different reasons. In Portugal this is the case because the meanings of national identity are relatively shared and little contested, whereas in Italy because the Right has been hegemonic in producing its own signifying configuration of Italianness, capable of establishing itself in public opinion. Faced with these contextual differences, radical left parties (hereafter RLPs) have reacted in a plurality of ways. In Portugal, faced with a context in which national identity remains poorly politicised and not clearly associated with right-wing values, the radical Left has positively articulated national identity without major attempts of resignification. However, different parties have shown different behaviours, in line with their specific party profile. In fact, the Portuguese Communist Party has articulated national identity much more than the Left Bloc. In Spain and in Italy, although national identity has been equally right-leaning, the radical Left in these two countries responded differently to this similar situation. In Spain Podemos broke with the tradition of the Spanish radical Left and opted for positively articulating the nation in its discourse, by launching a profound attempt to resignify it. On the contrary, in Italy the main parties of the radical Left did not follow this strategy, and they rather adapted to the context, by avoiding positive articulations of nationality as well as attempts of resignification.

The reasons and forms of these differences and commonalities have been analysed in the empirical chapters, treating each empirical case as a stand-alone case study. Yet, in the analysis there are some general factors, both at the level of context and party agency, that are recurrent throughout the three cases and proved to be very important for the empirical research. Therefore, in this section I will focus on these factors from a comparative perspective, by looking at how they favour an explanation of the differences between the three cases, and I will discuss them in light of the scholarly literature. The factors that are recurrent in the three case studies are the type of country's transition of democracy, the outcome of the 2011 protests, the relevance of the nationalist Right in the country politics, the role of left-wing populism at the level of party strategy and Euroscepticism.

I will now address them one by one, each in a separate subsection. However, it is important to stress that these factors presented here are summarised and singled out for analytical purpose, but political outcomes result out of an interconnection and overlap of these factors (and others) altogether. For a more holistic and complete reading of each single case study, please refer to the empirical chapters.

Table 11. ***National identity and the radical Left in Spain, Italy and Portugal***

	Sedimentation of national identity	*Politicisation of national identity*	*Floating-ness of national identity*	**Main parties / tendencies**	*Positive articulation of national identity*	*Resignification of sedimented meaning*
Spain	right-leaning (since late-Francoism)	high	moderate	Podemos	high (decreasing)	high
				United Left	low (increasing)	high
				Anticapitalists	no (but high with peripheral national identities)	no
Italy	right-leaning (since 90s)	high	low	Communist Refoundation Party	no	no
				Power to the People!	no	no
				*sovereignist Left**	Moderate-high	low
Portugal	Slightly left-leaning (since Carnation Revolution)	Low (rising?)	low	Portuguese Communist Party	high	Low-moderate
				Left Bloc	Low-moderate	low

* It is in italics because it is not a radical left party, but rather a leftist political area with poorly defined borders that has attracted people from the Italian radical Left, and deserves to be discussed given its position on the nation (see Chapter 6).

8.1.1 Divergent transitions to democracy

A first factor that has proven to be relevant for the relationship between the radical Left and the nation in the three case studies is the type of democratisation that each country experienced in the transition from the fascist regime to democratic pluralism. Portugal moved beyond the Salazarist regime through a social revolutionary democratisation (Fishman 2018) that altered a good part of the sedimented meanings that national belonging had acquired during Salazar's rule (see section 7.1). With its predominantly left-oriented headship, the Carnation Revolution of April 25th 1974 paved the way to a left-leaning identification with the country that continues to exist nowadays (see section 7.2). As emerged in the analysis, this type of democratic transition favoured the rise of an institutionalised banal nationalism which the radical Left can more easily identify with than in other countries; and this can be noted in the greater presence of national signifiers in the discourses of Portuguese radical left parties, even in a party as the Left Bloc (BE), whose political culture is primarily cosmopolitan and yet shows loyalty and esteem for national institutions and for the Portuguese nation-state (see section 7.2.2).

Something somewhat similar happened also with the democratisation process in Italy. In fact, the final defeat of Nazi-Fascism through the partisan uprising and the Liberation on April 25th 1945 consecrated a narrative that considered the fight against fascism as a national liberation struggle – a fight for the *patria*. Accordingly, the Italian Left in the first democratic decades had no difficulty in identifying with the country (see section 6.2), in a similar way to what has been said about the contemporary radical Left in Portugal. Yet, the Italian transition to democracy happened exactly thirty years sooner than the Portuguese one, and in more recent years new political junctures carried along a decline in the influence of the Liberation over Italian politics, not to say in its capacity to provide a widespread left-wing identification with the country (see section 6.2.3). Over the years the Italian Right proved successful in constructing a new identification with the country where the Liberation had no relevant significance anymore (see sections 6.2.3 and 6.3.3), creating a new and more widespread banal nationalism based on ethnocultural elements, that is much more difficult for the radical Left to identify with.

Contrary to Italy and Portugal, in Spain the 1975-1978 regime change was gradual, mediated and primarily elite-driven: the Spanish transition to democracy was a process of negotiated reform driven by reformist members of the Francoist apparatus and the democratic opposition (Sánchez-Cuenca 2020). This restrained a progressive resignification of Spanish identity, after a long-lasting fascist regime that had been particularly successful in seizing national identity (see section 5.1). In fact, this type of democratic transition did not give way to forms of banal nationalism with which the radical Left could easily identify, and elements from the Francoist past survived, starting with the monarchy itself, preventing the radical Left from a troubleless identification with the country. Furthermore, a left-wing identification with Spain was further complicated by the alliance that emerged between sectors of the Left and peripheral nationalist movements (anti-Franco as well as anti-Spain) during the fight against the Francoist dictatorship. As a result, the Spanish radical Left mostly avoided to positively identify with the nation. This changed with the breakthrough of Podemos, whose leaders deliberately began to praise Spain and their national belonging. However, in the attempt to claim patriotism and national pride, Podemos' leadership had almost no sedimented meanings they could make use of in building their own patriotic discourse (unlike, for instance, the Communist Party in Portugal) and were thus forced to operate counter-hegemonically, attempting a political resignification of what Spanishness stands for (see section 5.2).

What these three different cases suggest is that the type of transition to democracy does not mechanically determine the presence or absence of radical Left's patriotism, yet it heavily influences the conditions of possibility of the relation between RLPs and the nation. As the scholarly literature on democratisation indicates, the type of transition to democracy influences how inclusionary national institutions and politics are (see: Fishman and Villaverde Cabral 2016; Fishman 2019). This, in turn, is likely to impact also how actors feel attached and loyal to the national political community, and thus – to a certain extent – to 'the country'. The sedimentation of meanings that emerges from the transition to democracy can thus pull the radical Left further from, or closer to, the nation. Yet, the findings also indicate that this sedimentation can always be altered, and this change can come both from the Left and the Right. As emerged in the analysis, in Italy right-wing political actors overcame old conceptions of Italian identity that were favourable to the Left and gradually established new ones; in Spain Podemos' goal-oriented leftist leadership attempted to challenge unfavourable identifications with Spain and set up new ones.

8.1.2 The outcome of the 2011 protests

In 2011, large demonstrations against austerity measures and post-democratic polity spread in many areas of Europe and beyond, opening a new transnational cycle of protests. In countries where these protests have been continuous and particularly widespread (such as Greece and Spain), attended by people beyond the circle of the militant Left, they proved to have a relevant impact on RLPs (García Agustín and Jørgensen 2016; della Porta et al. 2017; March 2017b). This cycle of mobilisation fostered a renewal in symbols, practices and vocabulary within the radical Left's political culture. By actively taking part in the popular protests, actors from the radical Left opened up to new discourses and practices inspired by the mobilisation, favouring a greater willingness to abandon some ritualisms of radical left subcultures.

An exemplary case of this has been the 15-M in Spain: the wave of protests against austerity, corruption, and for a real democracy (*democracia real*), that spread throughout Spain from May 2011 onwards. The 15-M shook the Spanish radical Left, favouring a critical reflection on its *modus operandi* and opening a window of opportunity for new practices and discourses, including a wider use of national-popular discursive elements and even left-wing patriotism (see section 5.2.1). In fact, the global protest movements of 2011, although transnational and interconnected, returned to perceive the nation as their prime political arena and, at times, even as a source of identity, by pointing at national adversaries and using a more national-popular discourse (Gerbaudo 2017, 113–34). As the analysis indicated, the 15-M's return to a national-popular symbolic repertoire, different from the traditional frames of the radical Left, influenced Podemos' discourse and the party's attempts to reclaim national identity (see section 5.2.1).

Contrary to Spain, in Italy the 2011 protests turned to be a "failed mobilisation" (Zamponi 2012). Although the international cycle of protests led to hundreds of demonstrations, assemblies and meeting also in Italy, the mobilisation was eventually much less influential than in Spain and in Portugal, and all the attempts to start some Italian Occupy-style mobilisation, during the Fall of 2011, proved to be very weak in terms of outcome (Zamponi 2012; Andretta 2017). This contained the diffusion and sedimentation of the international protest movement's new ideological constructs within the radical Left. Italian RLPs found themselves increasingly on the corner of the political system, due to their electoral weakness and the weakness of social movements' mobilisation (at least in terms of outcome). This situation restrained the possibilities for RLPs to ideologically renew themselves and to positively identify with the national community (see section 6.2).

Similarly to Spain, Portugal also witnessed an intense wave of anti-austerity contention. The Portuguese protest of the *Geração à Rasca* ('The Desperate Generation') on 12 March 2011 was the biggest demonstration in Portugal since the Carnation Revolution of 1974 (Baumgarten 2013). This demonstration was the first of a series of protest events that were part of 2011 worldwide mobilisations against austerity measures and for participatory democracy. However, Portugal did not witness a crisis of the political system comparable to Spain. Dissatisfaction with economics, not with institutions, was at the heart of Portugal's 2011 protests (Portos and Carvalho 2019). Moreover, much as there were ideas and practices imported from other countries' mobilisations, the 2011

Portuguese protests relied mainly on more traditional actors and social movement groups, and the protest discourse remained mostly Portugal-specific (Baumgarten 2013, 469; Accornero and Ramos Pinto 2015). These mobilisations were generally centred on social and economic issues, rather than political and democratic ones, and there was not a proliferation of new movement groupings as in Spain. As such, it was easier for established RLPs to capitalise on public dissatisfaction by articulating an economic, anti-austerity discourse. By remaining relatively attached to national institutions, the Left Bloc (BE) and the Communist Party (PCP) put the fight against EU-led austerity measures at the centre of their campaigning, without embracing a clearly populist rhetoric (see section 7.2). This being said, the cycle of mobilisation was not a "turning point" for how the Portuguese radical Left treated the nation. The PCP was openly patriotic before the 2011 cycle of protests and continued to be so also after; the BE had no problem in identifying with the country either before or after 2011. At best, the 2011 cycle of protests reinforced the PCP and BE's identification with the country by fueling their anti-EU stances (see section 7.2.3).

As social movement studies underlined, progressive social movements have often addressed programmatic challenges to left-wing parties, by proposing new issues and new organisational challenges, by raising support for some emerging topics in public opinion and so on (e.g. della Porta and Diani 2020, 197–231). However, studies that focused on how social movements influenced the radical Left during the cycle of anti-austerity protests have centred their analysis on other issues rather than national identity (e.g. García Agustín and Jørgensen 2016; della Porta et al. 2017; March 2017b). Yet, as the analysis conducted in this research indicates, this cycle of protests also mattered for the relation between the radical Left and the nation. As findings suggest, when the 2011 cycle of protests was successful in terms of outcome, this seems to have favoured the spread of national-popular elements within the radical Left. If for Portugal this was nothing more than a mild strengthening of already-existing tendencies, in Spain the cycle was more like a turning point, and brought the Spanish radical Left one step closer to consider itself as 'part of the nation' too, paving the way for Podemos' patriotism. Instead, the marginalisation and eventual failure of protest politics in Italy, made more difficult for the Italian radical Left to take a similar path as the one of Podemos, and pushed it further to the corner of the national political community, strengthening its animosity towards the nation.

8.1.3 The hegemony of the nationalist Right and migration flows

The relative success of radical right parties in many EU countries after the Great Recession and, by extension, the role that nationality has been increasingly playing in the articulation of political conflicts, are an issue that has been extensively discussed in the literature, also focusing on the politicisation of immigration in Europe during the so-called migration crisis (e.g. Mudde 2017b; Milačić and Vuković 2017; Crouch 2018; Caiani and Císař 2019; Hutter and Kriesi 2021). Yet, raising levels of electoral support for radical right parties are mostly being left out of the analysis in academic studies on the radical Left (at least as far as contemporary Europe is concerned). This issue has been partly tackled from the angle of migration policies: McGowan and Keith inquired whether the radical Right's exploitation of migration-related issues has also obliged RLPs to change their policies (McGowan and Keith 2016). As they claim, most of the European RLPs they analysed have been developing a narrative on immigration issues clearly distinct from the one of the radical Right, which emphasises internationalism and open borders. However, they have generally struggled to express this in a way that has been convincing to voters or has been able to prevent the growth of the radical Right (McGowan and Keith 2016, 105–7).

This issue also opens up a broader question on the identification with the country by the radical Left. In situations where the radical Right is politically influential and centres its discourse on the defence of the country's identity against immigration, how can leftists identify with their country?

This is the problem that the radical Left had to face in Italy. Even before the populist right zeitgeist, Italy's radical leftists where already increasingly distancing themselves from the nation (see section 6.2), and this distancing skyrocketed with the exploit of xenophobic nationalism, brandished by populist radical right actors who put the defence of Italianness and nation's borders at the centre of the political agenda. As Broader recalls, "the harsh debate on mass immigration – presented by all major parties as a central cause of crime – allowed the Lega to polarise the right-wing electorate around its identitarian agenda, while also promoting it to the cutting edge of the fight against 'the left" (Broder 2020). With immigration serving as the glue of Italy's newfound nationalism, the Italian radical Left reacted, explicitly or implicitly, by increasingly distancing itself from any identification with the country. Much as this was the dominant trend, some minor actors became instead harshly critical of the Left's cosmopolitanism and open-border stances, and thus turned to patriotism. However, they embraced Italian patriotism without managing to provide a clear-cut alternative to the dominant right-wing identification with the nation, and the boundaries between their patriotism and the one of the Right often blurred (see sections 6.2.3 and 6.3.3).

The Portuguese and Spanish cases differ from the Italian one on this matter. First of all, in the two countries, the breakthrough of the populist Right (*Vox* in Spain, *Chega* in Portugal) took place later and without ever reaching such high consensus rates as in Italy. Furthermore, the issue of migration impacted the Spanish political debate much less than in Italy, and in Portugal even less than in Spain. As Lisi points out, "[i]mmigration has not been a major topic of debate in the domestic arena and has had virtually no impact on the Portuguese political system" (Lisi 2020, 4). Neither in Spain nor in Portugal, therefore, has the issue of immigration greatly affected the ways in which the radical Left engaged with its own national identity.

Nevertheless, differently than Portugal, Spain did experience a (however partial) political hegemony of the Right on the terrain of national identification when Podemos was founded in 2014. It was exactly this hegemony of the Right over nationality that Podemos aimed to replace with its counter-hegemonic approach. Yet, this hegemony was mostly a legacy of Francoism, and was not directly connected to the new wave of European right-wing and xenophobic populism (see section 5.1). Thus, the dispute was not so much on the migration issue as on other issues (see section 5.2). This counter-hegemonic approach continued also after the arrival of *Vox* and its xenophobic nationalism, albeit it was accompanied by a tendential weakening of the centrality of patriotism in Podemos' discourse.

These different cases suggest that the hegemony of right-wing nationalism significantly matters for how the radical Left engages with nationality, pushing it to take clearer positions on this issue. It seems to favour either a stepping away from national identification (as in Italy) or an attempt to challenge the meaning of this identification (as in Spain). 'Intermediate' positions, such as that of the Left Bloc (BE) in Portugal (see section 7.2.2), appear instead to be more viable in contexts without a clear hegemony of the Right and where nationality is a less polarising issue. Finally, it is reasonable to assume that counter-hegemonic attempts by the radical Left to pull patriotism to the left are relatively easier when the hegemony of the Right is built on issues other than immigration (as in Spain). If the leitmotif of right-wing nationalism is instead the hostility towards migrants (as in Italy), this seems to complicate the ability of the radical Left to disarticulate the link between national identity and ethnocultural stances, given the high level of politicisation and political salience of migration flows.

8.1.4 Left-populist strategy and patriotism

In the chapters that preceded the empirical analysis, I argued that the left-populist variant of the European radical Left is occasionally pictured in the academic literature as more at ease with the nation, even keen to draw from patriotism in its discourse (see section 3.3). As the literature on left-wing populism indicates, much as 'the people' is understood in inclusionary terms by left-populists, it represents, above all, a national community, and the defence of popular sovereignty takes place within the nation-state borders. Moreover, the role of emotions in constituting collective identities contributes to overlapping appeals to the people and the national community, since the nation entails a considerable number of emotionally-loaded symbols which reinforce the sense of belonging (e.g. García Agustín 2020, 65–80; De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2021; Chazel and Dain 2022).

The empirical analysis conducted on the Spanish radical Left confirms this scholarly insight: Podemos' patriotism is embedded in the party's populist strategy. As the analysis has shown, Podemos' leaders use a dichotomic division between the people and the elite as a calculated discursive strategy, and, in order to strengthen this populist strategy, they draw from patriotism. Thus, the nationalist elements of Podemos' discourse are not traces of internalised banal nationalism, but they are intentionally used by the party's goal-oriented political leadership as a means to reinforce their populist project and their political legitimisation. However, Podemos has not simply referred to the naturalness of the nation for legitimising itself, but it has actively attempted to modify its meanings, as part of a broader populist strategy (see section 5.2).

This empirical confirmation of the link between populism and nationalism seems to find theoretical validation also from the fact that in most of today's Western countries, political competition is still highly nationalised and the political concepts of people and nation, however distinct, have parts of meaning that overlap and interconnect (Brubaker 2019; Anastasiou 2019). Accordingly, populist rhetoric and practices are often overdetermined by national(ist) narratives and imaginaries. It appears difficult (albeit not *a priori* impossible) to politically conceive 'the people' not as 'people-nation' (see the theoretical discussion in section 3.3). Unsurprisingly, this was exactly the reasoning that Podemos' founders came up with while planning their populist strategy: in order to claim to represent 'the people', they believed they could not afford to leave national belonging aside (see section 5.2.1).

The Italian case is completely different on this matter, due to the absence of structured left-wing populist parties (Mazzolini 2019). In fact, as emerged from the analysis, the parties of the Italian radical Left were little influenced by left-wing populism. No openly populist left parties ever emerged and, when some populist elements were internalised by the radical Left, this happened in a limited and secondary way, as in the case of Power to the People! (PAP) (see section 6.2.2). As philosopher Benedetto Croce warned us, what-ifs do not belong in historical analysis (Bobbio 2016, 77–78); yet, it is reasonable to suppose that the fact that left populism never really set foot in Italy, did not play in favour to an eventual reconciliation of the radical Left with national identification.

This being said, this study also points out that it would be a mistake to consider left-populists as the only radical left actors who draw from a national imaginary and even from patriotism. Much as praising the nation is not a common characteristic of the whole European radical Left (see section 2.3), this trait can at times be seen also beyond left-wing populism, as the overall analysis of the Portuguese radical Left notably indicates (see Chapter 7). In fact, clear-cut patriotism can be found even among non-populist radical Left actors, as the case of Portuguese Communist Party exemplarily shows. In the discourse of the Portuguese Communist Party, left-wing pro-worker stances and patriotism are solidly articulated together, although this articulation does not emerge out of a populist rhetoric or strategy (see section 7.2.1).

8.1.5 National pride and Euroscepticism

A final element worthy of a comparative look is the position of RLPs on the European Union, in order to explore how this position matters for how they engage with the nation. There is a scholarly acknowledgement that the economic crisis has polarised opinions about the European Union within the radical Left, triggering RLPs to launch fierce criticisms of the EU's response to the 2008 financial crisis. The European radical Left has always had to accommodate different outlooks on European integration, from sceptic to supportive. But the crisis has pushed both viewpoints further away from each other, weakening the overall voice of the radical Left on the European stage. They have shared an extensive critique of the EU project, but have found it hard to agree on the fundamental question of whether the European Union itself can be reformed or not (Holmes and Lightfoot 2016; Keith 2017; García Agustín 2021). Yet, how these different views on the EU have influenced the positions of the radical Left on national identity remains an open question. Halikiopoulou and others famously argued that radical Left's Euroscepticism is eventually based on, and intertwined with, nationalist stances (Halikiopoulou, Nanou, and Vasilopoulou 2012). However, this claim has been later disputed by other scholars (see Charalambous 2013b).

What this thesis' findings indicate is that the Euroscepticism-nationalism nexus within the radical Left does exist in some cases, but it is a nexus that ought to be problematised, as it is by no means generalisable. For instance, it notably does not hold true in Spain for the case of Podemos, wherein the party's patriotism is not based on left-wing Eurosceptic stances (see section 5.2.1). Podemos has been patriotic, but not Eurosceptic. It did express some mild (and often-secondary) Eurosceptic stances, but these were very rarely linked to patriotism. National pride was deployed by Podemos within the arena of national politics, in opposition to internal and not external adversaries. When the party talked about European affairs the patriotic rhetoric faded away and references to national identity were rare (see section 5.2.2). This suggests that the identitarian and symbolic rediscovery of the nation does not necessarily imply the refusal of politics beyond the national scale. In fact, national and European identities are not bound to be mutually exclusive, and in some cases they can also be cumulative (Caiani and Weisskircher 2022). As the case of Podemos indicates, RLPs can exploit cultural and symbolic references to nationality in their political communication without setting their politics as hostile towards transnational institutions.

As for the Italian radical Left, the Euroscepticism-nationalism nexus appears to be seesawing. We have seen that the rise of Euroscepticism in Italy in the second half of the 2010s also reached the radical Left, and hard Eurosceptic positions increased within the radical left milieu, at the expense of previous *alter*-Europeanist stances (see sections 6.2.3 and 6.3.1). Fuelled by Euroscepticism, some actors did turn to national pride and national sovereigntism, as for the so-called *sovereignist Left* (see section 6.3.1). In the narrative of those actors, hostility for the EU and patriotism were articulated together and their discursive salience increased jointly, thus showing a neat presence of the Euroscepticism-nationalism nexus. However, this was not always the case: some actors who embraced hard Euroscepticism have done so without expressing it through a patriotic or sovereignist rhetoric. This is the case of Power to the People! (PAP) and, even more neatly, of its more Eurosceptic internal minorities, who do not include any reference to national pride and identity in their bold anti-EU discourses (see section 6.3).

Finally, in Portugal the Euroscepticism-nationalism nexus appears to be true, although it must be treated as only one of the various factors at play, since Euroscepticism was not ‘the cause’ of the radical Left’s identification with the nation. The Euroscepticism of the PCP harks back to the party’s long-lasting patriotic political culture (see section 7.2.1). Similarly, the Euroscepticism of the Left Bloc cannot be analysed without taking into full account the importance that the party has been traditionally giving to the signifier ‘the country’ and to national democracy (see section 7.2.2). Yet, the nexus exists because criticism towards the European Union and positive references to Portugal have increased simultaneously and in an intertwined manner, both in the discourse of the PCP and (albeit in a minor and different form) in the Left Bloc, during the years when hostility towards EU policies was more salient (see section 7.2.3). This being said, it would be a mistake to consider nationalism as the main ground on which PCP and Left Bloc’s Euroscepticism stands. In PCP’s Euroscepticism, nationalism coexisted with the more traditional left-wing criticism of the EU based on economic reasons and centred on anti-neoliberal stances. In the Left Bloc, economic reasons were central in their Eurosceptic stance and, much as the defence of national sovereignty was also important in the party discourse, it emerged mostly as a *sustainer* for their anti-neoliberal

Euroscepticism, rather than the root of it (see section 7.2.3).

In conclusion, it is true that at times there is a link between Euroscepticism and patriotism. Patriotism tends to favour and strengthen Euroscepticism, and vice versa. But the interaction between the two should not be essentialised in the study of the concrete politics of the radical Left: there exist actors who are patriotic without being Eurosceptic, and also actors who are Eurosceptic without being patriotic.

8.2 Propounding a Typology

In the analysis conducted in this study on how the radical Left relates to national identity, I have deliberately avoided to *name* the different positions that have emerged, i.e. to categorise them in a clear-cut typology. In fact, a categorisation of radical left outlooks on the nation is missing in academia, and therefore there were no existing ideal-types to which I could refer (see section 1.1). As explained in the methodological chapter, this study has thus been primarily exploratory, because it dealt with a research issue where academic studies are lacking, and each case study was scrutinised through an interpretative and holistic approach (see Chapter 4). Yet, however partial and contingent it may be, a typology based on different descriptive types should now be attempted, as it can systematise some of the findings and favour further research on this matter (Collier, Laporte, and Seawright 2008). Accordingly, in light of all the theoretical reasoning and empirical analysis of this study, in this final section I try to tackle the scholarly gap by drafting some analytical types of radical left positions on nationality. I propose a descriptive typology based on four different types: *social patriotism*, *counter-hegemonic patriotism*, *national cosmopolitanism* and *post-national cosmopolitanism*. These four radical left positions are first outlined in Table 12, and then each typology is described below. For analytical purposes, in drafting this typology I favoured the most frequent positions among established parties and avoided the rarer and more hybrid ones, often carried out by very small groups.

Similarly to what has been said about the categorisation of RLPs (see section 2.3), this categorisation too should be understood as a heuristic device for illuminating a complex reality. It is an analytical typology that should not be reified, as political actors often present elements that trespass on one single type. Furthermore, it is important to emphasise that these are descriptive types of RLPs based on their standpoint on nationality, and *not* a comprehensive typology of RLPs. This means that actors who fit in the same type among those presented below may still be very different on other characteristics.

Finally, this categorisation must be taken with a grain of salt, as it is based on the empirical analysis of only three countries (Italy, Spain and Portugal, all of them South European), albeit supported by a broader theoretical and historical reflection (see Chapter 2 and 3). Therefore, the ideal-typical parties that better exemplify the types of this typology are here only chosen from the empirical cases of this thesis, even if this categorisation could potentially be extended to other European countries and possibly map the entire European radical Left. Hence, this typology ought to be seen as a preliminary categorisation that represents an open invitation to scholars of the radical Left for further research of a comparative kind between a wider number of actors. In fact, if we follow this train of thought, there may also be other types to be added to this typology, such as *anti-national cosmopolitism* or *hard sovereigntism*, which are theoretically possible but I have not found them among established RLPs in the three countries analysed. Yet, they might be found in other European countries or within the radical left milieu beyond party politics.

Table 12. ***Typology of the radical Left's positions on the nation***

Type	**Key elements**	**Typical party**
Social patriotism	- Patriotism is combined with workers-centred socialist elements - Party's political culture is embedded and rooted in national traditions and culture - National symbolism and references to the nation's history, culture and customs are present - The interest of the nation and the interest of the workers are treated as matching	Portuguese Communist Party (PCP)
Counter-hegemonic patriotism	- The attempt to put forward an idea of national belonging that challenges the dominant one is central - National pride and belonging are deliberately politicised, by challenging the adversaries over what it means to be part of the nation - Claims that they are the ones who truly have the country's interests at heart, as well as accusations to the adversaries as betrayers of the country's best interests, are particularly present	Podemos (mostly in the years 2014-2019)
National cosmopolitanism	- The nation-state is respected and treated as the central political arena - Party's political culture is mainly cosmopolitan - National pride and references to nationality are scarce - The aim of 'representing the country' is present - The policy proposals are framed as 'for the country'	Left Bloc (BE)

Post-national cosmopolitanism	- Party's political culture is mostly cosmopolitan - National pride and references to nationality are absent - The policy proposals are not framed as 'for the country' - The nation is not expressed in positive terms, not even as a sovereign political community	Communist Refoundation Party – European Left (PRC-SE) (especially after 2008)

8.2.1 Social patriotism

Social patriotism is the standpoint that combines patriotism with workers-centred socialist elements. The foremost feature of this standpoint is that it entangles a leftist focus on social rights with the recurrent presence of banal nationalism in the narrative, that is the everyday representations of the nation through the repeated use of flags, national symbols, national references and so on (see section 2.2 for a discussion of banal nationalism). It is the standpoint that come closest to the patriotism of many 20th-century Western communist parties, who emphasised their national character and their full belonging to the nation, especially in the years of the antifascist struggle and in the second post-war period (see sections 3.2 and 6.2.1).

Radical left social patriots have a political culture that is embedded and rooted in national traditions and culture. They make use of national symbolism and, in their rhetoric and practices, often refer to the nation's history, culture and customs. They consider the interest of the nation and the interest of the workers as matching. Accordingly, they display love for their country while pushing for socialist policies, and the ideas of representing and/or fighting for the working people and the country are equally present. The nation is conceived in inclusionary terms, and national belonging emerges more as a shared sense of community rather than as a terrain of identitarian conflict against political adversaries. The nation-state is their chief political arena and the fight for improving the wellbeing of workers is framed within the boundaries of national democracy. Internationalism (mostly understood as supra-national cooperation and international solidarity) remains, but its relevance in party's daily politics is minor compared to other radical left actors.

Exemplary of this typology is the patriotism of the Portuguese Communist Party. In the discourse of the Portuguese Communists, patriotism is central and it is rooted in the national legacy of the Revolution, but also in the national tradition of 20th-century Portuguese communism. In their discourse, national interest coincides with the interest of the working people, which can only be achieved through social policies that are patriotic and left-wing. The party narrative emphasises the close bond between social policies and national sovereignty and commonly articulates cultural, symbolic and political references to the nation. Yet, it is a patriotism that remains more sedimented and ritualised than politicised, and it is thus not highly confrontational (for a complete assessment of the patriotism of the Portuguese Communist Party, see Chapter 7).

8.2.2 Counter-hegemonic patriotism

Counter-hegemonic patriotism is a position held by those actors who deliberately attempt to put forward an idea of nationality that challenges the dominant one on its own ground. It is counter-hegemonic because it aims at challenging a hegemonic construct by opposing an alternative hegemony on its own ground (Pratt 2004). Accordingly, counter-hegemonic patriotism attempts to put forward an idea of nationality that challenges the dominant right-wing one on its own terrain (see section 5.2.2.4 for a discussion of counter-hegemony).

It shares similarities with the strategical insights that were advocated by Austrian Marxist Otto Bauer at the beginning of the twentieth century, for whom national identity and belonging were also a terrain of class struggle – one of the grounds on which bourgeoise nationalism had to be fought off and challenged (see section 3.2.2).

In this type of patriotism, national references are not sedimented traces of banal nationalism, but rather an intentionally used political means, that serves as a legitimisation strategy for the actor (see section 2.2). Similarly to social-patriots, radical Left's counter-hegemonic patriots treat the nation-state as their central political battleground. Accordingly, they frame their policies as 'for the country' and claim to 'represent the country'. However, they do not necessarily have a political culture embedded and rooted in national traditions and culture, nor are they very much integrated into the nation's political community. They might even have a mostly-cosmopolitan political background. And yet, they deliberately politicise national pride and national belonging: they challenge the adversaries over what it means to be part of the nation. In political competition, they oppose previous understandings of what the nation stands for, and advance their own idea of what the *real* nation is about. Therefore, claims that they are the ones who truly have the country's interests at heart, as well as accusations to the adversaries as betrayers of the country's best interests, are particularly present.

Exemplary of this typology is the patriotism of the Spanish party Podemos, especially (but not exclusively) in the first years after its foundation in 2014, when the party adopted a clear-cut populist strategy. In fact, in Podemos counter-hegemonic patriotism emerges out of the populist strategy of the party. Podemos' leaders frequently label their politics as patriotic and repeatedly claim to be proud of Spain and of them being Spaniards, while naming political adversaries as 'enemies of the fatherland' and 'anti-patriots', unworthy to even pronounce the name of the country. In doing so, the party has not simply referred to the naturalness of the nation for legitimising itself, but it has actively attempted to modify its meanings. The party challenges the association of nationhood with right-wing values, and it proposes another identification with the nation along left-wing lines. Accordingly, the national community imagined by Podemos differs radically from the one typical of the Spanish Right: the party attempted to construct an image of Spain that refers to an inclusive welfare state, to people's mobilisation and to a moral community that is not delimited by lingual or ethnic particularisms (for a complete assessment of Podemos' patriotism, see Chapter 5).

8.2.3 National cosmopolitanism

National cosmopolitanism characterises those radical left forces whose political culture is primarily cosmopolitan and, yet, retain the nation-state as their prime political battleground and as a source of political identity. This standpoint combines the cosmopolitan political culture typical of the Western New Left together with Gramsci's teaching that a class or a political movement fighting for ruling the country must embody the country and self-identify as the country's leadership (see section 3.3.2 for an examination of Gramsci's thought on this matter).

Radical left national cosmopolitans deploy cultural references, practices and symbolism that are more cosmopolitan than national-popular (although the latter does not disappear, especially in regard to the country's history). National pride and references to nationality are thus mostly absent. However, this primarily-cosmopolitan party's culture never turns into open criticisms to national belonging, even less to the nation-state. The centrality of the nation-state for achieving the party's goals is undisputed, and the claim of 'doing politics for the country' is recurrent. The idea of 'the country' is in fact highly present, but it is deprived as much as possible of its 'blood and soil' component, and partially deprived of 'national culture' and 'national tradition', too; thus turning into a concept quite empty of semantic meanings. Yet, the country remains central as a political community – as the true bearer of democratic sovereignty. Here a certain split between 'nationality' and 'nation' emerges, in which the former is almost absent in the political discourse, while the latter is instead recurrently present. Accordingly, the rhetorical formulas of making policies 'for the country' and of 'representing the country' not only survive in national cosmopolitanism, but often assume an important discursive centrality.

Exemplary of this typology is the position held on the nation by the Left Bloc in Portugal. The party is at ease with national elements, be they rhetorical or symbolic, but does not frequently articulate them in the discourse. Its political culture remains primarily cosmopolitan and a national symbolic repertoire is not frequent. Yet, the signifier 'country' assumes discursive centrality in the party narrative. In fact, the Left Bloc presents itself as a national party, aspiring to represent the majority of the Portuguese people and to lead the country – it positively identifies with the country and frequently defines its policy proposals as 'for the country'. In the party narrative, 'the country' is not defined in cultural terms, but it is the true bearer of democratic and popular sovereignty – a community that the Left Bloc aspires to represent and at which party policy proposals are aimed (for a complete assessment of the Left Bloc's stances, see Chapter 7).

8.2.4 Post-national cosmopolitanism

Post-national cosmopolitanism reflects the position of those within the radical Left who are the furthest away from identifying with the nation. This standpoint echoes the positions of those, such as Rosa Luxemburg, who were the most critical of nationalities within the second generation of Marxists, by stressing the non-national character of the working class (see section 3.2.2). It also brings to institutional party politics the post-national positions of the Global justice movement's Western activists, which avoided a national symbolic repertoire and saw the global and/or local arena as their central battleground (see section 3.1).

Post-national cosmopolitans do no treat the nation as a source of identity – they are either indifferent to national belonging or even hostile to it. The nation state may remain the central political arena they operate in, but this is a *de facto* situation, self-perceived as a limit, rather than an explicit and deliberate choice. National pride and references to nationality are either absent or openly opposed. Their political culture is largely cosmopolitan and avoids national symbolism and references. Even when references to nation's history and traditions are presented in the discourse, they are often re-read through the lens of a cosmopolitan approach. In their daily communication great attention is given to experiences and politics that happen outside the national borders. Their policies proposals are usually not framed as 'for the country', since in their discourse the nation is generally not expressed in positive terms, not even as a sovereign political community. Supranational identifications, much as they remain geographical, are often preferred to the narrowness of the national one, such as for European identity.

Exemplary of this typology is the cosmopolitanism of Italy's Communist Refoundation Party, especially after 2008, when the party lost all its MPs in the national parliament and rebranded itself as “Communist Refoundation Party – European Left”. Although the party avoids a bold refusal to identify with the country, typical of few marginal grassroots movements, it nonetheless treats manifestations of banal nationalism with animosity. The party never positively identifies with the nation, and strongly reaffirms internationalism as an essential value to be preserved and defended, claiming that workers and discriminated minorities have no country. Banal nationalism’s symbolisms and national-popular references are thus mostly absent in the party narrative, and policy proposals are not framed as meant for the country itself, but rather for specific groups (for a complete assessment of Communist Refoundation Party’s stances, see Chapter 7).

9. CONCLUSION

> *As a woman I have a country; as a woman I cannot divest myself of that country merely by condemning its government or by saying three times "As a woman my country is the whole world". Tribal loyalties aside, and even if nation-states are now just pretexts used by multinational conglomerates to serve their interests, I need to understand how a place on the map is also a place in history within which as a woman, a Jew, a lesbian, a feminist I am created and trying to create.*
> Adrienne Rich (Notes toward a Politics of Location, p. 212, 1984)

I opened this thesis with the observation that the ways in which contemporary radical left parties articulate national identity in their discourse can vary greatly from country to country, but also between parties in the same country. This is a research area where academic studies are still very scant, and I thus took this academic void as the starting point of my research, beginning with a general discussion on the relation between the radical Left and the nation and then moving to the empirical analysis of the specific cases of contemporary radical left parties in Spain, Italy and Portugal. The discourse-theoretical framework gave a solid theoretical basis to the research, as well as a useful conceptual toolkit for the analysis (see section 2.1.1). Moreover, the triangulation of three different methods of data gathering and analysis proved to be a suitable methodological choice, allowing the research topic to be addressed in a holistic and multi-faceted way (see section 4.3).

In this concluding chapter I first bring together the main arguments and findings that emerged out of the empirical research (section 9.1), and then move to a discussion on how this study contributes to the scholarly literature and can favour further research on this matter (section 9.2).

9.1 Arguments and Findings

In order to capture how radical left parties refer to national identity in their discourse, and to examine why there is a plurality of standpoints on this matter, I adopted an interpretive approach, which is best suited for studies where little is known about the phenomena under investigation. The scope of this work was thus primarily exploratory, and in-depth analysis based upon small number of cases is considered to be particularly appropriate and especially suitable for this aim. Accordingly, I conducted a thorough interpretive study on contemporary radical left parties in Spain, Italy and Portugal, with attention to each case as an interpretable whole.

To get to the empirical analysis, I first discussed and operationalised the notions that guide the analysis. Among them stands out the concept of 'nation', whose definition has been long debated in nationalism studies. I contended that Benedict Anderson's analysis of nationalism provides groundbreaking insights in understanding the national phenomenon, and it paves the way to an interpretive reading of national identity. The power of Anderson's notion of 'imagined community' lies exactly in its ability to provide us with a useful matrix out of which we can apprehend the different variants of a nationalist discourse. In fact, nations are not unitary phenomena – they are not defined by concrete traits equally observable in all cases. There is not a 'true' colour of nationalism: the meanings ascribed to nationality change across time and space, and different meanings can also co-exist within the same juncture, with rival hegemonic attempts to define the nation according to different sets of values. In politics, there is thus no *a priori* limitation on the elements that can be articulated with the nation. Yet, this does not mean that there are no limits. For instance, when the meaning of national belonging is highly sedimented and relatively fixed, the room for manoeuvre for altering is restricted. But even in the case of an organic crisis that unleashes the possibility to radically alter the symbolic order of a society, 'nation' is still a term with a history, and history influences the ways in which new articulations can be carried out. Consequently, a nationalist discourse can move in *any* direction, but it is not immune to the discursive conditions of possibility of its time and space.

This anti-essentialist conceptualisation of the nation, with its related terminology, permitted to shed light on the many positions that the radical Left has been holding in different times and spaces. Before entering into the empirical analysis, I broadened the research question and gave an introductory overview of the historical and theoretical nexus between the radical Left and the nation. Strange as it may seem today, originally the concepts of Left and nation were not all that far apart: not only the political concepts of nation and Left arose from the same cradle – the French Revolution – but, as the historian Eric Hobsbawm suggested, in the troubled French summer of 1789 they were also in some way synonymous. Yet, with the rise of the worker and socialist movements, and later with the spread of anti-colonial struggles, the history of the relations between leftist and nationalist aspirations became much more see-sawing and complex. At different times and periods, socialism and nationalism either united into fragile alliances, fused into one single aspiration, or fought against each other on opposite sides. Moreover, although it has often been said that Marxist theory has little to do with, and to say about, the nation, the major Marxists of the early twentieth century had a far-reaching debate on nations and nationalism that lasted until the beginning of WWI, triggered by Otto Bauer's 1907 book 'The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy'. Some of the various positions that emerged in the Marxist debate on how to treat the nation in class struggle are still reflected in the standpoints of the contemporary radical Left.

After providing a general overview, chapters 5–8 laid out the empirical analysis and the comparative discussion. Throughout the analysis, I drew on a triangulation of three different methods of data gathering and analysis: discourse-theoretical analysis, semi-structured interviews (elite and expert) and participant observation.

In Chapter 5 I presented the first case study: the Spanish radical Left and its relation with national identity. In order to comprehend how the Spanish radical Left has been dealing with nationality, it ought to be remembered that during the Francoist dictatorship (1939-1975) the government proved very successful in seizing the idea of 'Spain', articulating it with far-right political values, monoculturalism and administrative centralism, and ultimately with the regime itself. Despite the fact that during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) patriotic claims and references to the *patria* were frequent within the anti-fascist and leftist Republican front, from the late years of Francisco Franco's regime onwards the radical Left began to avoid any positive reference to Spanish national identity or to Spanish patriotism in its discourse, as it interiorised the profound connection between Spanishness and Francoism. The radical Left milieu maintained overall its deeply-felt antipathy towards nationality up to 2014, when the breakthrough of a new radical left party, Podemos, proved to be a turning point on this matter. Although most of Podemos' leaders had shared the same radical left refusal of nationality (with the party leader Pablo Iglesias still claiming a year before founding Podemos that he personally could not even pronounce the word 'Spain'), by 2014 they had reconsidered their position, arguing that it is not possible to win your country over to your political project without laying claim to national belonging. Inspired by the symbolic renewal of 15-M cycle of protests, by the experiences of the Latin American Left, by professional surveys they conducted, and by the theory of populism, Iglesias and the party's other leaders began to draw from a national-popular vocabulary and to openly reclaim state-wide patriotism for their political project. They frequently labelled their politics as patriotic and repeatedly claimed to be proud of Spain and of them being Spaniards, while naming political adversaries as 'enemies of the fatherland' and 'anti-patriots', unworthy to even pronounce the name of the country. Podemos' leaders used a dichotomic division between the people and the elite as a calculated populist strategy, and, in order to strengthen it, they embraced patriotism. Thus, the nationalist elements of Podemos' discourse were not traces of banal nationalism, but they were intentionally used by the party's goal-oriented leadership as a means to reinforce their populist project and their political legitimisation. However, Podemos has not simply referred to the nation for legitimising itself, but it has actively attempted to modify its meanings. Podemos challenged the association of nationhood with right-wing values, and proposed another identification with the nation along left-wing lines. It aimed to shape an alternative form of national identification capable of challenging the dominant one on its own terrain. In fact, the national community imagined by Podemos differs radically from the one typical of the Spanish Right: through a resignification of national pride and belonging, Podemos' leadership attempted to construct an image of Spain that refers to an inclusive welfare state, to people's mobilisation and to a moral community that is not delimited by linguistic or ethnic particularisms. As for secondary actors under empirical scrutiny, *Izquierda Unida* gradually drew near to Podemos' positions, but without displaying any bold patriotic rhetoric; *Anticapitalistas* maintained the hostility for Spanish national identity typical of the Spanish radical Left, although it fully endorsed peripheral national identities; and *Más País* aimed to revamp the national-popular vocabulary that characterised the Podemos project especially in its first years.

In Chapter 6 I moved the analysis to the second case study: the Italian radical Left and its relation with national identity. In the late 2000s, Italy's radical Left progressively fell prey to party fragmentation and political marginality, struggling more than in other countries with typical dilemmas on identity and strategy. Especially after the electoral debacle of 2008, it entered into a phase of decreasing electoral strength that has continued to worsen to this day. This political marginality had also repercussions on the relation with national identity, given that this identity, however cultural and territorial it might be, is also closely linked to the idea of politically belonging to the country, of being part of a public sphere and a national political framework – of which the radical Left has increasingly found itself at the fringes. The gradual sliding of the Italian radical Left towards a 'people of the Left' subculture, outside mainstream politics, thus favoured a detachment from Italian identity. Moreover, the legacy of its long-gone political strength combined with its current electoral weakness, have made the Italian radical Left much more ideologically trapped in its past compared to other European counterparts. This means that contemporary actors have frequently harked back to past stances in order to justify their current ideological positions on the nation. The relation between the radical Left and nationality from WW2 onwards can be summarised in three distinct phases: the first phase (*antifascist patriotism*) is no longer a clear source of inspiration for the radical Left, except in some minor groups that have attempted to rediscover it.

The legacy of the second phase (*class comes first*) can instead be traced in grass-roots and radical actors, such as *Potere al Popolo!* (PAP). Finally, the third phase (*beyond the nation*) is best represented by the 'historic' Italian radical left party, *Rifondazione* (PRC), who was the central actor in that phase and has kept its key elements up to this day. Furthermore, in recent years the role of nationality in Italian politics has changed widely, returning to be highly politicised, as well as increasingly reimagined along right-wing lines, thus pushing the radical Left to deal with it. This can be seen especially on some of the issues that have been dominating the country's political agenda in recent years, namely the criticisms to the European Union, the reforms of the Italian constitution and the increasing strength of the nationalist Right. Rising Euroscepticism in Italian politics also affected the radical Left, creating new rifts within it. Some actors, such as the PRC, much as they criticised EU economic institutions, remained committed to left-Europeanism and to European identity; others, such as PAP, engaged with Euroscepticism, but without displaying any positive identification with the nation. If the European Union turned to be a divisive issue on the radical Left, the defence of the Constitution over attempts to change it by mainstream forces has been much less so, being a political goal shared by virtually the entire milieu of the radical Left, albeit with some differences in intensity and rhetoric between actors. In this sense, the radical Left came close to constitutional patriotism, but without articulating it with any reference to national pride or belonging. Finally, with the hegemony of the nationalist Right over public discourse, and, to some extent, over the popular classes, the radical Left has found itself taken aback, unsure how to react to this threat. The most common reaction has been to strongly reaffirm internationalism as an essential value to be preserved and defended, and to take further distance from a positive identification with the nation. Yet, some minor groups within the left-Eurosceptic camp have attempted to rediscover patriotism as a way to counter the radical Right, but this happened without any comprehensive effort of resignification as done by Podemos in Spain.

In Chapter 7 I moved the analysis to the third and last case study: the Portuguese radical Left and its relation with national identity. In Portugal, the Carnation Revolution of 1974 represents a leftist *and* a national myth, whose legacy still defines Portuguese politics today, making the country's banal nationalism slightly leaning to the left. Furthermore, national identity has not been particularly contested within the political arena, and therefore remains a shared and little-politicised identity. In this context, the Portuguese radical Left has been generally at ease with its own national identity, avoiding anti-national stances and rather displaying a positive identification with the country. There are, however, some important differences between the two main Portuguese radical left parties, namely the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and the Left Bloc (BE), on the ways they relate to Portuguese identity. Much as they both identify with the nation in their political discourse, it is the PCP the one who clearly displays a patriotic rhetoric and a national-popular symbolic repertoire. In fact, patriotism is central in the discourse of the PCP and it is rooted in the legacy of the Revolution, but also in the national tradition of Portuguese communism. In the discourse of the Communists, national interest coincides with the interest of the working people, which can only be achieved through patriotic left-wing policies. This being said, the patriotism of the PCP remains more sedimented and ritualised than politicised. Cultural, symbolic and political references to Portuguese identity are commonly articulated in the party narrative, but they are not highly confrontational, and thus fit into a context of low politicisation of Portuguese identity. The position of the BE on the nation is instead more nuanced. Much as the BE is at ease with national elements, be they rhetorical or symbolic, the party does not frequently articulate them in its discourse, as the party's political culture remains primarily cosmopolitan. Yet, the signifier 'country' assumes discursive centrality in the party narrative. In fact, the BE presents itself as a national party, aspiring to represent the majority of the Portuguese people and to lead the country. It positively identifies with the country and frequently defines its policy proposals as 'for the country'. In the BE narrative, 'the country' is a concept quite empty of semantic meanings, but remains central as a legitimate political community – as the true bearer of democratic and popular sovereignty that the party aspires to represent and at which the party policy proposals are aimed. Furthermore, both the PCP and the BE have shown openly Eurosceptic positions, especially in the years when the European question has been more salient in the Portuguese national debate. For the PCP it was a continuation of its long-standing Eurosceptic positions, while for the BE there was a radicalisation of its previously-milder Euroscepticism, that reinforced the presence of national identity in the party discourse. The two parties ended up displaying a similar narrative, although with different tints based on their specific ways of talking about the nation: the PCP articulated the criticism of EU-led neoliberalism with patriotism, national symbolism and the defence of national interests, while the BE put emphasis on the defence of the country's dignity, democracy and sovereignty. Finally, at the turn of the 2010s and 2020s, there has been in Portugal an electoral growth of the populist Right, which called into question the scholarly view that considered Portugal immune to right-wing nationalism. Although it is too soon for a comprehensive assessment, this change in Portuguese politics is likely to have an impact on the relation between radical left parties and national identity, now forcing these parties to confront right-wing nationalism.

Finally, in Chapter 8 I took stock of the empirical findings from a comparative perspective, inquiring into some common factors and differences of outcome between the cases.

First, the different type and period of transition to democracy in Spain, Italy and Portugal seem to have a relevant influence in shaping specific radical left standpoints on their own national identity. As findings suggest, whenever the transition to democracy was capable to (partially) change the sedimented meanings of national identity and create a new left-leaning identification with the nation, this favoured the rise of an institutionalised banal nationalism which the radical Left can more easily identify with, as in Portugal with the 1974 Carnation Revolution. However, the legacy of the democratic transition can lose saliency over time. For instance, new political junctures carried along a decline in the influence of the 1945 Liberation over Italian politics, not to say in its capacity to provide a widespread left-wing identification with the country. Accordingly, if the Italian communist Left in the first democratic decades had no difficulty in identifying with the country, this is not the case anymore. Contrary to Italy and Portugal, in Spain the 1975-1978 regime change was gradual, mediated and mostly elite-driven. This restrained a progressive resignification of Spanish identity, after a long-lasting fascist regime that had been particularly successful in seizing national identity. This type of democratic transition did not give way to forms of banal nationalism which the radical Left could easily identify with. However, Podemos tried anyway to claim patriotism and national pride. Yet, Podemos' leadership had almost no sedimented meanings they could make use of in building their own patriotic discourse and were thus forced to operate counter-hegemonically, attempting a political resignification of what Spanishness stands for. As these three cases suggest, although the type of democratisation does not mechanically determine the presence or absence of radical Left's patriotism, it affects the conditions of possibility of how radical left parties engage with the nation.

Second, the different outcomes of the 2011 protests are also a relevant factor for comprehending the outlooks of the radical Left on the nation. As findings indicate, when the 2011 cycle of protests was successful in terms of outcome, this seems to have favoured the spread of national-popular elements within the radical Left. If for Portugal this was nothing more than a mild strengthening of already-existing tendencies, in Spain the cycle was more like a turning point, and brought the Spanish radical Left one step closer to consider itself as 'part of the nation' too, paving the way for Podemos' patriotism. Instead, the marginalisation and eventual failure of protest politics in Italy, made it more difficult for the Italian radical Left to take a similar path as the one of Podemos, and further pushed it to the corner of the national political community, strengthening its animosity towards the nation.

Third, the presence or (relative) absence of a strong nationalist Right in the country also proves to be a relevant element for the analysis. In fact, the hegemony of right-wing nationalism over national politics significantly influences how the radical Left engages with nationality, pushing it to take clearer positions on this matter. It seems to favour either a stepping away from national identification (as in Italy) or an attempt to challenge the meaning of this identification (as in Spain). 'Intermediate' positions, such as that of the Left Bloc in Portugal, appear instead to be more viable in contexts without a clear hegemony of the Right and where nationality is a less polarising theme.

Fourth, the use or not of a populist strategy by radical left parties is also relevant in the analysis of their stances on the nation. In fact, populist rhetoric and practices are often overdetermined by national(ist) narratives and imaginaries, given that it is difficult (albeit not *a priori* impossible) to politically conceive 'the people' not as 'people-nation'. Unsurprisingly, this was exactly the reasoning that Podemos' founders came up with while planning their populist strategy: in order to claim to represent the people, they believed they could not afford to leave national belonging and pride aside. This being said, this study also points out that it would be a mistake to consider left-populists as the only radical left actors who draw from a national imaginary and even from patriotism. Indeed, clear-cut patriotism can be found also among non-populist radical left actors, as the case of the Portuguese Communist Party exemplarily shows.

A fifth and final element worthy of a comparative look is the position of radical left parties on the European Union, in order to explore how this influences the ways they engage with the nation. Some scholars argued that radical Left's Euroscepticism is eventually based on, and intertwined with, nationalist stances. What this thesis' findings indicate is that the Euroscepticism-nationalism nexus within the radical Left does exist in some cases, but it is a nexus that ought to be problematised, as it is by no means generalisable. Although it is true that patriotism may favour and strengthen Euroscepticism, and vice versa, the interaction between the two should not be essentialised, because there exist actors who are patriotic without being Eurosceptic (as Podemos in Spain), and also actors who are Eurosceptic without being patriotic (as Power to the People! in Italy).

9.2 Contribution to the Literature and Suggestions for Further Research

What this thesis has attested and highlighted is not only that the relation of the radical Left with national identity is complex and multifaceted, but also that it intersects with other relevant dimensions of radical left parties, such as their ideological positioning, their strategic reflections and their interaction with the political arena they operate in. As such, it is an important political dimension that cannot be overlooked when studying radical left parties' identity and concrete politics. Despite its relevance, studies on the Western radical Left have often left this dimension out of the analysis (see section 1.1.). It is a shortcoming in the academic literature that this thesis has tried to cover, and this is thus its first scholarly contribution: to add to the studies on the radical Left a thorough analysis of this often omitted, but by no means irrelevant, dimension.

The empirical study of the Spanish, Portuguese and Italian cases has provided up-to-date and in-depth information on this topic, propounding an empirical analysis that was previously non-existent in the academic literature. It also framed the issue within a broader reflection on the radical Left and the nation, in order to provide the historical-political background and the theoretical toolkit for future studies. In this respect, the conceptual tools drawn from Discourse Theory that were employed in this research (see sections 2.1.1 and 2.2) proved to be perfectly suitable for looking at the topics under investigation, as well as helpful in the analysis. This confirms that the applicability of Discourse Theory goes beyond the sole populist politics and can favour the study of different topics within social and political sciences, as some discourse theorists rightly stressed (e.g. Howarth and Torfing 2005; De Cleen and Glynos 2020).

Overall, the thesis aims to be a solid starting point for future analyses on the relation between the Left and the nation in other European countries and beyond. Without pretence of generalisability, this study has highlighted some factors and elements that push towards certain radical left positions on national identity, paving the way for further researches on other radical left actors and/or in other European polities. Interesting and stimulating analyses may come, for instance, from similar research in other areas of Europe, such as Central and Eastern Europe and Northern Europe, which were left out of this study; or from focusing on other radical left actors rather than parties, such as social movements.

Moreover, in the final section of the comparative chapter, I singled out a descriptive typology that helps mapping the different standpoints that radical left parties have on the nation: social patriotism, counter-hegemonic patriotism, national cosmopolitanism and post-national cosmopolitanism. Although these types should be taken with a grain of salt, as political actors often present elements that trespass on one single type, they are nonetheless a useful heuristic device that helps illuminating a complex reality. To this date, there is no academic typology to describe the relation between the radical Left and the nation, and these types should thus be seen as a preliminary categorisation, as they are limited by the small numbers of cases considered in the analysis. However, this typology may potentially be extended to other European countries and arguably map the entire European radical Left (perhaps with the addition of new types emerging from further studies). It represents an open invitation to scholars of the radical Left for further research of a comparative kind between a wider number of actors.

This being said, exploring the relation between the radical Left and the nation has an academic relevance that goes beyond the field of radical left studies, as it also involves an issue central for nationalism studies: the shifting political meanings of national belonging and identity. In fact, in addition to covering a little explored area of study within the literature on the radical Left, this research also deepened and problematised the role that nationality plays in party politics, looking at how and why its meanings can change in Western societies. Consequently, inquiring into the outlooks of the radical Left on this matter not only permitted to fill an academic void in radical left studies, but also provided new data and insights on the role that the nation plays in politics, enlarging our comprehension of how specific meanings manage to impose themselves and become hegemonic, while others do not. In studies on nationalism this issue has often been addressed by looking at other political actors than the radical Left. However, this thesis has shown how radical left parties are a privileged research object for studying the role that national identity plays in politics, and how its meanings change according to agency and contexts. This is because, as we have seen, the radical Left engages with national identity in a plurality of ways, and it is therefore a useful angle of analysis for studying the differences of meaning highlighted by nationalism studies. The invitation to scholars of nationalism is therefore to also look to the left side of the political space, and this dissertation can represent a solid starting point for analyses of this kind.

Finally, beyond the avenues for further investigation that this thesis can open in the fields of radical left studies and nationalism studies, this research also interacts with the politico-philosophical and normative discussion on how progressive, left-wing and emancipatory politics *should* treat the national community and related concepts, such as national identity and pride. As it has been shown in Chapter 3, this is not only an issue where existing positions vary greatly in different time and space, but it is also a long-lasting conflictual topic at the theoretical level, that has led to several intellectual disputes. The empirical data found throughout this research contribute to this debate by confirming Benedict Anderson’s great insight that treating national identities as something either genuine or false is always misleading: all collective identities (national or otherwise) are socially constructed and what really matters is how they are imagined, as they can be imagined in very different ways. The empirical analysis thus highlighted that national identity is neither univocal nor predetermined by any essentialist limit, and it is therefore politically possible to change its meanings and build a national community-based politics that is also internationalist, intercultural and open to migrants, although there can certainly be contextual limits that make it difficult to build such a type of politics. This insight disproves the thesis of those who consider national identity as something *intrinsically* exclusionary, racist or male chauvinist (Hardt and Negri

2000; Abrahamian 2018; Raimo 2019; Filippi 2021); yet it does not say much on why the Left should prefer a national community-based politics rather than a post-national cosmopolitan one, perhaps based on other types of imagined community. Although this question remains open and I do not believe it has an answer that is valid in every time and place, it ought to be remembered that national identity is still deeply sedimented in contemporary Western societies, especially among the popular classes, whose lifestyle and cultural references tend to be more *nationalised* compared to middle and upper classes. Critics of national identity often describe it as false, ahistorical, and imposed from the top down: something only the naive could identify with. The problem is, as a declared political position, this keen rejection of our own nationality finds no support among the popular classes and the poorest – even the most progressive – who often combine their self-identity with a national one. Consequently, national identity is an element that the Left cannot easily ignore, as it is a fundamental part of the context in which it operates politically. Doing so would imply moving away from the popular classes to which left-wing policies are directed, because national-popular frames and references still are an important ingredient for making communication and interaction with the popular classes possible. Calls for progressive politics to reject the narrowness of the national community thus risk to be an electoral dead end, distancing the Left from its own popular traditions.

Moreover, the national community responds to an atavistic need for identification with a community that is of paramount importance for any progressive politics that oppose self-serving individualism. It meets a feeling of communitarian bond that other types of imagined community struggle to fulfil today. However, this does not imply the need to abandon other forms of imagined community in the name of the sole national one. Identities are not mutually exclusive, and a plurality of collective identities may coexist and intersect in the same community: class and gender identities, various national identities in multi-ethnic societies, and so on.

Finally, there is the problem that in many EU countries right-populist forces have succeeded in repoliticising national belonging in recent years, casting it in ethnocultural terms. Faced with this situation, there is the risk for the Left that rejecting national identity *en bloc* could end up legitimising exclusionary discourses – leaving the Right unchallenged in its battle to define what the country is and what being member of the national community means. To disregard national identity may mean leaving it up to the Right to impose its own vision of this identity, focused on ethnic and monocultural themes. This is an exclusive idea of national belonging for which migrants and ethnic minorities pay the price every day, now that they are labelled non-members of the community.

There is no doubt that today's great challenges for progressive politics are increasingly global, starting with the climate crisis and the enormous world inequalities triggered by neoliberalism. But it is precisely for this reason that an internationalism that incorporates national-popular frames is most needed, as it is arguably the most capable of taking root among the popular classes. Only by respecting the cultural identities and national traditions sedimented among the people, favouring their most progressive aspects in spite of the most reactionary ones, it is possible to effectively oppose today's exclusionary nationalisms and build a concrete internationalism for our time, which intersects with feminist and environmentalist struggles, and fights for the wellbeing of workers of all nationalities. To put it in Otto Bauer's words, national belonging is one of the terrains on which class struggle is fought.

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APPENDIX ONE (A1)

As expounded in section 4.3.1, for the purposes of the research I collected a set of selected party statements, speeches, articles, and texts from leaders and key members of radical left parties in Italy, Spain and Portugal, as well as some relevant party documents and reports. The list of all the texts analysed is reported below, divided by country.

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APPENDIX TWO (A2)

As explained in section 4.3.2, during the research fieldwork I conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews in Spain, Italy and Portugal. The interviews conducted and used for this study are thirty: twenty-one elite interviews and nine expert interviews. What follows is the list of all the people interviewed, divided by country.

A2.1 For the Spanish case

Elite interviews

[ES-INT.1] **Carolina Bescansa Hernández**. Founding member of Podemos; Secretary for Political and Social Analysis of Podemos (2014-2017); national MP for Podemos (2016-2019).

[ES-INT.2] **Luis Alegre Zahonero.** Founding member of Podemos; Head of communications of Podemos (2014); Secretary of Internal Participation of Podemos (2014-2015); Secretary General of Podemos-Community of Madrid (2015-2016).

[ES-INT.3] **Sarah Bienzobas**. Founding member of Podemos; member of *Juventud Sin Futuro* (2011-2014); head of the graphic team of Podemos (2014).

[ES-INT.4] **Sira Rego**. Member of the federal committee of United Left; European MP for *Unidas Podemos* (2019-ongoing).

[ES-INT.5] **Nagua Alba**. Secretary-General of *Podemos Euskadi* (2016-2017); national MP for Podemos (2016-2019).

[ES-INT.6] **Raúl Camargo**. Member of the national committee of *Anticapitalistas*; member of the Assembly of Madrid for Podemos (2015-2019).

[ES-INT.7] **Manuel Monereo**. National MP for Podemos (2016-2019).

[ES-INT.8] **Jaime Pastor**. Leading figure of *Anticapitalistas*.

[ES-INT.9] **Paloma López**. European MP for United Left (2014-2019).

Expert interviews

[ES-INT.10] **Javier Franzé**. Professor at the Department of Political Sciences and Sociology, Universidad Complutense de Madrid; author of articles and studies about Podemos' discourse.

[ES-INT.11] **César Rendueles**. Professor at the Department of Political Sciences and Sociology, Universidad Complutense de Madrid; co-author of *Le sfide di Podemos* (Manifestolibri, 2017).

[ES-INT.12] **Jorge Sola**. Professor at the Department of Political Sciences and Sociology, Universidad Complutense de Madrid; co-author of *Le sfide di Podemos* (Manifestolibri, 2017).

[ES-INT.13] **Armando Fernández Steinko**. Professor at the Department of Political Sciences and Sociology, Universidad Complutense de Madrid; author of *Izquierda y republicanismo* (Akal, 2010).

A2.2 For the Italian case

Elite interviews

[IT-INT.1] **Eleonora Forenza**. European MP for the Communist Refoundation Party (2014-2019), elected with *L'Altra Europa con Tsipras*.

[IT-INT.2] **Viola Carofalo.** Former national leader of Power to the People! (2017-2021).

[IT-INT.3] **Marco Rizzo**. National leader of the Communist Party (2009-ongoing).

[IT-INT.4] **Stefano Fassina.** National MP, first elected with the Democratic Party (2013-2018), and then with Free and Equal (2018-ongoing); founder and President of Patria and Constitution.

[IT-INT.5] **Franco Turigliatto**. National leader of Anticapitalist Left (2013-ongoing).

[IT-INT.6] **Maurizio Acerbo.** National leader of the Communist Refoundation Party (2017-ongoing).

[IT-INT.7] **Paolo Ferrero**. Former national leader of the Communist Refoundation Party (2008-2017).

[IT-INT.8] **Giuliano Granato**. National leader of Power to the People! (2021-ongoing).

Expert interviews

[IT-INT.9] **Marco Damiani**. Professor at the Department of Political Science, Università degli Studi di Perugia; author of *La sinistra radicale in Europa: Italia, Spagna, Francia, Germania* (Donzelli Editore, 2016).

[IT-INT.10] **Alessandro Somma**. Professor at the Department of Law, Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza. Author of *Sovranismi. Stato, popolo e conflitto sociale* (Derive Approdi, 2018).

[IT-INT.11] **Loris Caruso**. Professor at the Department of Letters, Philosophy and Communication, Università degli Studi di Bergamo. Authors of articles about Italy's radical Left for the daily newspaper *il Manifesto*.

A2.3 For the Portuguese case

Elite interviews

[PT-INT.1] **José Manuel Pureza**. National MP for the Left Bloc (2009-2011, 2015-ongoing); vice-president of the Portuguese parliament (Assembly of the Republic).

[PT-INT.2] **Isabel Pires.** National MP for the Left Bloc (2019-2021).

[PT-INT.3] **Francisco Louçã**. First national leader of the Left Bloc (1999-2012); member of Portugal's Council of State (2015-ongoing).

[PT-INT.4] *Unauthorized to disclose*. Politician of the Portuguese Communist Party.

Expert interviews

[PT-INT.5] **José Neves**. Professor at the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa; author of *Comunismo e Nacionalismo em Portugal* (Tinta da China, 2008).

[PT-INT.6] **Robert Fishman**. Professor at the Department of Social Sciences, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid; author of *Democratic Practice: Origins of the Iberian Divide in Political Inclusion* (Oxford University Press, 2019).

APPENDIX THREE (A3)

In Appendix Two (A2) I presented the list of all the people interviewed for the research. What follows are the interview guides that I used for conducting the interviews. Although I talked with the interviewees in Spanish, Italian and Portuguese, the guides reproduced here are translated into English to facilitate the reader. As detailed in section 4.3.2, these two interview guides present a general list of the high-level topics that I planned on covering in the interviews, but they are not rigid: I customised or expanded the list of questions according to the national context and/or the person interviewed.

A3.1 Semi-structured elite interviews

Topics	**Questions**
National identity and patriotism	1. Are references to national identity, [Spain] and being [Spanish] present in your party's political communication? If so, what role do they play? 2. Are your party members at ease with national symbology? For example, using the national flag, or referring to the country as the recipient of a political proposal ('.. for [Spain]'). If yes/no, why? 3. Could your party be defined as a "patriotic" party? If yes/no, why? 4. How does your party combine national identity with the support for multiculturalism? 5. Is there an open discussion on these issues within your party?
History	6. As for your country's history, are there reasons tied to the past that influenced the way your party relates to national identity?
European Union	7. Have the process of European integration and its recent developments (with the criticisms of its policies) changed the role that national identity plays in your party? If yes/no why?
Economy	8. Has the defence of the national welfare state, in the face of the financial crisis and austerity policies, influenced the way your party view national identity? If yes/no why?
Migrations	9. Has the recent wave of migration flows changed the way your party refers to national identity in official communication?

Nationalist right	10. In recent years, right-wing nationalism has grown considerably in Europe. Has this impacted your party's political strategy? If so, in which direction?
Populist strategy	11. Supporters of left-wing populism highlighted the possibility of adopting a "populist strategy" in the field of national identification, trying to change the colour of patriotism, taking it to the left, but without encompassing the values of right-wing nationalism. Is your party adopting such a strategy? If yes/no, why? And in general, do you think this is a working strategy? Do you see risks?
Conclusions	12. Is there anything else you would like to add about the topics of this interview? 13. Is there a particular person you would advise me to contact to discuss about these issues?

A3.2 Semi-structured expert interviews

Topics	**Questions**
National identity and patriotism in the [Spanish] radical Left	1. How much are national symbology and references to national identity present in the political communication of the [Spanish] radical Left? 2. Are left-wing militants comfortable with national symbology and national terms? If yes/no, why? [+ can you tell me something more about the use of the flag?] 3. On these issues, are there substantial differences between different radical left groups? 4. Does left-wing patriotism exist in [Spain]? If so, in which political parties? How does it combine with solidarity with migrants / with the fact that [Spain] is a plurinational country? 5. On the other hand, is there a feeling of rejection of any form of identification with [Spain] on the left? If so, where is it located?
History	6. As for the history of [Spain], are there reasons linked to the past that impacted the current relation between national identity and the radical Left?
European Union	7. Has growing discontent with the European Union and criticism of its policies changed the role that national identity plays within the radical Left?

Economy	8.	And the growing importance of the battle in defence of the national welfare state against austerity policies, what role did it play?
Migrations	9.	Has the recent wave of migration impacted the way the radical Left treats its own national identity? [+ can you tell me something more about *rojipardismo/rossobrunismo*?]
Nationalist right	10.	In recent years, right-wing nationalism has grown considerably in Europe. Has this affected the political strategies of the radical Left? If so, in which direction?
Populist strategy	11.	Podemos has adopted a "populist strategy" in the field of national identification, trying to change the colour of Spanish patriotism, taking it to the left, but without encompassing the values of right-wing nationalism. Have other parties also followed a similar strategy? And in your opinion, is it working? Do you see risks?
Conclusions	12. 13.	Is there anything else you'd like to add about the topics of this interview? Is there a particular person you would advise me to contact on these issues?

APPENDIX FOUR (A4)

As discussed in section 4.3.2, all conducted interviews have been coded using MAXQDA (https://www.maxqda.com/), a qualitative data analysis software. The codes represent the arguments, the frames and the issues that emerged in the interviews. The list below is the complete codebook, automatically generated by MAXQDA.

Code	**Frequency**
Left Bloc (BE)	33
Left-wing patriotism	31
Flag(s)	27
European Union	24
Podemos' patriotism	21
Radical Right	20
Left-wing anti-patriotism	19
Migration Flow	19
Power to the People!	19
History	18
the radical Left & right-wing nationalism	18
Right-wing nationalism	17
Rossobrunismo / rojipardismo	17
Communist Refoundation Party (PRC)	16
Populism	16
Welfare state	15
Europeanism	14
Fascist regime(s)	14
Portuguese Communist Party (PCP)	14
Debates on patriotism	13
Sovereigntism	13
Left-wing populism	12
Spanish national identity	12
Anti-patriotism	11
National-popular	11
Internationalism	10
Anti-Europeanism	9
Italian national identity	9
Peripheral nationalism / independentism	9

Plurinationalism	9
Revolution	9
Antifascism	8
National symbolism	8
Party differences	8
Patria and Constitution (PeC)	8
Portuguese national identity	8
United Left (IU)	8
Word “Spain”	8
Patriotism & Nationalism	7
National Unity	7
Anticapitalists	6
National identity VS Nationalism	6
Partisans	6
Anticapitalist Left	5
Generational gap	5
National sovereignty	5
Republicanism	5
Survey(s)	5
Word “patria”	5
Anecdotes	4
World Cup	4
Colonialism	3
Communist Party (PC)	3
National self-determination	3
Podemos-IU relations	3
Adelante Andalucia	2
France	2
Giuseppe Garibaldi	2
Italian Left (party)	2
Civil War	1
French Revolution	1
Juventud Sin Futuro	1
Leaderism	1

APPENDIX FIVE (A5)

Besides discourse analysis and interviews, for the purposes of this research I also conducted participant observation at various party (and inter-parties) events in Italy, Spain and Portugal, such as meetings, demonstrations, congresses, rallies and celebrations (see section 4.3.3). The list below reports all the events I attended.

Madrid, Spain, 31 January, 2015. Podemos' national rally ''March for Change' (*La Marcha del Cambio*).

Lisbon, Portugal, 25 April, 2015. National demonstration for the April 25th celebrations.

Barcelona, Spain, 2 February, 2017. Presentation of the list *Podemos en Movimiento*, lunched by *Anticapitalistas*, for the internal election of Podemos.

Barcelona, Spain, 18 February, 2017. Catalan demonstration in favour of welcoming refugees (*Volem acollir*).

Macerata, Italy, 10 February, 2018. Italian antifascist national demonstration (*Manifestazione antifascista*).

Rome, Italy, 17 February, 2018. National demonstration in solidarity with the Kurdish movement (*Da Kobane ad Afrin la resistenza curda combatte per l'umanità. Corteo nazionale*).

Florence, Italy, 8 March, 2018. Florentine demonstration for the International Women's Day (*Basta violenza, basta sessisimo, basta con la società patriarcale*).

Lisbon, Portugal, 8 September, 2018. World Climate March (*Marcha Mundial do Clima*).

Lisbon, Portugal, 9–11 November, 2018. Left Bloc's XI national congress (*XI Convenção do Bloco*).

Madrid, Spain, 8 March, 2019. Spanish demonstration for the International Women's Day (*Huelga feminista en el día de la mujer*).

Madrid, Spain, 23 March, 2019. Podemos' national rally 'He is back' (*Vuelve*).

Florence, Italy, 6 April, 2019. Power to the People!'s event for 2019 local election (*Presentazione lista Potere al Popolo con Viola Carofalo e Antonella Bundu*).

Seixal, Portugal, 6–8 September, 2019. Portuguese Communist Party's national celebration *Festa do Avante*.

Lisbon, Portugal, 27 September, 2019. Portuguese climate strike (*Greve climática global de setembro de 2019*).

Lisbon, Portugal, 28 September, 2019. Left Bloc's "lunch-political meeting" for the 2019 national election (*Mega-almoço em Lisboa | Legislativas 2019*).

Rome, Italy, 7 December, 2019. Italian radical Left parties' national gathering 'Unitary National Assembly of the Opposition Left' (*Assemblea nazionale unitaria delle sinistre d'opposizione*).

Bologna, Italy, 15 May, 2021. March against the bombing of the Gaza Strip and in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Lisbon, Portugal, 27 August, 2021. Portuguese Communist Party's presentation of the party book in honour of the party's 100th anniversary "100 Years of Struggle at the Service of the People and the Patria for Democracy and Socialism" (*100 Anos de Luta ao Serviço do Povo e da Pátria pela Democracia e o Socialismo*).