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THE POLITICAL LEGACY OF NAZI ANNEXATION*

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We explore the legacy of foreign state repression by using the case of the de facto annexed Nazi operational zones in Italy and a spatial regression discontinuity design. We show that the operational zones experienced harsher political persecution and violence. After the war, these exhibited greater support for radical opposition at the expense of the moderate ruling party. Consistent with a mechanism of greater distrust in the government, formerly annexed areas are more likely to vote against laws suppressing dissent and report lower political trust. These results suggest that repressive annexation, even if temporary, has enduring political and social consequences.

Interstate conflict is highly destructive and ubiquitous throughout history. The twentieth century alone witnessed the staggering loss of at least 100 million lives in such conflicts (Leitenberg, 2006).

Interstate wars often result in various forms of foreign rule. A foreign power may choose to militarily occupy new territories, while maintaining pre-existing power structures. Alternatively, it may opt to annex them and incorporate them into its mainland. Annexations, or the 'forcible acquisitions of territory by one state at the expense of another state' (Hofmann, 2013), have been, and still are, a common outcome of international conflicts. Post-World War II examples include India's annexation of Goa, Indonesia's annexation of West Papua and East Timor, Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights and Russia's annexation of Crimea and territories in Eastern Ukraine.

Annexation, occupation and other forms of foreign rule tend to be accompanied by heavy repression, the harshness of which may determine the political legacy that the regime leaves for the subjugated territory. Intense foreign repression can have lasting effects through various

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channels. Violence-induced trauma and social disruptions may increase support for the opposition (Rozenas and Zhukov, 2019; Bühler and Madestam, 2022), and lead to fear of the state and scepticism of its ability to control its use of violence (Grosjean, 2014; Chen and Yang, 2019; Lichter *et al.*, 2020). Alternatively, after foreign rule is reverted, there might be a broader mandate for domestic parties with nationalistic views (Lupu and Peisakhin, 2017; Ochsner and Roesel, 2017) or movements that were active in the resistance (Acemoglu *et al.*, 2011b; Aaskoven, 2022; Fontana *et al.*, 2023). This increased support could come at the expense of those linked to the foreign oppressors (Rozenas *et al.*, 2017).

This paper provides causal evidence on the marked political legacy of foreign state repression under temporary annexation—and how this extends beyond that of military occupation—using a quasi-natural experiment involving one of the harshest authoritarian regimes in history, that of Nazi Germany. Specifically, we study the case of a short-lived but violent annexation—Nazi operational zones (OZ) in northern Italy. Between September 1943 and the end of World War II in Europe, the OZ were de facto annexed by Nazi Germany. The Germans took full control of the administrative and security apparatus. These areas experienced intense foreign state repression in the form of deportations, mass killings, and other means of alienating the local population. At the same time, the rest of northern Italy remained under a 'puppet' fascist regime, with the Nazis in charge of military operations.

The OZ grew out of Nazi expansionist aims and the desire to incorporate previous Austro-Hungarian possessions into the German Reich. These ambitions clashed with pragmatic administrative and military concerns, and the need to maintain Italian collaboration. These opposing interests resulted in a large section of the OZ border following a quasi-exogenous path that partitioned areas with similar pre-war demographic, economic, geographical and political characteristics. Unlike the Gothic and Gustav Lines, the boundary was not chosen as a Nazi defensive position, it was never a front line, and areas on both sides of it were liberated in the last days of the war. We identify the causal effect of Nazi annexation using a spatial regression discontinuity (RD) design, whereby we compare municipalities barely inside the OZ with those barely outside it.

First, our estimates show that Nazi annexation of the OZ led to greater foreign state repression, even when compared to areas militarily occupied by the same power. We find a sizeable positive effect of annexation on the relative number of deportations to prison camps of more than 0.75 SD in magnitude. The annexed territory also experienced more Nazi violence. Treated municipalities suffered from 1.4 SD greater incidence of episodes of Nazi-led violence and had 0.4 SD more Nazi attack victims per 1,000 inhabitants. However, this stronger repression did not translate into greater civil conflict: we find no effect on partisan activity or on the number of reprisals against the local population. Finally, there is no difference in the frequency or intensity of Allied bombing raids.

What are the domestic consequences of repressive annexation once it is reverted? Based on previous findings, we identify three main potential mechanisms. First, incorporated territories may experience an increase in *political disenchantment* and distrust of the state. As a result, these areas may exhibit greater support for opposition parties (in particular more radical ones) (Rozenas and Zhukov, 2019; Bühler and Madestam, 2022), lower institutional trust (Chen and Yang, 2019; Lichter *et al.*, 2020) and greater political apathy (Zhukov and Talibova, 2018). Second, annexed areas may see a surge in *nationalism* and anti-foreign sentiments, which can be quite persistent (Ochsner and Roesel, 2017; Rozenas *et al.*, 2017; Fouka and Voth, 2022). Third, these locations may experience a stronger *legacy of resistance* and be more likely to support political movements

linked to the liberation process. This may be due to partisan groups developing post-war political networks (Costalli and Ruggeri, 2015; Fontana *et al.*, 2023) or sympathies for resistance groups (Aaskoven, 2022).

We first analyse the political legacy of Nazi annexation in national elections. We find greater support for extremist parties on both sides of the spectrum: between 1946 and 1987 their vote share increased by up to 4.3 percentage points. Looking at the extreme left and extreme right separately, the vote shares for Communists and Neo-fascists rose by 3.7 percentage points and 0.8 percentage points, respectively. These magnitudes are sizeable, corresponding to 0.25 SD and 0.39 SD, respectively. These votes came at the expense of the Christian Democrats, the dominant ruling party through the Cold War era, whose vote share decreased by 3.7 percentage points. In addition, we find a negative effect on voter turnout of 1.2 percentage points, although it is not statistically significant in the baseline specification, with data pooled across years.

We then explore the persistence of these effects. We find that the effect on the extremist vote share is largely persistent over time. Notably, this is not driven solely by one side of the political spectrum. In contrast, the decline in turnout is temporary, fading away by the 1960s. We also show that our findings hold for European elections. Thus, they represent a consistent change in political behaviour not driven by national election idiosyncrasies.

In terms of mechanisms, the above evidence aligns with the implications of the political-disenchantment channel. Other channels cannot fully account for our main findings. For example, the persistent effect on communist support goes against the nationalism channel, given the internationalist nature of communist ideology and given that we do not observe a decline in support when the party took a more pro-European stance. Similarly, the legacy-of-resistance channel cannot justify the increase in neo-fascist support or the initial decrease in turnout.

We provide further evidence on our transmission channels by exploring voting behaviour in the 1978 referendum. During this vote, citizens had the option to repeal a law granting the national government substantial power to repress dissent. We find that support for repealing the law was 3.8 percentage points higher in the OZ. Hence, voters in the previously annexed areas appear to have had persistently lower levels of trust in the government's ability to moderate its use of violence. Furthermore, using survey data from 1968, we find that OZ residents exhibited lower political trust, were more likely to believe that government officials are dishonest, but were not different in their anti-foreign attitudes. While we cannot disprove the presence of other channels that we discuss, the full body of our evidence is most consistent with the political-disenchantment channel.

We provide ample evidence to support the validity of our research design. First, we show continuity in pre-war electoral and other political outcomes. Second, we confirm that the shares of Germans and Slavs varied smoothly at the border. Third, we show that previous international borders do not coincide with our treatment boundary. Fourth, we conduct a falsification exercise generating random placebo treatment borders based on other provincial boundaries. Historical accounts on the arbitrariness of the border-selection process and on the lack of importance of provincial boundaries further attenuate selection concerns. Finally, we present a set of conventional RD checks related to polynomial degree and bandwidth selection and show that our baseline results remain unchanged.

While our empirical setting allows for causal identification of the legacy of repressive annexation in the context of northern Italy, it may not allow us to answer some additional important questions. First, although we speculate that foreign state repression and violence were the primary features of our setting, our empirical design cannot fully disentangle the different factors

that constitute the experience of being under a repressive foreign regime. Second, our context does not provide the means to compare the effects of domestic versus foreign state repression. Third, we cannot study a more prolonged annexation or the effects from annexation of the whole country. These questions are beyond the scope of this paper, but may be fruitful areas for future research.

This paper complements the growing literature on state repression by providing causal evidence on the lasting domestic consequences of repressive annexation.[1] We also highlight that the intensity of foreign repression, which we find was higher under annexation than under military occupation, matters in shaping future political behaviour. Related studies have focused on the political consequences of repression in the Soviet Union (Kapelko and Markevich, 2014; Rozenas *et al.*, 2017; Zhukov and Talibova, 2018; Rozenas and Zhukov, 2019; Rozenas *et al.*, 2022), the persecution of Jews during World War II (Acemoglu *et al.*, 2011b; Finkel, 2015; Charnysh and Finkel, 2017; Homola *et al.*, 2020), and the Great Chinese Famine (Chen and Yang, 2019). Others have studied the political effects of deportations of ethnic minorities (Lupu and Peisakhin, 2017) and the effect of state violence in autocracies after regime change (Lichter *et al.*, 2020; Bautista *et al.*, 2023).[2] Consistent with our findings, Bühler and Madestam (2022) show that domestic state repression in Cambodia reduces trust and decreases support for the authoritarian incumbent.

This research is part of a broader literature on the political effects of violence and conflict.[3] We argue that state repression diverges from other types of violence because it undermines trust in the state and the political establishment, and its ability to credibly constrain its use of violence. Similarly, we complement the literature on other types of oppression, such as extreme labour coercion (slavery and serfdom) (Markevich and Zhuravskaya, 2018). We contend that these types of coercion differ from state repression because they predominantly target specific segments of the population (based on economic status, ethnicity or race), and largely do not involve direct oppression of citizens by the state. Finally, we also contribute by analysing the political effects of a particular type of conflict treatment—forceful annexation—that has so far been largely overlooked.

This paper also complements the literature on the consequences of foreign rule, first by showing that annexation leads to a harsher treatment of the local population, even when compared to military occupation, and second by documenting a persistent effect of foreign repression on political disenchantment and distrust. Most of this literature focuses on matters related to military occupation (Acemoglu *et al.*, 2011a; Ochsner, 2017; Costalli and Ruggeri, 2019; Aaskoven, 2022; Fouka and Voth, 2022; Fontana *et al.*, 2023; Martinez *et al.*, 2023).[4]

[1] State repression can be defined as one-sided political violence by the government, resulting in the infringement of human rights (Besley and Persson, 2011). It may include 'harassment, surveillance/spying, bans, arrests, torture and mass killing by government agents and/or affiliates within their territorial jurisdiction' (Davenport, 2007).

[2] Also, see Toews and Vézina (2018), Naumenko (2019) and Grasse (2023) for the economic consequences of state repression and Meng and Qian (2009) and Becker *et al.* (2020) for the individual-level effects of famine and forced migration, respectively. For a detailed review of the literature on the legacies of political violence, see Walden and Zhukov (2020).

[3] Among other topics, researchers have analysed the consequences of conflict on political participation (Bellows and Miguel, 2009; Blattman, 2009; Costalli and Ruggeri, 2015) and strength of ethnic versus national identity (Besley and Reynal-Querol, 2014; Gehring, 2022; Ananyev and Poyker, 2023). Studies have also examined the effects of bombings on civic engagement and insurgency activities (Dell and Querubin, 2018), and the legacy of war on trust and social capital (Cassar *et al.*, 2013; Rohner *et al.*, 2013; Grosjean, 2014; Alacevich and Zejcirovic, 2020; Tur-Prats and Caicedo, 2020) and intergroup economic exchange (Korovkin and Makarin, 2023).

[4] Other related studies focus on the consequences of colonial rule, including, but not limited to Acemoglu *et al.* (2001), Dell (2010) and Dell and Olken (2020). Most closely related to our paper is Iyer (2010), who compares direct and indirect

Of particular relevance is Fontana *et al.* (2023), who study the consequences of civil war by comparing areas around the Gothic Line, which was the front line between Allied and Nazi/Repubblica Sociale Italiana (RSI) troops for six months. The authors find that civil conflict between Nazi/Fascist forces and partisans led to a rise in communist support along this area. In contrast, we study one-sided foreign repression induced by annexation that lasted for almost two years and occurred far away from the front lines. This greater repression saw no change in partisan resistance and led to an increase in support for both left-wing and right-wing radicals, accompanied by a decline in political trust.

Also related is the work by Dehdari and Gehring (2022), who find that long-term German annexation of Alsace-Lorraine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries led to a stronger regional identity. We argue that a short-lived annexation like the OZ is unlikely to lead to cultural transformation. Hence, cultural aspects are not the focus of this paper.

The rest of the paper unfolds as follows. Section 1 details how the OZ border was established and how the area was administered. Section 2 describes our data sources and empirical strategy. Section 3 provides quantitative evidence on the wartime experience. Section 4 describes the expected effects of repressive annexation on post-war outcomes and the possible transmission channels. Section 5 presents our main post-war results. In Section 6, we discuss our results and offer additional evidence on our preferred mechanism. Section 7 concludes.

1. Context

Italy entered World War II in June 1940 on the Axis side. After German and Italian forces were defeated in Africa, Allied forces landed in Sicily in July 1943. Later that month, in the wake of military defeats, rampant inflation and food shortages, Mussolini was deposed and arrested. While reassuring Hitler that their alliance would continue, the newly appointed government started negotiating with the Allies. In September 1943, Italy signed the Armistice of Cassibile and surrendered to the Allies. Allied forces then proceeded to invade the southern mainland. After the armistice was announced, Germany set in motion Operation Achse, with the aim of swiftly disarming Italian troops and occupying Italy militarily. German troops easily dismantled the Italian state apparatus, then started a military occupation of northern and central Italy.

1.1. *Establishment of the OZ*

The administrative arrangement of the occupied areas was decided by Hitler and his inner circle. It was influenced by Austrian irredentist aspirations, German annexation aims and the need to maintain the alliance between fascism and Nazism (Collotti, 1963b, p.20). The final plan prescribed the establishment of the Repubblica Sociale Italiana (RSI), an Italian fascist state led by Mussolini, and two de facto annexed areas: the Operational Zone of the Alpine Foothills (Operationszone Alpenvorland, or OZAV) and the Operational Zone of the Adriatic Littoral (Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland, or OZAK). Figure 1 shows the 1991 Italian provinces that were part of the OZ.[5]

colonial rule and finds that direct colonial rule leads to worse outcomes. Colonial rule differs from annexation: the former implies a hierarchical, segmented relationship, while the latter implies full integration with the mainland.

[5] Other territories, now part of Croatia and Slovenia, were included in the OZAK.

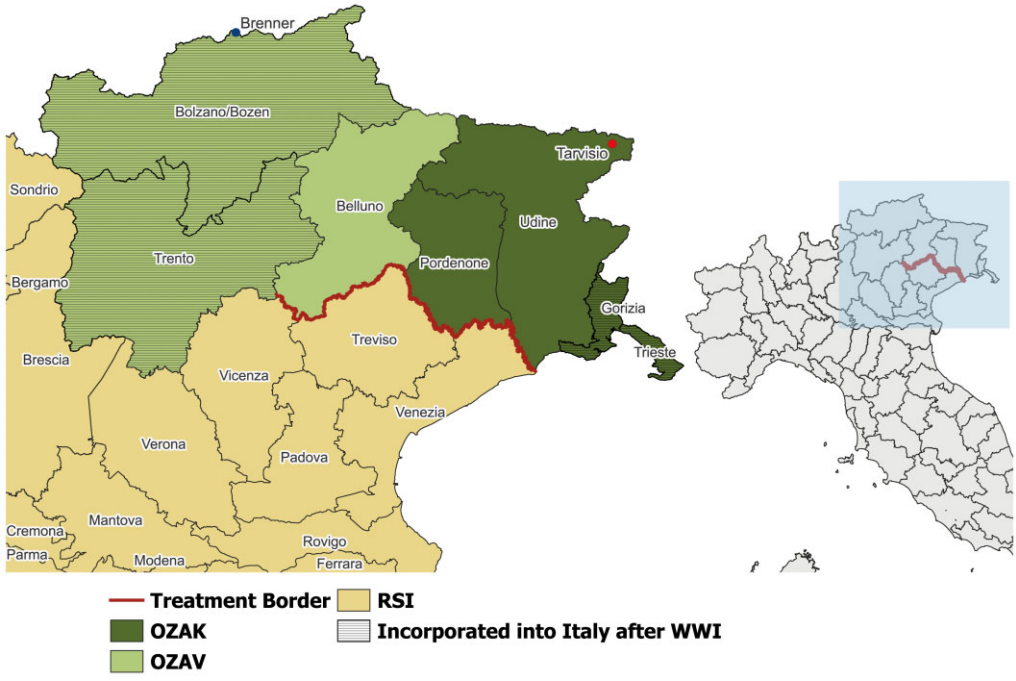

Fig. 1. *Nazi OZ, the RSI, and the Treatment Border.*
Notes: The map depicts the location of the Nazi OZ (OZAK and OZAV). The treatment border (indicated by a thick red line) and the study sample excludes the provinces of Bolzano and Trento, because those territories were incorporated into Italy after World War I and had a significant German minority population. Hence, our treatment group is made up of municipalities in Belluno, Gorizia, Pordenone, Trieste and Udine. Our control group is made up of RSI municipalities in the regions of Emilia-Romagna (except those in the southern provinces of Forli-Cesena, Ravenna and Rimini), Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Liguria, Lombardy, Piedmont and Veneto. (See Section 2 for details on our sample and empirical strategy.) Gorizia and Trieste were also incorporated after World War I, but are not located at the treatment border. In our robustness checks, we exclude these provinces as well.

What determined the border between the OZ and the RSI? Nazi authorities agreed on annexing the territory that had belonged to the Austrian Empire[6] until 1918. However, no clear consensus emerged on what other areas to annex. From a military perspective, the Germans wanted to hold key mountain passes, namely the Brenner and Tarvisio Passes, along the Germany–Italy border (Pelizzari, 2017). This would allow them to supply troops fighting in Italy and Yugoslavia.

However, Nazi expansionists went further. The minister of propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, wanted to extend German territory to the 1860 Austrian border, including the entire region of Veneto and the province of Mantua (Luciani, 2004; Di Michele and Taiani, 2009). The view of setting the border south of Venice was later supported by Hitler himself (Radice, 1959). This goal clashed with pragmatic considerations, such as having a large enough police force to control the new territories and maintaining Italian collaboration (Klinkhammer, 1993; Di Michele and Taiani, 2009).

[6] Bolzano, Gorizia, Pola (the Istrian Peninsula), Trento and Trieste were annexed at the end of World War I, in 1918. Fiume (currently Rijeka in Croatia) became part of Italy in 1924, and Ljubljana (currently Slovenia) was incorporated in 1941.

These opposing forces led to a partition that failed to fully satisfy either Nazi or Fascist authorities (Di Michele and Taiani, 2009). In the end, a large segment of the border between the OZ and the RSI—namely, between the provinces of Belluno and Udine (and Pordenone, which split from Udine in 1968) on the OZ side, and the provinces of Treviso, Venezia and Vicenza on the RSI side (the thick red line in Figure 1)—followed a plausibly quasi-exogenous path of largely irrelevant Italian provincial borders that did not coincide with previous international borders or ethnic cleavages. The incorporation of Belluno and Udine was unrelated to the nature of their border with neighbouring RSI provinces. The inclusion of Udine followed from the presence of the Tarvisio Pass in the northernmost part of the province. Belluno was annexed to avoid a territorial gap between the OZAV and the OZAK (Corsini, 1993). In Section 2.2, we provide evidence on pre-war economic and political similarities of the bordering areas that supports our identification strategy.

1.2. *Life in the OZ*

The institutional arrangement and the resulting way of life in the OZ were markedly different from those in the RSI. The OZ were placed under full German administrative and military control. As in other areas annexed by Nazi Germany, each zone was ruled by a *Gauleiter,* who was appointed directly by Hitler. The *Gauleiters* had vast powers in legislative, executive and judiciary matters, and were directly responsible to Hitler. The OZ were not de jure annexed to the Reich. However, there is consensus among historians that they were de facto annexed and were considered as part of the future Reich (Collotti, 1963a, p.30; Fogar, 1968, p.521).[7] In contrast, the RSI was an Italian fascist state (Klinkhammer, 1993; Bresadola, 2004). While Germans had control of military operations, Mussolini was entrusted with management of the administration and public apparatus. Germans presented the RSI to the public as the legitimate successor of the Italian state, obtaining diplomatic recognition from the eight Axis states.

In the OZ, the *Gauleiters* created special courts that applied the law of the neighbouring German *Reichsgau* (Radice, 1959, p.12) instead of Italian law. They ruled over magistrates, lawyers, notaries, courts and prosecutors, and they could invalidate decisions of the judicial authority. Moreover, the state security apparatus differed from that in the RSI. Special police corps were created and Italian police forces were subjugated. German commanders were solely responsible for military conscription, and draftees were assigned mostly to German armed forces (Rapporto Riservato alla Persona del Duce, 1944). German armed forces and police were responsible for territorial control and anti-partisan activities. RSI military divisions could not enter the OZ without German authorisation. The few troops who were admitted were deprived of operational autonomy (Di Giusto and Chiussi, 2017, p.9). In addition, civilian movement was largely prohibited, and a special permit was required to cross the border (Radice, 1959, p.10).

The local populations in the OZ were subject to higher levels of foreign repression. The military and other influential figures of the Nazi regime were in favour of harsh military treatment that would subject local populations to the full weight of Italian betrayal (Di Michele and Taiani, 2009, p.42). Military units known for their cruelty were deployed in the area. For example,

[7] Bills and discussions in the Italian parliament confirm the de facto annexation (e.g., Disegno di Legge 1263, V Legislatura, Senato della Repubblica). The de facto annexation of the OZ was a source of shame for Mussolini (Di Michele and Taiani, 2009, p.59). He and his ministers asked Hitler to restore Italian sovereignty over the OZ, but their requests were ignored or denied. Partisan accounts like the following on the fighting in Belluno also support this view: 'These were hard times for us, because that was Reich territory and the Germans were much more ferocious on their turf than in Veneto' (De Nardi, 2015).

Austrian war criminal, Odilo Globocnik, who helped organise and supervise the killing of more than 1.7 million Jews as part of Aktion Reinhard, and his group of around 100 men were assigned to the OZAK, operating in the region throughout the annexation period. Globocnik was entrusted with making the region '*Judenfrei*' (free from Jews), fighting partisans and carrying out reprisals against civilians. In Trieste, the OZAK capital, Nazi forces set up the only extermination camp in Italy, Risiera di San Sabba, where the Nazis tortured and killed thousands of partisans, hostages captured during roundups and civilians suspected of collaborating with partisans.

Italians in the OZ, including Fascists, were largely marginalised. The *Gauleiters* excluded Italian authorities from the RSI. They radically overhauled local administrations, substituting Italians with trusted Austrian and German nationals (Luciani, 2004, p.637; Di Michele and Taiani, 2009, p.96). The Fascist party was given a secondary role in the OZAK, but was forbidden in the OZAV. These schemes stemmed from the long-term aims of Nazi policy: permanent annexation and the construction of a new German order (Fogar, 1968, p.50; Di Giusto and Chiussi, 2017, p.9).

1.3. *Post-War Political System*

In northern and central Italy, tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians with different political ideologies, united by the common objective of liberation, organised the resistance movement. They formed partisan brigades, engaging opposing forces directly or conducting sabotage. The National Liberation Committee (Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale—CLN) served as the political arm of the resistance. This broad coalition of parties from across the political spectrum included the moderate Christian Democrats (Democrazia Cristiana—DC) and the Italian Communist Party (Partito Comunista Italiano—PCI).

After German capitulation, the CLN parties formed a provisional government. In June 1946, Italians were asked to vote on whether they wanted to keep the monarchy or set up a republic, and to vote on a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution. A majority of voters favoured the republic, which was proclaimed a few days after the vote. The new constitution went into effect on 1 January 1948. The first nationwide legislative election took place three months later.[8]

Throughout our period of analysis, the political system was dominated by the DC. The party promoted a social market economy, advocated programmes such as land reform and social reform, and promoted traditional family values. It was the main political force in all ruling coalitions, or it ruled independently as a minority government, until 1994. All post-war Italian prime ministers were DC politicians until 1981, when Giovanni Spaldoni, a member of the Italian Republican Party, led a five-party coalition. In all legislative elections until 1983, the DC was able to obtain more than 40% of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies.

The main opposing force to the DC was the PCI. It was the largest and best-organised communist party in Western Europe, consistently obtaining at least 20% of the national vote. The PCI never joined the government, though it did support the ruling coalition in certain votes and gave external support to the 1976 government. Most of the party's support came from urban workers and farmers, particularly in the regions of Emilia-Romagna, Marche, Tuscany and Umbria. The party also garnered support from those who wanted to limit the influence of DC-led coalitions (Scoppola, 1991; Lepre, 2006).

[8] For the provinces of Gorizia and Trieste on the Yugoslav border, the first national elections were held in 1953 and 1958, respectively.

At the opposite end of the ideological spectrum was the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement (Movimento Sociale Italiano—MSI). Founded in late 1946 by fascist veterans and former members of the fascist regime, the MSI was a relatively minor political force. It gained around 5% of the vote in most elections. The party garnered support from voters who supported traditional values, as well as from those who wanted to protest against the political establishment (Chiarini, 1989).

2. Data and Method

2.1. *Data*

In this paper, we assemble a time-consistent database of more than 4,000 northern Italian municipalities (*comuni*) spanning seven decades. The sample is composed of all municipalities in the regions of Emilia-Romagna (except those in the southern provinces of Forli-Cesena, Ravenna and Rimini), Friuli-Venezia Giulia (FVG), Liguria, Lombardy, Piedmont and Veneto. This area roughly coincides with the area north of the Gothic Line (excluding the autonomous regions of Aosta Valley and Trentino-South Tyrol), the last major German defence line in Italy, which was liberated in the last few weeks of the war. To ensure a consistent sample, we use the municipal boundaries of 1991 as our baseline and track the creation, dissolution, merger and partition of municipalities over time.[9]

Our period of analysis extends through the end of the 1980s. Italy's political landscape experienced a significant transformation in the early 1990s. The changes were the outcome of societal shifts in Italy, significant external events including the end of the Soviet Union, and the nationwide judicial investigation known as the 'Clean Hands' operation in 1992. Following these events, major political parties that had dominated Italian politics disintegrated in rapid succession: the PCI dissolved in 1991, followed by the DC in 1994.

Our panel includes information from existing datasets and several newly digitised data sources. This section describes the main variables of interest and their respective sources.

2.1.1. *Operational zones*

We use a 1991 map of Italy to construct the OZ boundary (the provincial boundaries of frontier provinces have not changed since). We then calculate the distance from the centroid of each municipality to the closest boundary point.[10]

2.1.2. *Pre-war variables*

To test for the idiosyncratic nature of the OZ border, we obtain data on municipal socioeconomic characteristics from the 1921 and 1936 Italian censuses (ISTAT, 1921; 1936) from Bianchi-Vimercati *et al.* (2022). We observe population by gender and literacy rate in 1921, and we observe total population, employment rate and composition of the workforce by sector in 1936.

[9] For these adjustments, we refer to www.elesh.it, which records administrative and territorial changes following Giuliano and Matranga (2021).

[10] We convert municipal polygons using the shp2dta package and calculate distances using the geonear package. Hence, our treatment border is made up of polygon vertices. Alternative distance calculations based on finer borders lead to similar results.

To test for political imbalances, we obtain data for the last free elections before the rise of fascism (held in 1919 and 1921) from Corbetta and Piretti (2009).[11] Unfortunately, the data have several missing observations. To address this issue, we obtain raw voting data collected by Acemoglu *et al.* (2022),[12] which allows us to fill most of the voids in the Corbetta and Piretti (2009) data.[13] In addition, because Fascists and Communists ran in only a few provinces in 1921 (neither party participated in 1919), we compute predicted vote shares for those provinces in which they did not participate. Covariates for the prediction include 1921 illiteracy rates and population density, vote shares of main parties, and municipal latitude and longitude.

We complement our analysis by using data from the Central Political Records (Casellario Politico Centrale—CPC). The CPC (2010) is a centralised register instituted in 1894 to monitor subversives and people considered dangerous to the public order (Tosatti, 1997). During fascist times, the register included opposition politicians and members of the general population considered to be anti-fascists. We scrape the CPC website[14] to obtain individual records, which contain information on birthplace and political affiliation or characterisation of the individual. We then compute the number of communists and socialists who entered the records in the years leading up to the war and the first years of the fighting (1936–42) as a share of the 1936 population. This serves as a pre-treatment indicator of left-wing opposition to the fascist regime at a time when there were no free elections. We also include data from Acemoglu *et al.* (2022) on other relevant political variables, such as on the presence of fascist branches, fascist violence, and socialist majority in local elections in 1920.

We check for differences in ethnic composition by using surname data from Gabbuti (2020). The surnames are drawn from the 1933 tax declarations in the provinces around the OZ border: Belluno, Padova, Treviso, Venezia, Verona, Vicenza and Udine. The records include data for over 90,000 tax payers. We then predict the individual's ethnicity by using machine-learning algorithms provided by Forebears, the largest geospatial genealogical service.[15] We categorise a surname as German if its most likely European country of origin is Germany or Austria; Slavic if its most likely European country of origin is Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia or Ukraine; and Italian if its most likely European country of origin is Italy or San Marino. We compute the share of German, Italian and Slavic taxpayers, and an index of ethnic fractionalisation based on eighteen European ethnic groups.

2.1.3. *Wartime violence*

We obtain information on the episodes of violence perpetuated by Nazi and Fascist forces from the *Atlas of Nazi and Fascist Massacres in Italy* (ANPI-INSMLI, 2019). This includes information on murders of civilians and resistance fighters between 8 September 1943 and the end of World War II. We georeference each episode, aggregate the data at the municipal level, and produce relative measures of the total number of attacks and victims per 1,000 inhabitants, using the 1936

[11] The 1924 elections are not regarded as having been free and fair because they took place amid a climate of fascist violence. Shortly after the elections, Giacomo Matteotti denounced in parliament the fraud and intimidation. Ten days later, he was killed by a fascist mob.

[12] The data is not public, but the authors kindly agreed to share it with us.

[13] Still missing is 1919 data for several municipalities in the border province of Treviso for which the votes of at least one main party are categorised as 'others'. For those cases, we computed the vote shares of main parties (PPI and PSU) as missing.

[14] http://dati.acs.beniculturali.it/CPC/.

[15] See www.forebears.io/about/name-distribution-and-demographics for more information.

municipal population as baseline. As the data distinguishes the identity of the perpetrators, we construct separate variables for Nazi and Fascist-led violence.

Deportations were a key aspect of Nazi repression. Hence, we digitise the biographies of individuals deported for political reasons (opponents and dissidents) to Nazi concentration camps between 1943 and 1945 from Mantelli and Tranfaglia (2013). The records include details for more than 23,000 individuals from across Italy. We parse this data to extract the birthplace of each individual, using it as a proxy for place of residence.[16] Individuals deported to the Bolzano transit camp or the Risiera di San Sabba concentration camp are not included in the volumes. This works against us finding a positive effect on deportations, since, per historical accounts, individuals deported to these camps were mainly from the OZ. We calculate the relative number of deportees using the 1936 population as our baseline. In addition, to distinguish between Jewish and political deportees, we obtain the surnames of Jewish families in Italy from Schaerf (1925).

We also obtain data on the location of partisan brigades in 1944 and 1945 from Costalli and Ruggeri (2015), who georeferenced the location of armed partisan bands from Baldissara (2000). We construct a dummy indicator for whether a partisan brigade was present in each municipality, and we compute the distance between each municipality and the closest partisan band. We assign a distance of zero to municipalities with armed partisan bands present.

Finally, we use information on Allied bombings collected by the Theatre History of Operations Reports (THOR, 2013) from digitised Allied mission reports. We match each Allied air raid in Italy between September 1943 and the end of World War II to its target municipality. We then calculate the number of raids and the volume of bombs dropped in each municipality.

2.1.4. *Post-war variables*

To explore the effect of the OZ on political behaviour, we obtain election results for the Italian lower chamber from the electoral archives of the Italian Interior Ministry (Eligendo, 1948–87). For each observation (election municipality), we observe the number of citizens eligible to vote, the number of citizens who cast a ballot and the number of votes for each party. The main variables of interest are the vote share of extremist parties (i.e., Communists and Neo-fascists), the vote share for the main ruling party (the DC), and turnout. Communists include the PCI and minor extreme-left parties that branched out from the PCI in the 1970s, such as Democrazia Proletaria, Il Manifesto, Nuova Sinistra Unita and Partito Comunista Internazionalista. The Neo-fascists vote share is that of the MSI.

We complement this data with other electoral outcomes. We include the results of the first three European parliamentary elections (1979, 1984 and 1989) from Eligendo (1979–89). In addition, we digitise data for the municipal elections of 1951 and 1956 to compute turnout and vote shares of main parties and coalitions in local elections (see Online Appendix Figure A2 for a sample photograph of the digitised document). For 1956, we do not have information for localities of less than 10,000 inhabitants in Piedmont, though these are largely irrelevant because they fall outside of the regression bandwidth. If a party or coalition did not run in a locality, we compute its vote share as missing. Finally, we digitise the results of the 1978 referendum which, at the time of processing, were not available online. In that referendum, voters were asked whether they wanted to repeal the Reale Law on public order and police powers. We use the results to gauge support for curbing state power to repress dissent.

[16] An individual's birthplace is preferable to the place of arrest, since individuals may have been captured on the run or near resistance hideouts, and for data-availability reasons. We have information on birthplace for 20,111 individuals, while place of arrest is available for only 8,012 deportees.

For additional evidence on political trust, we obtain data from the Italian National Election Study (ITANES), a series of electoral surveys conducted on a representative sample of the Italian population in every election year. Coverage of the OZ provinces in later years was poor, so we restrict our attention to the 1968 survey (Barnes, 1992).

We obtain municipal data on population, labour force participation, employment rate and workforce composition for the 1951 and 1961 census from ISTAT (1951; 1961). To check for effects on economic development, we complement this data by digitising information on the availability of public services in 1951 and 1961 (ISTAT, 1951; 1961). From there, we calculate the share of homes with electricity, interior plumbing and indoor water.

Finally, we check for effects on national politician supply by processing data for candidates who ran for the 1946 Constituent Assembly election from the electoral archives of the Italian Interior Ministry (Eligendo, 1946). We obtain birthplace information to compute the number of candidates from each municipality per 1,000 registered voters. Unfortunately, no information exists for other characteristics such as education and work experience.

2.1.5. *Geographic and other covariates*

We compute average elevation in each municipality using data from Jarvis *et al.* (2008). We calculate average rainfall and temperature from Fick and Hijmans (2017). Finally, we test for balance in railroad infrastructure by updating information on Italian railway development through 1913 from Ciccarelli and Groote (2017) to account for new railways built through 1931. For this, we digitise new lines for the regions of Veneto and FVG using the 1931 Italian railway network map available at Pozzo (1934).

Tables A1 and A2 in the Online Appendix provide basic descriptive statistics for the main post-war outcome variables and pre-war covariates, respectively.

2.2. *Empirical Strategy*

In evaluating the impact of repressive annexation, we face several identification challenges. First, the foreign power may annex an area that is systematically different from the rest of the country. For example, the annexed region may be more productive, or differ culturally and ethnically from the unincorporated territories. Second, the foreign power may set the border based on military considerations, taking advantage of natural boundaries that may be relevant for future outcomes.

To overcome these challenges, we exploit the fact that a large segment of the OZ border was set in a quasi-exogenous manner, as detailed in Section 1. This border did not follow relevant political or natural boundaries. We claim that our treatment boundary partitioned a homogeneous area in terms of demographic, economic, geographic and political characteristics. Later in this section, we provide empirical support for this claim and discuss the main identification concerns.

We estimate the treatment effect using a sharp geographic RD design. We define the treatment assignment variable d_i as the minimum distance between the municipality i's centroid and the OZ border. The RD estimand is then defined as:

$$\tau_{RD} = \lim_{d_i \downarrow 0} E\left[Y_{it} | OZ_i = 1, d_i\right] - \lim_{d_i \uparrow 0} E\left[Y_{it} | OZ_i = 0, d_i\right],$$

where Y_{it} is the observed outcome of municipality i in period t and OZ_i takes the value of one if municipality i was inside the OZ and zero otherwise.

We estimate τ_{RD} using local linear regressions. Our baseline estimates use the robust bias-corrected estimator with a data-driven bandwidth selector proposed by Calonico *et al.* (2014b). Following Calonico *et al.* (2014a), we report the conventional estimate of τ_{RD} and standard errors, but we present the robust bias-corrected p-value levels. For pooled RD estimates, we account for serial correlation by using a cluster-robust nearest-neighbour estimator with errors clustered at the municipal level, following the advice in Cattaneo *et al.* (2019). We also present results using a heteroscedasticity-robust nearest-neighbour estimator, which is the standard option in Calonico *et al.* (2014a) and that, in the context of spatial pooled RD designs, calculates standard errors based on observations within municipalities (Calonico *et al.*, 2014b). In both methods, we set the number of nearest neighbours to be greater than or equal to the number of observations per municipality.

The identifying assumption behind our design is that conditional expectations of potential outcomes, $E(Y_i(0)|d_i)$ and $E(Y_i(1)|d_i)$, are continuous in d_i. This assumption may not hold if the exact placement of the boundary was endogenous to municipal characteristics, which may affect post-war outcomes. We address the potential concerns with this assumption in the following four ways: (*i*) we restrict our attention to the quasi-exogenous part of the OZ border, (*ii*) we quantitatively confirm continuity in baseline characteristics along that part of the OZ border, (*iii*) we qualitatively argue that provincial borders were irrelevant at the time, and (*iv*) we confirm that the part of the OZ border that we focus on did not coincide with other historical borders. We provide details for each of these steps below.

To alleviate identification concerns, we focus on the quasi-exogenous part of the OZ border between Belluno, Pordenone and Udine on one side and the rest of the Veneto region on the other (see the treatment boundary in Figure 1). We exclude the provinces of Bolzano and Trento from the analysis. These were incorporated into Italy at the end of World War I, retained a large German population and were subject to specific policies during the fascist period and World War II (Belmonte and Di Lillo, 2021); thus, the continuity assumption at the OZ border would be debatable in their case. Including Gorizia and Trieste—which were also incorporated after World War I, together with a few Udine municipalities—is not problematic for identification, as they are farther from the OZ border.[17] As part of our robustness checks, we exclude those localities that were incorporated after World War I; we find that our estimates are largely unaffected.

We explore the validity of our design by checking for balance in pre-war electoral and political outcomes, as well as socioeconomic and geographic characteristics. Tables 1 and 2 report the results of our balance tests.

We find no significant discontinuities in past electoral outcomes, such as the vote share of radical left-wing parties, which includes the PSU, the PRI and the PCI following the categorisation presented in the electoral statistics for 1921 (Ministero dell'Economia Nazionale Direzione Generale di Statistica, 1924), turnout, or the vote share of the predecessor of the DC and main political force at the time, the PPI, in both 1919 and 1921. Similarly, there is no discontinuity in socialist support in local elections, measured by a binary variable that indicates whether the socialists achieved a majority in the 1920 local elections. As an additional check, following Acemoglu *et al.* (2022) and Fontana *et al.* (2023), we compute predicted values for Fascist and Communist vote shares in 1921, as both political groups did not run candidates in many

[17] The closest municipality to the OZ border, San Canzian d'Isonzo, is around 30 km away from it. In most of our specifications, the optimal bandwidth is less than 30 km. Moreover, these provinces make up only 31 out of the 288 municipalities in our treatment group.

Table 1. *Balance on Electoral and Political Covariates.*

			Dep. var.	
	RD estimate	*N*	Mean	SD
Panel A: pre-war electoral outcomes				
i. 1919 Legislative Election				
Left-wing parties (PSU+PRI+PCI), % valid votes	2.755	3,700	39.7	25.8
	(9.138)			
Italian Popular Party (PPI), % valid votes	−0.437	3,700	31.5	22.8
	(6.889)			
Turnout, % 1921 male pop.	−3.657	3,762	42.6	13.2
	(3.614)			
ii. 1921 Legislative Election				
Left-wing parties (PSU+PRI+PCI), % valid votes	2.184	3,828	34.5	22.3
	(4.086)			
Italian Communist Party (PCI), predicted % valid votes	−0.773	3,828	4.94	9.42
	(1.188)			
Fascist parties, predicted % valid votes	−0.472	3,828	5.13	7.47
	(1.339)			
Italian popular party (PPI), % valid votes	−1.742	3,828	32.4	21.9
	(5.391)			
Turnout, % 1921 male pop.	−2.631	3,828	45.8	12.8
	(1.929)			
iii. Other electoral outcomes				
Socialist majority in 1920 local elections	−0.103	3,415	0.34	0.47
	(0.118)			
Panel B: political characteristics				
Communist activists in CPC (entry date: 1936–42), per 1,000 1936 pop.	−0.091	4,059	0.14	0.40
	(0.114)			
Socialist activists in CPC (entry date: 1936–42), per 1,000 1936 pop.	−0.084	4,059	0.06	0.24
	(0.068)			
Fascists violence (1920–2), events per 1,000 1911 pop.	0.002	3,415	0.05	0.19
	(0.033)			
Presence of fascist branch (1921)	0.057	3,415	0.17	0.37
	(0.089)			

Notes: Standard errors are calculated using a heteroscedasticity-robust nearest-neighbour variance estimator with the minimum number of neighbours equal to three. Column 1 reports the conventional RD estimates for the effect of the treatment using a first-order polynomial with no covariates, and the bias-corrected significance levels following Calonico *et al.* (2014b). Column 2 displays the number of observations available. Columns 3 and 4 report the mean and standard deviation for the outcome variable as in the Online Appendix Table A2. Data for 1920 socialist majority, fascist violence, and presence of fascist branches comes from Acemoglu *et al.* (2022), which explains the difference in sample size. Data for 1919 and 1921 is not available for some municipalities in sample. For 1919, PPI and PSU vote shares were set to missing when the share of other parties in Acemoglu *et al.* (2022) raw voting data is higher than 0, as it appears that, in many of those cases, PPI and/or PSU votes were coded as 'others', particularly for the bordering province of Treviso.

constituencies. While there are caveats with this analysis, the lack of discontinuities in predicted values provide additional evidence for balance in extremist support.

Our balance tests for past non-electoral political outcomes point to a similar pattern (see Panel B of Table 1). In particular, we observe no significant discontinuities in the relative number of communist and socialist activists (born in a given municipality) who were entered into the CPC between 1936 and 1942. We consider these two results important because they provide evidence of balance in the political environment in the years leading up to the treatment, rather than the early interwar years as is the case for the election data. Moreover, we find no discontinuities in fascist presence before the start of the regime. We observe balance in the relative number of

Table 2. *Balance on Demographic, Economic and Other Covariates.*

			Dep. var.	
	RD estimate	*N*	Mean	SD
Panel A: demographic characteristics				
Annual population growth, %, 1921–36	−0.497	4,059	1.86	3.50
	(0.484)			
Illiteracy rate (1921), % of pop. 6+	2.420	4,064	10.9	7.10
	(1.887)			
Population density (1921), pop./km^2	0.893	4,064	167	180
	(17.882)			
Ethnic fractionalisation (1933)	−0.029	716	0.18	0.12
	(0.039)			
Italian population (1933), % of taxpayers	1.629	716	89.7	8.62
	(2.455)			
German population (1933), % of taxpayers	0.725	716	1.14	4.07
	(0.616)			
Slavic population (1933), % of taxpayers	−0.621	716	1.01	2.11
	(0.489)			
Panel B: economic characteristics				
Workforce (1936), % of total pop.	1.163	4,059	48.9	8.01
	(1.245)			
1936 workforce in:				
Agriculture, % of total pop.	1.299	4,059	29.0	13.1
	(2.134)			
Industry, % of total pop.	0.002	4,059	13.6	10.2
	(1.175)			
Commerce, % of total pop.	−0.229	4,059	2.9	1.63
	(0.277)			
Public administration, % of total pop.	−0.069	4,059	1.1	0.96
	(0.145)			
Private administration, % of total pop.	−0.099	4,059	0.2	0.31
	(0.058)			
Panel C: other characteristics				
Average altitude, MASL	−83.236	4,064	423	462
	(107.243)			
Average monthly precipitation, mm.	9.497	4,064	943	240
	(20.167)			
Average temperature, °C.	0.407	4,064	11.3	2.47
	(0.541)			
Distance to closest railroad, km.	0.479	4,064	5.02	4.95
	(0.948)			

Notes: Standard errors are calculated using a heteroscedasticity-robust nearest-neighbour variance estimator with the minimum number of neighbours equal to three. Column 1 reports the conventional RD estimates for the effect of the treatment using a first-order polynomial with no covariates, and the bias-corrected significance levels following Calonico *et al.* (2014b). Column 2 displays the number of observations available. Columns 3 and 4 report the mean and standard deviation for the outcome variable as in the Online Appendix Table A2. Data for ethnicity comes from the 1933 tax registry for bordering provinces only, which explains the difference in sample size. For the 1936 census, we do not have data for five municipalities.

fascist violent events and in the presence of fascist local branches. Overall, our results show no major differences in support for extremists on either side of the political spectrum.

Figures A3 and A4 in the Online Appendix display the corresponding RD plots for the political outcomes. We observe a positive discontinuity for left-wing parties in 1919, but the discontinuity is not pronounced in 1921. Furthermore, we see no differences in local socialist majority in 1920, or the number of communists and socialists registered in the CPC records. Other plots confirm

the results in the tables that there are no significant discontinuities in local fascist support, vote share of the PPI, predicted communist vote share, and turnout.

In addition, there are no significant differences in demographic, economic or geographic characteristics. First, Panel A of Table 2 shows balance in population growth between 1921 and 1936, and in 1921 illiteracy rates and population density. Most importantly, we find no discontinuities in the ethnic composition of the population, measured using tax-registry data from 1933. For instance, there are no differences in the share of the two most important minority groups, Germans and Slavs, or in ethnic fractionalisation. A caveat with this estimate is that tax records may not accurately represent local ethnic composition. However, for our estimates to be biased, sample representativeness would have to vary discontinuously at the border. We consider this unlikely, given the balance in other covariates. Second, the results in Panel B show that areas around the border had similar economic characteristics in the last pre-war census (1936). We observe no significant differences in the size or relative composition of the workforce. In particular, we find balance in the percentage of industrial workers, who represented a core constituency of the PCI. Finally, Panel C shows balance in geographic covariates such as altitude, precipitation and temperature, and in pre-war railroad infrastructure, measured as the distance to the closest railway line.

2.2.1. *Provincial and regional borders*

Our treatment boundary is based on Italian provincial borders. Hence, a concern is that any results may be driven by idiosyncratic provincial differences. However, Italian provinces were largely irrelevant administrative units until the 1990s, when a push for decentralisation began. In the debates over the new Republican constitution, immediately after World War II, the continuation of provinces was an issue (Ballini, 2010, pp.105–12). Ultimately, provinces continued to exist with limited operational autonomy (see Aimo, 2017, pp.57–85, for a detailed discussion on the limited role of provinces before and after the war). The national government's provincial representative, the *prefetto*, was of limited relevance until the 1980s (Cassese, 1983, p.1450). Moreover, Italian media markets, which may have influenced political campaigns, were not divided based on provincial borders (Monteleone, 1992).

The FVG region, which includes the OZ provinces of Gorizia, Pordenone, Trieste and Udine, was granted its special status relatively late, in 1963 (all other regions with special status—Sardinia, Sicily, Trentino-South Tyrol and Aosta Valley—obtained it in 1948). Until a gradual process of regional decentralisation started in the 1970s, all regions had restricted powers, limited mainly to local government museums and libraries, hunting and fishing (Saponaro, 2019). Regions gained more fiscal powers only after the Bassanini Laws were enacted in the 1990s.

We further address concerns on the relevance of administrative borders in Section 5.3. In particular, we generate random placebo borders based on provincial boundaries, and show that our results lie at the top of the simulated coefficient distribution.

2.2.2. *Historical borders*

Past European imperial borders can have persistent economic and political effects (Grosfeld and Zhuravskaya, 2015; Becker *et al.*, 2016; Bukowski, 2019). If our border follows previous imperial boundaries, our estimates may be biased. However, this is not the case.

In Section 1, we detail how the OZ border was set in a quasi-exogenous manner. We note that the border does not coincide with that of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the time of Italian reunification, nor with the border of other major states. This is illustrated in the

Online Appendix Figure A1. In particular, in 1870, all provinces where our treatment border runs had been integrated into Italy. Before that, the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia, a constituent land of the Austrian Empire, marked the border with Italy. The boundary was located well beyond the OZ border, as the kingdom included present-day Lombardy. Moreover, all bordering provinces were part of the same administrative region of the kingdom, the Governo di Venezia.

A related concern has to do with the establishment of the post-war Italy–Yugoslavia border. It should be noted that no current Italian municipality was part of the Yugoslav-administered zone created at the end of the war. The current Italian border with the former Yugoslavia, settled in 1947, was west of the Morgan Line, which divided Allied- and Yugoslav-administered zones.

3. Wartime Experience

In Section 1, we detail how the wartime experience differed for those living in the OZ relative to those in the RSI. In this section, we provide quantitative evidence on the differences in repression, partisan resistance and Allied bombings between the two areas.

Table 3 presents the effects of Nazi annexation on wartime violence. Panel A confirms an increase in foreign state repression in the OZ. Specifically, we find a sizeable and statistically significant effect of Nazi annexation on the relative rate of deportations, which were mostly non-Jewish political prisoners. The estimate of 0.84 per 1,000 inhabitants represents more than 0.75 SD. Figure 2(d) illustrates the increase in the number of deportations.

We also find a positive and sizeable, although marginally statistically insignificant (p-value = 0.12), effect on the number of violent episodes relative to the pre-war population. These are episodes of state repression (e.g., reprisals, shootings, torture) by Fascist and Nazi forces against both civilians and partisans. This effect is driven by foreign repression. Inside the OZ, there is a significant increase in the number of Nazi-led attacks.[18] However, there is a decrease in Fascist-led violence. A similar pattern holds for the relative number of victims. Nazi annexation led to 1.3 more victims from Nazi violence per 1,000 inhabitants, corresponding to 0.4 SD. Figure 2 illustrates the jump in the number of violent incidents and the number of those involving Nazi troops at the treatment cutoff. It also highlights the harshness of these violent incidents by displaying a sharp increase in the number of firing squad executions. Taken together, these results point to higher levels of foreign state repression inside the annexed areas.

Foreign repression might have led or have been a response to more domestic resistance. However, we find no evidence of an effect on the presence of partisan brigades (Panel B of Table 3). Moreover, there is no impact on the distance between the municipality's centroid and the closest partisan brigade. The lack of an effect can be seen in the Online Appendix Figure A5. A further measure for partisan activity is the number of reprisals against the local population. The estimate (last row of Panel B of Table 3) supports the lack of difference in resistance.

Next, we analyse the effect of annexation on Allied bombing raids. Allied commanders may have increased the frequency and intensity of bombing raids in the OZ if there were targets of greater military value in the area (e.g., key infrastructure, factories, military stockpiles). The results in Panel C of Table 3 show no evidence of an impact on the number of raids or the volume of bombs dropped. Figure A5 in the Online Appendix illustrates this null result for the total number of bombings. This suggests that the OZ population did not experience more frequent and

[18] We categorise as Nazi-led attacks those incidents carried out by Nazi forces only, and those carried out by both Nazi and Fascist troops jointly. This follows from the fact that Italian forces typically followed Nazi command in joint military operations.

Table 3. *Effect of Repressive Annexation on Wartime Violence.*

	RD estimate (1)	*N* (2)	Dep. var. Mean (3)	Dep. var. SD (4)
Panel A: state violence (1943–5)				
Deportations, per 1,000 of 1936 pop.				
Total	0.841*	4,059	0.47	1.08
	(0.437)			
Jews	0.086	4,059	0.02	0.14
	(0.090)			
Episodes of violence, per 1,000 of 1936 pop.				
Total	0.451	4,059	0.19	0.49
	(0.246)			
Fascist-led	−0.103*	4,059	0.06	0.25
	(0.052)			
Nazi-led	0.557*	4,059	0.12	0.39
	(0.270)			
Victims of violence, per 1,000 of 1936 pop.				
Total	0.952	4,059	0.71	3.00
	(0.688)			
Fascist-led	−0.344**	4,059	0.14	0.79
	(0.162)			
Nazi-led	1.269*	4,059	0.55	2.87
	(0.686)			
Panel B: partisan resistance (1944–5)				
Presence of partisans	0.002	4,064	0.10	0.30
	(0.097)			
Distance to closest partisan band	0.237	4,064	4.41	3.96
	(0.674)			
Reprisals, per 1,000 of 1936 pop.	−0.060	4,059	0.03	0.13
	(0.044)			
Panel C: Allied bombings (1943–5)				
Number of bombing raids	−1.773	4,064	2.42	20.54
	(2.564)			
Bombs dropped, tons	−22.353	4,064	36.90	329.10
	(43.836)			

Notes: Standard errors are calculated using a heteroscedasticity-robust nearest-neighbour variance estimator with the minimum number of neighbours equal to three. All state violence outcomes are calculated per 1,000 of 1936 population. Column 1 reports the conventional RD estimates for the effect of the treatment using a first-order polynomial with no covariates, and the bias-corrected significance levels following Calonico *et al.* (2014b). Column 2 displays the number of observations available. Columns 3 and 4 report the mean and standard deviation for the outcome variable as in the Online Appendix Table A1. For the 1936 census, which we use as our population baseline, we do not have data for five municipalities. * denotes significance at 10% and ** significance at 5%.

intense raids. In addition, the findings further support our identifying assumption that the border was set in a quasi-exogenous manner and that it did not follow strategic military considerations.

Overall, our results show that Nazi annexation was associated with a significantly harsher wartime experience relative to Nazi military occupation. In particular, the OZ population suffered greater foreign state repression. This was not matched by an increase in partisan activity.

4. Expected Effects of Annexation on Political Outcomes

What are the expected consequences of repressive annexation once it is reverted? Based on the literature on the effects of violence and state repression, we hypothesise that formerly

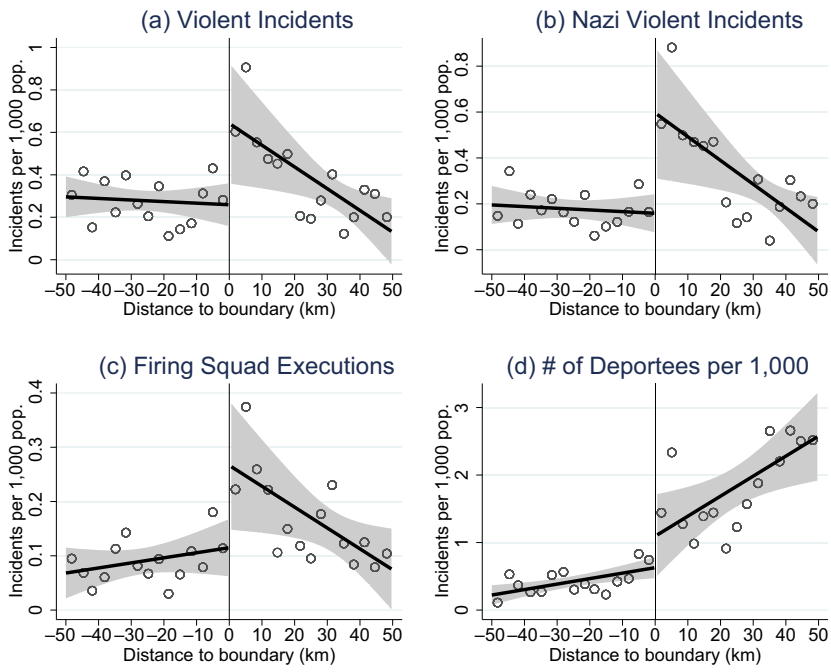

Fig. 2. *Effect of Annexation on Wartime Violence.*
Notes: In panels (a) through (d) the graphs plot the total number of violent incidents, the number of violent incidents involving Nazi troops, the number of firing squad executions and the total number of deportees to prison camps. All outcomes are per 1,000 inhabitants as of the 1936 Census and measured for the period between September 1943 and May 1945. Plots include a linear fit on each side of the cutoff and 95% confidence intervals (shaded area) calculated using robust standard errors.

annexed territories may: (*i*) see an increase in political disenchantment and distrust of the state, leading to heightened support for extremist parties and reduced voter turnout (the *political-disenchantment* channel); (*ii*) experience a surge in nationalistic sentiments, potentially leading to greater political engagement and greater backing for parties with more nationalistic platforms (the *nationalism* channel); and/or (*iii*) reward political groups and parties linked to the liberation process (the *legacy-of-resistance* channel). While this list of mechanisms may not be exhaustive, we consider these three to be the most important and likely channels in our setting. We elaborate on these channels below, and discuss their potential effects on key outcomes.

4.1. *Potential Mechanisms*

4.1.1. *Political disenchantment*

Previous findings show that state repression leads to political apathy and distrust of the national political establishment. Even if perpetuated by foreign actors, exposure to reprisals, deportations and other harsh forms of state violence may increase fear of the state and its use of violence. As a result, voters may be more willing to give electoral support to a radical opposition that may keep tighter checks on the dominant political forces.

In recent years, the literature has provided empirical support for this channel. Rozenas and Zhukov (2019) points out that Ukrainian communities that experienced more suffering during the 1930s famine showed more opposition to Moscow when the threat of regime retribution was low. Bühler and Madestam (2022) find a lasting negative effect of past state repression on support for an authoritarian incumbent, and a positive effect on support for democratic values. At the same time, affected communities have lower levels of trust, social capital and civic engagement. Regarding institutional trust specifically, Chen and Yang (2019) show that greater exposure to the Great Chinese Famine led to a persistent decline in trust in local government. Lichter *et al.* (2020) find that a higher intensity of East German government surveillance has lasting negative consequences on interpersonal and institutional trust in modern-day Germany. Vlachos (2022) shows that Nazi forced conscription in annexed French territories reduced political trust and voter participation, and, depending on the political context, increased voter radicalisation. More generally, Grosjean (2014) points to a negative effect of war victimisation during World War II on political trust and the effectiveness of national institutions. Finally, on political apathy, Zhukov and Talibova (2018) show that state violence during Stalin's regime lowers present-day turnout in both Russia and Ukraine.

Given the nature of this channel, we anticipate it to be primarily relevant in the national and supranational (European) political sphere. These are the settings where decisions concerning the state's role in economic, political and social life are made. In particular, laws regarding individual freedoms and the application of state violence are established at the national level, as is the case in Italy. During the time frame of our study, the role of local governments primarily encompassed the provision of basic public services, such as maintaining public registries and local infrastructure. While some municipalities had a local police force (Polizia Comunale), their role was mostly circumscribed relative to national security forces such as the Carabinieri and the Polizia di Stato. A weaker effect on local electoral outcomes would be consistent with previous findings. For instance, Grasse (2023) finds no significant effects of past state repression on the ruling party's vote share in local elections in Cambodia, while, in the same context, Bühler and Madestam (2022) find a lasting negative legacy at the national level.

4.1.2. *Nationalism*

The aforementioned research generally focuses on the consequences of domestic state repression by authoritarian regimes. However, in the case of the OZ, the perpetrator was foreign. Liberation from foreign rule could heighten a territory's sense of patriotism and nationalism. It could also lead to stronger anti-foreign sentiments. The latter could be particularly relevant within the post-World War II Western European context, which saw the creation of supranational organisations such as the European Economic Community (EEC), the predecessor of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Several studies document that foreign or out-group violence can strengthen national identity and lead to greater rejection of outsiders. Ochsner and Roesel (2017) find that the support for far-right parties is stronger in Austrian localities that were victims of violence during the Turkish sieges in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Rozenas *et al.* (2017) find that the areas in Western Ukraine that suffered greater Soviet violence due to an anti-nationalist insurgency campaign are less likely to vote for 'pro-Russian' parties, which, they argue, voters associate with the original perpetrators.

The effects of repression on nationalism may stay dormant until the re-emergence of past political cleavages. Fouka and Voth (2022) show that memories of Nazi reprisals in Greece

persist, resurfacing during later political crises, in this case, in the form of anti-German consumer boycotts. Aaskoven (2022) finds that Danish localities that experienced greater Nazi violence displayed lower support for joining the EEC, framed by anti-EEC campaigners as a Germany-led organisation.[19] More radical parties may be better able to capitalise on an anti-foreign platform. For example, DellaVigna *et al.* (2014) show that exposure among Croats to anti-Croatian messages on Serbian radio leads to greater support for extreme nationalist parties at the expense of more moderate ones.

We do not expect the treated region to develop a stronger regional identity. In contrast to other annexation cases, such as Alsace-Lorraine (Dehdari and Gehring, 2022; Vlachos, 2022), the annexation of the OZ lasted for less than two years and the region did not have a salient pre-treatment identity. Such a short-lived experience is unlikely to generate a new regional identity.

Similarly, we do not expect to see stronger sympathies with the oppressor's identity and ideology in the OZ. Potentially, cooperation and socialisation with occupying forces may have led to amity toward Germans and, to some extent, Nazi ideology. However, our treatment was characterised by extensive violence and marginalisation of the local population. Hence, we expect to see more animosity toward occupying forces in the OZ. This is consistent with previous findings. For example, Dell and Querubin (2018) show that, during the Vietnam War, the US Army's extensive use of force worsened anti-US attitudes relative to the US Marine Corps strategy, which focused on winning hearts and minds.

4.1.3. *Legacy of resistance*

Previous evidence points to the importance of resistance activity in shaping post-war politics. For example, Fontana *et al.* (2023) show that electoral support for communists was higher north of the front lines, where partisans actively fought Nazi military occupation. This effect is attributed to the link between partisan networks and the post-war PCI.

Foreign state violence may result in greater support for parties with close links to the resistance, even if there is no increase in partisan activity. These parties may be able to exploit voters' gratitude and sympathies for the resistance movement. Aaskoven (2022) notes a positive relationship between Nazi violence during the German occupation of Denmark and support for far-left parties linked to the Danish resistance. Similarly, Acemoglu *et al.* (2011b) find a positive correlation between the severity of Nazi persecution against Jews and support for communist candidates in post-Soviet Russia.

4.2. *Hypothesised Effects on Outcomes*

4.2.1. *Far-left support*

According to the political-disenchantment channel, which implies distrust of the dominant political establishment, we expect to see an increase in electoral support for left-wing extremism in the OZ, represented mainly by the PCI and its later communist affiliates. The PCI was the main opposition to the DC-led coalitions after the war. Following the logic of the channel, the effects

[19] Similar mechanisms could be at play with conflict boosting ethnic and even supranational identity. Lupu and Peisakhin (2017) show that descendants of repressed Crimean Tatars have a stronger ethnic identification, are more likely to support the Crimean Tatar political leadership, express more animosity toward Russia, and are more politically engaged. Ananyev and Poyker (2023) find that an interethnic conflict in Mali led to stronger ethnic identification and a decline in national identity among residents living close to the conflict zone. Gehring (2022) finds a positive effect on EU identity in states facing a higher military threat from Russia after it annexed Crimea in 2014.

could be especially pronounced once the PCI established itself as the dominant opposition force to DC governments. As mentioned in Section 1.3, in 1946, the PCI was part of the CLN national-unity government. The party left the government in mid-1947, a year ahead of the pivotal 1948 general elections. That first legislative election was marked by the defeat of the PCI as the leading partner of a left-wing coalition, and it cemented the PCI's role as the main national opposition to DC rule. Thus, if the political-disenchantment mechanism is operating in this context, we would expect to see a rise in communist support in the OZ after the 1948 elections.

Communists were also the main driving force behind the Italian partisan movement. However, we find no discontinuity in local resistance activity (see Table 3). Hence, unlike in Costalli and Ruggeri (2019) and Fontana *et al.* (2023), a higher vote share for the PCI cannot be explained by more extensive far-left grassroot movements linked to partisan presence. Still, a higher vote share for the PCI may be expected due to the greater sympathy for the resistance movement in areas that suffered greater repression. Since the PCI was perceived as the main opposition force to Nazi occupation, voters' support for the party may have been stronger in the OZ.

In contrast, the nationalism channel could be consistent with both lower and higher support for communists. On the one hand, communist ideology is, by its nature, internationalist. The PCI leadership shared common positions with the Soviet Union and other communist movements, including support for the Soviet invasion of Hungary (Iandolo, 2014). On the other hand, the PCI was generally against the European integration project, at least in the immediate post-war period (Isernia, 2008). For example, in the Manifesto Project Dataset (Lehmann *et al.*, 2023), the PCI is the only party among the DC, the PCI, and the MSI whose post-World War II manifestos through 1983 contained explicit anti-European sentences.

4.2.2. *Christian democrat support*

Based on the political-disenchantment mechanism, we expect to see a decrease in electoral support for the DC in the OZ. As noted in Section 1.3, after 1948, the DC emerged as the established ruling party in Italian national politics. Until 1994, the DC was consistently the most-voted-for party in Italian general elections, and it participated in all ruling coalitions or administered the executive independently as a minority cabinet.

Furthermore, the DC did not have the same reputation as the PCI in terms of the intensity of its opposition to fascist and Nazi regimes. While the DC was also part of the CLN, communist activists constituted the bulk of violent resistance to Nazi authorities. Hence, OZ voters' sympathies for the DC may have been weaker than for the PCI, according to the legacy-of-resistance channel.

The nationalism channel's impact on DC support is ambiguous. The party's conservative nature meant that it attracted voters who favoured traditional Italian values and way of life (Ginsborg, 2003). However, in the 1950s, the party became a strong supporter of the common European project (Acanfora, 2010). According to the Manifesto Project Dataset (Lehmann *et al.*, 2023), the DC was the only party among the DC, the PCI and the MSI whose manifestos through 1963 contained explicit pro-European sentences; an average of 2.3% of its manifesto sentences expressed pro-European sentiments in the 1946–87 period.

4.2.3. *Far-right support*

The expected effect on far-right electoral support is more ambiguous. On the one hand, following the political-disenchantment channel, we expect to see a higher vote share for the Neo-fascist Party (MSI), which generally attracted anti-establishment and protest votes. Hence, voters in

the OZ may have been more willing to support it to express opposition to the political ruling class. On the other hand, MSI support may have been lower in the OZ. Parties associated with the resistance may have drawn support away from the MSI, given past collaboration between Fascists and Nazis. Moreover, voters may have linked Neo-fascists to the original perpetrators, given the ideological links between the two. However, while MSI ideology relates to fascism and, to a lesser extent, Nazism, there is no ethnic divide between the party and OZ constituents. Hence, increased nationalism and rejection of foreign perpetrators may signify a positive shift in MSI support. The MSI was also against international integration; according to the Manifesto Project Dataset (Lehmann *et al.*, 2023), 2.1% of its manifesto sentences expressed anti-internationalist sentiments in the 1948–87 period.

4.2.4. *Turnout*

The political-disenchantment channel suggests that voters may be more distrustful and less willing to support the ruling political class. However, this may mean a higher turnout for radical opposition parties. Most likely, political apathy should translate into lower turnout in general elections. However, it should be noted that, throughout our period of analysis, voter turnout for the whole of Italy in national elections was above 88% (and higher than 92% between 1948 and 1976). Hence, expressing discontent through political inaction was not a common practice. The nationalism and the legacy-of-resistance channels would, if anything, predict a higher turnout in areas affected by violence.

4.2.5. *Trust in government*

We expect OZ citizens to have expressed lower levels of trust in government institutions. Moreover, OZ voters should have been less willing to support ballot measures that extended government powers to carry out violent actions and suppress dissent. Both of these effects would be products of greater political disenchantment. Differences in nationalism and sympathies for the resistance should have had little direct effect on these outcomes. If anything, these would be more consistent with increased state trust.

4.2.6. *Economic outcomes*

Our results in Section 3 show that there is no discontinuity in Allied bombing raids. Therefore, we do not expect to see greater destruction of physical capital in the OZ. Conversely, political deportations and Nazi violence against civilians may have disrupted social networks and directly affected human capital. Hence, while we do not expect to see major differences in economic activity, we may observe minor short-run impacts on workforce composition and household wealth. The absence of substantial differences would suggest that an indirect effect of foreign state repression on political outcomes via economic channels, such as selective migration or changes in political preferences due to workforce composition, is unlikely.

4.2.7. *Overview*

Table 4 summarises our hypothesis. According to the political-disenchantment channel, one expects to see an increase in support for the Communists and Neo-fascists, decreased support for the Christian Democrats, possibly lower turnout, and lower trust in the state. In contrast, the nationalism channel suggests an increase in support for the Christian Democrats and Neo-fascists, a decline in support for the Communists, and potentially increased turnout. The

Table 4. *Summary of Mechanisms and Expected Effects.*

National Political Outcomes	Mechanisms		
	Political disenchantment	Nationalism	Legacy of resistance
Communist support	+	+/−	+
Neo-fascist support	+	+/−	−
Christian Democrat support	−	+/−	+/−
Turnout	−	Null/+	Null/+
Trust in government	−	Null/+	Null/+

Notes: '+/−' indicates an ambiguous effect that may be positive or negative. 'Null/+' indicates that the channel should produce no effect or, if anything, a positive impact.

legacy-of-resistance channel implies an increase in Communist support at the expense of all other parties, including Christian Democrats and Neo-fascists.

5. The Political Legacy of Repressive Annexation

In this section, we study the political consequences of repressive annexation. We examine the effects on support for radical opposition parties (i.e., Communist and Neo-fascist) and turnout in national elections. We complement our results by analysing European and local elections. We then explore the robustness of our estimates.

5.1. *National Elections*

Table 5 reports the results of a pooled RD estimation for the whole period of analysis. As noted in Section 2.2, our baseline standard errors are calculated using a cluster-robust nearest-neighbour estimator (column 1). We also report estimates using the heteroscedasticity-robust nearest-neighbour estimator (column 2), as in the context of spatial pooled RD designs, it calculates standard errors only based on observations within municipalities (Calonico *et al.*, 2014b).

We observe a positive and highly statistically significant 4.3 percentage point increase in the national electoral support for extremist parties. This effect can be roughly decomposed into a 3.7 and 0.8 percentage points increases in the Communist and Neo-fascist vote shares, respectively. While the effect on Communists is larger in absolute terms, the estimate for Neo-fascists is bigger in relative terms—0.38 as opposed to 0.25 SDs, respectively.

The results for other parties suggest that increased extremist support came, at least in part, at the expense of the Christian Democrats. Their vote share went down by 3.7 percentage points, though the first estimate under clustered errors is marginally statistically insignificant. Finally, we observe a negative effect of annexation on turnout of 1.2 percentage points, or 0.27 SD. As before, the effect is significant only under robust nearest-neighbour errors.

Figure 3 illustrates these results. The plots display a clear discontinuity at the treatment cutoff in support for Communists, Neo-fascists, and the parties pooled together. A noticeable drop in the Christian Democrat vote share is also visible. The size of the discontinuities is very close in magnitude to the estimates presented in Table 5.

Table A3 in the Online Appendix breaks down the results by decade. The effect on the vote share of extremist parties is persistent. It remains positive, sizeable, and statistically significant

Table 5. *Effect of Repressive Annexation on National Electoral Outcomes.*

	RD estimate		*N*	Dep. var. Mean	Dep. var. SD
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Panel A: extremist parties' vote shares					
Extremist parties, %, 1946–87	4.291**	4.168***	44,577	25.2	14.9
	(1.705)	(1.008)			
Communists, %, 1946–87	3.719**	3.476***	44,577	22.9	14.6
	(1.679)	(0.977)			
Neo-fascists, %, 1948–87	0.811**	0.762***	40,556	2.58	2.08
	(0.353)	(0.225)			
Panel B: vote share other parties					
Christian Democrats, %, 1946–87	−3.732	−2.931**	44,577	47.9	15.8
	(2.145)	(1.041)			
Liberals, %, 1946–87	−0.169	−0.108	44,577	3.19	3.64
	(0.168)	(0.142)			
Socialists, %, 1946–87	0.292	0.196	44,577	14.3	8.64
	(1.071)	(0.829)			
Panel C: political participation					
Turnout, %, 1946–87	−1.247	−1.279**	44,577	92.9	5.45
	(1.015)	(0.478)			
Standard errors	NN clustered	NN			

Notes: National election variables pool data across eleven elections held between 1946 and 1987 for most municipalities. Data for a very limited number of municipalities is not available for some election years. Municipalities in Gorizia and Trieste did not take part in the 1946 and 1948 elections. The Neo-fascist party was unable to participate in the 1946 election. Vote shares are calculated as a percentage of valid votes. Vote share of extremist parties is the combined vote share of Communist and Neo-fascist parties as detailed in Section 2.1. Columns 1 and 2 report the conventional RD estimates for the effect of the treatment using a first-order polynomial with no covariates, and the bias-corrected significance levels following Calonico *et al.* (2014b). Standard errors in parentheses in column 1 are calculated using cluster-robust nearest-neighbour estimator with errors clustered at the municipal level following the advice in Cattaneo *et al.* (2019). Standard errors in parentheses in column 2 are computed using the heteroscedasticity-robust nearest-neighbour estimator, which is the standard option in Calonico *et al.* (2014a) and that, in spatial pooled RD designs, are based on observations within municipalities (Calonico *et al.*, 2014b). In both cases, the minimum number of neighbours is equal to eleven. Column 3 displays the number of observations available. Columns 4 and 5 report the mean and standard deviation for the outcome variable as in the Online Appendix Table A1. ** denotes significance at 5% and *** significance at 1%.

up until the end of our election panel. Figure A6 in the Online Appendix displays the year-by-year coefficients estimated in separate yearly RD specifications, and Figures A7 to A10 in the Online Appendix present RD plots separately by year for each of our main electoral variables. The plots confirm that the positive effect on Communist and Neo-fascist vote shares and the negative effect on Christian Democrat support remained consistent across elections. In fact, the effect on extremist parties combined never declines below the 3 percentage point mark after the first two post-war elections.

However, the negative effect on turnout is strong only in the 1940s and 1950s. It reaches a −2.7 percentage point peak in the 1950s and then converges back to statistical zero. The short-term pattern is also confirmed by the graphs in Figure 3(e) and (f). The bottom-right graph of Figure A6 in the Online Appendix further breaks down the dynamics into yearly effects. It shows that the effect peaks in absolute terms in 1953. The year-by-year RD plots in the Online Appendix Figure A11 further confirm this pattern.

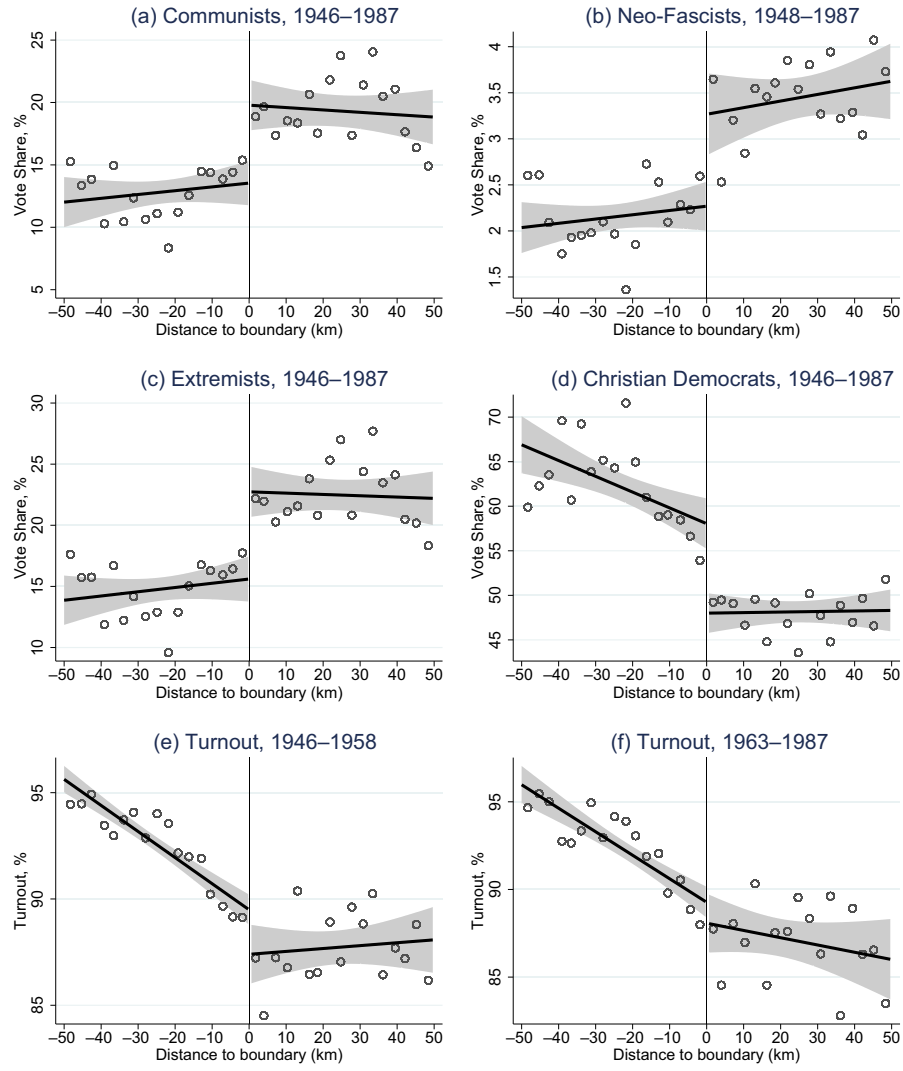

Fig. 3. *Effect of Repressive Annexation on National Election Outcomes.*
Notes: In panels (a) to (f), the graphs plot the vote shares of communist parties, neo-fascists (MSI), extremist parties (Communists and Neo-fascists), the DC, and voter turnout before 1958 and after 1958. Vote shares are calculated based on valid votes while turnout is calculated as a percentage of registered voters. Plots include a linear fit on each side of the cutoff and 95% confidence intervals (shaded area) calculated using standard errors clustered at the municipal level.

5.2. *European and Local Elections*

Do the results for national elections hold in European and local elections? We answer this question in Table 6.

Panel A reports the results for the first three European parliamentary elections, held between 1979 and 1989. The results are similar to those for national elections. Specifically, we observe

Table 6. *Effect of Repressive Annexation on European and Local Electoral Outcomes.*

	RD estimate		*N*	Dep. var. Mean	Dep. var. SD
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Panel A: European elections (1979–89)					
Vote Share, %:					
Extremist parties	4.571**	4.459***	12,188	29.3	12.9
	(1.861)	(1.244)			
Communists	3.995**	3.752***	12,188	26.0	12.7
	(1.869)	(1.277)			
Neo-fascists	0.670	0.706**	12,188	3.32	2.07
	(0.419)	(0.329)			
Christian Democrats	−3.735	−3.580**	12,188	42.3	13.8
	(1.670)	(1.228)			
Lombard League–Northern Alliance	−1.074***	−1.074***	4,061	4.93	5.44
(1989 only)	(0.149)	(0.148)			
Turnout, %	0.594	0.633	12,188	86.9	7.27
	(1.452)	(0.987)			
Panel B: local elections (1951–6)					
Vote share, %:					
Extremist parties	3.528	3.662	3,947	37.2	16.7
	(3.559)	(3.064)			
Communists	3.790	3.852	3,947	36.2	17.1
	(3.493)	(3.013)			
Neo-fascists	−1.578	−1.599	459	8.68	7.03
	(3.283)	(3.135)			
Christian Democrats	2.193	2.061	3,947	53.1	14.6
	(2.902)	(2.530)			
Independents	−10.155	−10.149*	768	16.4	12.2
	(5.010)	(4.692)			
Turnout, %	−2.557	−2.530	3,905	90.6	7.32
	(2.120)	(1.851)			
Standard errors	NN clustered	NN			

Notes: European election variables pool data across three elections held between 1979 and 1989. Lombard League participated in the 1989 election only. Local election variables pool data across elections held between 1951 and 1956. For local elections, we restrict our sample to localities in which both Communists and Christian Democrats participated. If a party did not run in a locality, its vote share is computed as missing. Data on turnout and registered voters is missing for limited number of elections for which we do have information on valid votes by party. Vote shares are calculated as a percentage of valid votes. Vote share of extremist parties is the combined vote share of Communist and Neo-fascist parties as detailed in Section 2.1. Column 1 and 2 report the conventional RD estimates for the effect of the treatment using a first-order polynomial with no covariates, and the bias-corrected significance levels following Calonico *et al.* (2014b). Standard errors in parentheses in column 1 are calculated using cluster-robust nearest-neighbour estimator with errors clustered at the municipal level following the advice in Cattaneo *et al.* (2019). Standard errors in parentheses in column 2 are computed using the heteroscedasticity-robust nearest-neighbour estimator, which is the standard option in Calonico *et al.* (2014a) and that, in spatial pooled RD designs, are based on observations within municipalities (Calonico *et al.*, 2014b). In both cases, the minimum number of neighbours is equal to three. Column 3 displays the number of observations available. Columns 4 and 5 report the mean and standard deviation for the outcome variable as in the Online Appendix Table A1. * denotes significance at 10%, ** significance at 5% and *** significance at 1%.

a strong and positive effect on the vote share of extremist parties of 4.6 percentage points, or 0.35 SD. Again, this effect is largely driven by Communist support. Conversely, the vote share of the Christian Democrats decreases by 3.7 percentage points, albeit this effect is marginally insignificant under our baseline errors. We also find a negative effect on the support for the Lombard League–Northern Alliance, the predecessor of present-day Lega Nord, which ran in

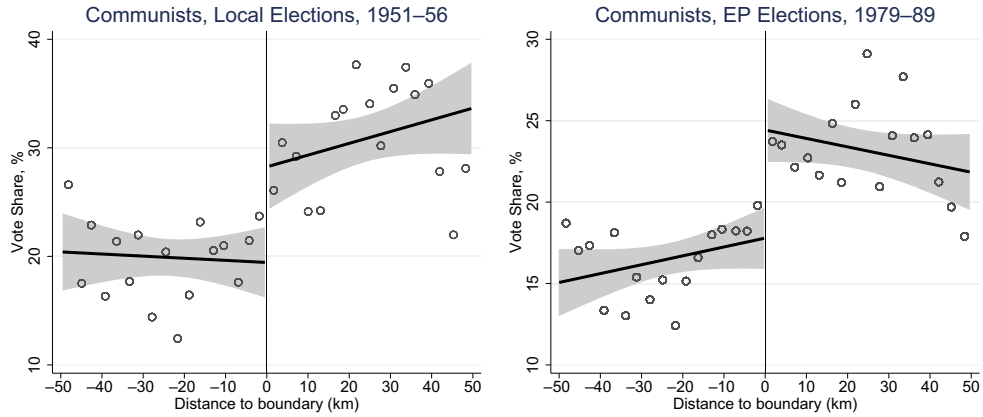

Fig. 4. *Effect of Repressive Annexation on Local and European Election Outcomes.*
Notes: Plots include a linear fit on each side of the cutoff and 95% confidence intervals (shaded area) calculated using standard errors clustered at the municipal level.

1989 only. Finally, we find no evidence of an effect on political participation. The coefficient on turnout is small and statistically insignificant.

Panel B reports the results for local elections. Our results correspond to elections in which both Communists and Christian Democrats participated. Party participation varied significantly in 1950s local elections, hence this sample restriction leads to more comparable observations. We find a positive, albeit statistically insignificant impact on the vote share of extremist parties of 3.5 percentage points or 0.21 SD. In this case, however, the effect is fully driven by the Communists. This effect is also not statistically significant. However, in Figure 4, a clear discontinuity can be observed at the border. Unlike the case for national elections, we find a positive but statistically insignificant effect on the DC vote share. Finally, we observe a negative, statistically insignificant effect on turnout of around 2.6 percentage points.

Overall, the pattern of results for European elections is similar to that for national elections. Voters were drawn away from the Christian Democrats into more radical parties. These similarities are important because they support the claim that our national estimates are not driven by factors such as national electoral constituencies and legislative candidate selection. Our local election results also appear to show an increase in Communist support, though this does not come at the expense of the DC.

5.3. *Robustness*

We carry out several checks to evaluate the robustness of our main results on wartime violence and post-war electoral outcomes. We first check whether our findings are robust to the inclusion of covariates, and changes in the running variable polynomial and regression bandwidth. We also perform a falsification test to show that our results are unlikely to be driven by provincial idiosyncrasies. Finally, we check whether our results hold under alternative specifications that include restricting the sample to border municipalities, excluding natural obstacles from the treatment boundary, and performing an ordinary least squares (OLS) estimation following Dell (2010).

Table A4 in the Online Appendix shows our first set of robustness checks. First, the estimates hold when we include covariates (columns 2 and 3). Column 2 controls for municipal latitude and longitude, while column 3 accounts for treatment-border-segment fixed effects by including an indicator variable for whether the municipality is closer to the OZAV than to the OZAK. Our results are robust to an increase in the order of the running variable polynomial (column 4). The main difference with respect to our baseline results is that our results on wartime outcomes are less precise and no longer statistically significant. Nevertheless, the estimates remain sizeable and similar in magnitude. We then check whether the results are robust to changes in the regression bandwidth. Our baseline specification uses the default option in Calonico *et al.* (2014b), which selects a mean squared error optimal bandwidth. We repeat our analysis using a 25 km and 50 km bandwidth (columns 5 and 6, respectively). The estimates remain similar to those for the baseline bandwidth.

To assuage concerns on the importance of provincial borders, we complement the historical evidence in Section 2 by performing the following simulation exercise. We randomly split our sample of thirty-six northern Italian provinces into a treatment group and a control group. This gives a random placebo treatment border. We then repeat our RD analysis using the distance to this border as the running variable. We repeated this exercise 200 times to compute a simulated *p*-value for our estimates based on the distribution of placebo estimates. Column 7 of Table A4 in the Online Appendix shows the results. All of our main results are significant, except for those related to local elections, which are also not significant under our baseline specification. Thus, the simulated *p*-values show that the magnitude of our estimates is unusually large compared to random average provincial effects. These results, together with the balance checks, strongly suggest that our main findings are not driven by the overlap of OZ and provincial borders.

Our second set of robustness checks is shown in the Online Appendix Table A5. First, we show that our estimates hold when we zoom in on the border and restrict the sample to bordering municipalities (performing a simple OLS regression with an indicator variable for the treatment). The estimates (column 2) remain very similar to the ones from our baseline specification (column 1). We then repeat our RD analysis, but excluding from our sample those municipalities that were incorporated in Italy after World War I (column 3). Excluded localities include all those in the provinces of Gorizia and Trieste, and twelve municipalities in Udine. Again, our results hold well. In columns 4 and 5, we restrict our treatment border to exclude natural features. In particular, we exclude the part of the border that coincides with the Tagliamento River (column 4) and the one that coincides with a hill range in the Belluno-Treviso border (column 5). Again, our results hold to a large extent. Finally, we depart from Calonico *et al.* (2014b), instead carrying out an OLS estimation following Dell (2010) and Dell and Querubin (2018). We restrict the bandwidth to a standard 50 kilometres, and include a discontinuous linear polynomial for distance to the border and a second-order polynomial for the municipality's centroid latitude and longitude (with an interaction term between latitude and longitude). The estimates in column 6 show that the results remain similar, the main difference being a drop in significance and magnitude in the coefficient for deportations.

Finally, we check whether our baseline national election results are robust to changes in the definition of *vote share* and to the incorporation of pre-war national electoral outcomes as controls. The results are reported in the Online Appendix Table A6. The estimates show that our findings apply, not only to vote shares as percentages of valid votes (our baseline definition), but also when we compute them as percentages of eligible voters (column 2). In addition, we observe similar results when we control for the vote shares of major parties (left-wing and PPI)

and turnout in 1921 (column 3). Taken together with our pre-war balance estimates, these last robustness checks strongly suggest that our results are not driven by pre-existing differences in the political environment.

Overall, our findings are robust to these various checks. Our treatment produces a consistent rise in Nazi repression, which leads to higher support for the radical opposition at the expense of the governing DC.

6. Discussion

How do the previous results match the potential mechanisms and hypothesised effects in Section 4? In this section, we discuss our findings in relation to the three main transmission channels, we provide further evidence on our preferred mechanism—political disenchantment—and we discuss the economic legacy of repressive annexation and its possible effects on political outcomes.

Overall, our findings provide more support for the political-disenchantment channel. As noted in Table 4, this mechanism predicts higher support for Communists and Neo-fascists, lower support for Christian Democrats, and lower turnout. Our results for national and European elections generally fit this pattern.

The disenchantment mechanism also aligns well with the dynamic patterns present in the national elections results, as displayed in the Online Appendix Figure A6. Specifically, the positive impact on extremist support emerges post-1948 elections and remains persistent thereafter. This trajectory aligns with the unique circumstances surrounding the 1946 and 1948 elections. The 1946 vote was not a conventional national parliamentary election, but rather one for a constituent assembly responsible for drafting a new constitution. By contrast, the 1948 elections marked the inaugural vote for the new Republican parliament, with communists and socialists running together under a united left-wing front. Hence, establishment and opposition groups were not clearly demarcated in these two elections. As the ruling political class consolidated and tightened its control over national institutions, we start to observe higher support for radical opposition at the expense of the establishment, in line with the political-disenchantment channel.

The turnout estimates show the opposite pattern: we observe significant and sizeable effects (given high overall turnout levels) in the 1940s and 1950s, and no significant impacts later on. This could mean that the nationalism and legacy-of-resistance channels played a larger role in later elections. However, political disenchantment can manifest itself via turnout and/or support for the radical opposition. When the dynamic patterns of both turnout and extremist support are analysed in conjunction, the political-disenchantment channel cannot be disregarded. As the political establishment strengthens, voters may be more prone to channel their distrust by supporting the radical opposition than by abstaining from voting. Our dynamic results fit this explanation.

In contrast, the nationalism channel appears unlikely to drive our findings. As noted in Table 4, the nationalism channel yields ambiguous predictions regarding support for extremists and Christian Democrats, while suggesting a null or slightly positive effect on turnout. This channel may be aligned with some of our results, but reconciling it with the consistent positive impact on the Communist vote share is difficult for two reasons. First, communist ideology is inherently internationalist. Second, while the observed effect on Communist support is persistent, the salience of nationalist topics varied significantly across elections, and so did the PCI's stance on European integration, a key issue that divided nationalists and internationalists at the time.

As per party-platform data (Lehmann *et al.*, 2023), discussions of European integration were notably absent from the PCI's platform prior to 1958. Anti-European sentiments began to emerge during the 1958 and 1963 elections, with 1.2% and 1.8% of the PCI's manifesto sentences express anti-Europe sentiments, respectively. This trend can be explained by the prevalent communist perception that European integration was inherently anti-Soviet. However, the PCI later altered its stance to a pro-European one (Isernia, 2008), and from 1976 to 1987, approximately 3% of the PCI's platform sentences expressed pro-Europe sentiments. Nevertheless, despite these fluctuations, our results show a persistent positive impact on Communist support, which points against the nationalism channel. Finally, this mechanism is not supported by evidence from European elections. In addition to a positive effect on the Communist vote share, the results show a negative impact on support for Lombard League–Northern Alliance, the predecessor of Lega, a Eurosceptic party with nationalist tendencies.

Similarly, the legacy-of-resistance channel alone cannot explain the results in Section 5. This channel provides a compelling explanation for the rise in Communist support at the expense of the Christian Democrats: while both the PCI and the DC were part of the CLN, the PCI is widely regarded as having played a larger role in the resistance movement. However, this channel accounts for neither the positive impact on Neo-fascist support nor for the early negative impact in turnout.

Our local election results appear to partially fit the legacy-of-resistance channel, though we consider it aligned with the political-disenchantment channel as well. On one hand, although the effects are statistically insignificant, both Communists and Christian Democrats see an increase in support. This comes at the expense of independents and, to a lesser extent, Neo-fascists. These results are consistent with the expected effects of the legacy-of-resistance channel (see Table 4, column 3), whereby voters reward the parties that stood in opposition to Nazi forces, at the expense of political forces not linked to the CLN (independents) or those linked to the oppressor (Neo-fascists). On the other hand, when compared to the results for national and European elections, the local findings can fit the narrative of the political-disenchantment channel. As discussed in Section 4.1, we anticipate this mechanism to be a key factor in national elections, with a lesser, perhaps negligible, role in the local political environment. The reasoning is based on the different roles of national and local governments. Voters may see a need to keep in check, or reject, the national political establishment at the national level, where government actions can lead to sizeable restrictions on voters' economic, political and social behaviour. Such concerns are not as as pertinent in local elections, due to the limited role of municipal governments. Consequently, the political-disenchantment channel may predict rejection of the DC at the national, but not necessarily at the local level.

6.1. *Additional Evidence on the Mechanisms*

6.1.1. *Trust in government*

We look to further disentangle our transmission channels by studying voter behaviour in the 1978 referendum. This was the first referendum on state security issues and just the second legislative referendum in the history of the Italian Republic. After years of political violence in northern Italy, colloquially known as the *Years of Lead*, Italians were asked whether they wanted to repeal the Reale Law. This law gave the national government substantial power to repress dissent. It expanded the set of circumstances under which police forces could use weapons for law enforcement, search and detain suspects, and engage during riots or street protests. Opponents of

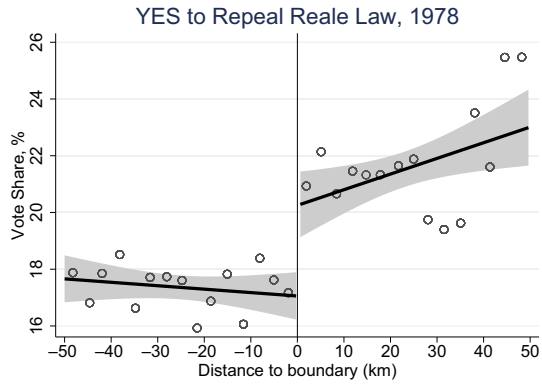

Fig. 5. *Effect of Repressive Annexation on Vote Share in Favour of Repealing Extra Government Power to Suppress Dissent, 1978 Reale Law Referendum.*
Notes: The plot includes a linear fit and 95% confidence intervals (shaded area) on each side of the cutoff calculated using robust standard errors.

the law viewed it as a stepping stone for the formation of a more repressive government regime.[20] Hence, a vote for repealing the Reale Law can be interpreted as a lack of trust in the government, particularly with respect to its restraint when suppressing dissent.

Figure 5 displays a clear discontinuity in the vote share in favour of repealing the law. The magnitude of the estimate is sizeable: OZ municipalities had a 3.8 percentage point (0.67 SD) higher vote share in favour of repealing the law.[21] This suggests that annexed areas remained sceptical of the government's ability to restrain its use of violence even three decades after the war. Following our discussion in Section 4.2, political disenchantment stands out as the only channel that can account for this negative effect on government trust. Furthermore, this result is in spite of the PCI's endorsement of the law, which counters the legacy-of-resistance channel and the notion of voters unquestioningly backing the PCI due to its role in World War II resistance.

6.1.2. *Survey evidence on trust, Europeanism, and anti-foreign attitudes*

The 1978 referendum result is stark. However, a concern remains that it may be idiosyncratic. We provide further suggestive evidence on political trust by analysing political attitudes from the ITANES carried out in 1968 (see Section 2.1 for sample restrictions for future years). We estimate OLS regressions on a sample composed of respondents in the former OZ and in neighbouring provinces.[22] Specifically, we regress survey outcomes on an OZ province indicator and control for individual-level characteristics, such as age, educational attainment and sex.

Table A7 in the Online Appendix presents the results for political trust and party support. Respondents from OZ provinces exhibited lower political trust (columns 1 and 2), and were more likely to believe that government officials are dishonest (columns 3 and 4) relative to respondents

[20] E.g., *Stampa Sera,* 9 June 1978, p.5: 'This is the first step towards the establishment of a police regime, in which, gradually, all the freedoms enshrined and guaranteed by the Constitution will be suppressed.'

[21] On the same ballot, voters were also asked whether they wanted to maintain public financing of political parties. For this question, we have no specific prediction. Reassuringly, the coefficient is statistically insignificant and much lower in magnitude.

[22] The control group consists of the rest of the Veneto provinces, i.e., Padova, Rovigo, Treviso, Venezia, Verona and Vicenza. Due to the limited sample size and the lack of information on the municipality of origin, we are unable to estimate our baseline RD specification.

in neighbouring provinces. Reassuringly, the results on political preferences are also confirmed (columns 5 to 14). Citizens from OZ provinces gave significantly higher approval to the PCI and lower approval to the DC (+11 and −15 points out of 100, respectively). They were also perceived by the interviewer to be more likely to vote for Communists and Neo-fascists.[23] While only suggestive, these results paint a similar picture to our main electoral results.

The ITANES survey allows us to further probe the plausibility of the nationalism channel. The survey asked whether a respondent has positive or negative feelings toward the EEC and various nationalities (Americans, Chinese, English, French, Germans and Russians) on a scale from 0 (extreme disapproval) to 100 (extreme approval). Table A8 in the Online Appendix presents the estimates, whereby we compare respondents in former OZ with those in nearby provinces. While not statistically significant, the coefficients suggest that, if anything, OZ residents exhibited more positive feelings toward the EEC and foreigners. Thus, we do not find support for the nationalism channel in survey data.

Overall, the survey results provide suggestive evidence for a negative effect in government trust and point to the political-disenchantment channel.

6.2. *Alternative Explanations*

6.2.1. *Economic development and migration*

It is possible that repressive annexation left a mark on post-war economic development. Nazi violence may have lowered human capital and affected social ties between and within communities. We provide evidence on the socioeconomic legacy of Nazi annexation by analysing outcomes from the 1951 and 1961 censuses, the first two post-war population counts. Given their relative closeness to the treatment period, the data should allow us to assess the direct economic consequences of wartime violence, rather than the indirect effects due to changes in post-war political behaviour.

Tables A9 and A10 in the Online Appendix report our results for 1951 and 1961, respectively. We find no significant discontinuities. Specifically, there is no evidence of an effect on socioeconomic indicators such as population density, the percentage of high school graduates, and the rates of labour force participation and employment. Moreover, there are no significant effects on the division of the labour force across economic sectors. Finally, we find no consistent differences in home access to basic services like electricity, interior plumbing and indoor water.

Our results point to limited economic effects of Nazi annexation. This is consistent with the evidence in Section 3, which shows no significant impact on bombing raids that can result in the destruction of physical capital. Our estimates suggest that any impact on human capital must have been short-lived.

The results also cast doubt on the possibility that selective migration is the main driver of the political legacy of Nazi annexation. Civilian movement across the border during our treatment period was negligible—a special permit was required to cross it (Radice, 1959, p.10). Once the border disappeared, citizens may have moved in a selective manner. However, our estimates for socioeconomic characteristics suggest that this is unlikely. We observe no significant differences in indicators of economic development such as provision of public services and in the structure

[23] This particular survey wave did not contain a direct question about voting intent. Interviewers based their judgement on respondents' answers to a series of questions regarding their political and policy preferences.

of local economies. The lack of differences in economic drivers for migration point to relatively limited selective migration.[24]

Finally, we check for differences in growth rates of total population and eligible voters to provide additional evidence on migration. Panel A of Table A11 in the Online Appendix presents the results. We find no significant or consistent effects across our measures. There is no evidence of an effect on annual growth rates of population, registered voters, or the number of valid votes.[25] Hence, while we cannot disregard that migration took place, its impact should not be sizeable.

6.2.2. *Politician supply*

An alternative yet related transmission channel has to do with politician selection. Our treatment may have had an effect on who decides to run for elected office, or on how party leaders select candidates in each area. The latter is less likely to explain the results because these are not driven by the particular characteristics of national elections. Regarding the former, we are unable to provide evidence on individual candidate characteristics. However, we collect information on birthplaces of candidates for the 1946 Constituent Assembly to check for differences in politician supply. Panel B of Table A11 in the Online Appendix reports the results. We find no significant discontinuities in the number of candidates per 1,000 registered voters. Moreover, there are no significant differences in politician supply for the two major parties.

7. Conclusion

This paper studies the political legacy of repressive annexation, focusing on the Nazi operational zones in northern Italy. These areas were de facto annexed by Nazi Germany and subjected to full German administrative and military rule. Since a large segment of the OZ border was set in a quasi-exogenous manner, we use a spatial RD design to identify the effects of this foreign repressive regime.

Our results show that OZ municipalities experienced greater foreign state repression relative to those that remained governed by Mussolini's puppet Fascist regime, under Nazi military occupation. In particular, we find a sizeable positive effect of Nazi annexation on the relative number of deportations, the number of episodes of violence involving Nazi forces, and the number of victims of Nazi attacks. Violence in the area was one-sided and the stronger repression did not lead to greater partisan activity or more Allied air raids.

We discuss three key potential mechanisms through which repressive annexation can have domestic consequences once it is reverted. The political-disenchantment channel predicts an increase in support for extremist parties at the expense of the political establishment, lower turnout and lower political trust. The nationalism channel points to a surge in support for nationalist and anti-foreign political platforms. Finally, the legacy-of-resistance channel suggests increased support for political movements linked to the liberation process.

[24] We document a differential effect on deportations, but we argue that this is not a confound, but rather a mechanism behind the impact of foreign repression. For example, forceful out-migration of community and political leaders may cause anger and distrust and lead to a political legacy through the political disenchantment channel. As the estimates in Tables A9 and A10 in the Online Appendix show, this effect does not appear to go through changes in socioeconomic composition.

[25] A caveat with these results is that our sample may include outliers due to how our balanced sample is constructed. For example, a municipality created at time t^* in the post-war era will be assigned population and voter absolute values from its parent municipality for time $t < t^*$. This may lead to extremely negative population growth rates.

We show that the political legacy of the Nazi annexation is most consistent with the political-disenchantment channel. We find greater support for radical opposition on both sides of the political spectrum in national elections. This comes at the expense of the established ruling party. The result is largely persistent over time. Similar results hold for European elections. In addition, annexed areas displayed a higher likelihood of voting in favour of repealing a law expanding the government's power to repress dissent, and reported lower levels of political trust in survey data. We interpret these findings as evidence that repressive annexation increases distrust in the government and in its capacity to moderate its use of violence.

These findings shed light on the lasting consequences of repressive annexation, which is particularly relevant given the current state of world affairs. They show how historical experiences can spur persistent disenchantment and distrust of the state. They also highlight how foreign state repression can affect domestic democratic development. This conclusion is relevant for emerging economies that have experienced foreign state repression and have faced difficulties in generating support for established institutions. Furthermore, our results are important for understanding the legacy of Nazi Germany and World War II in general, which is of broad interest to economists, historians and political scientists.

We acknowledge that our analysis faces certain limitations. First, the control group is a militarily occupied territory: we can contrast repressive annexation with military occupation, but we cannot estimate the effect relative to no foreign involvement. Second, we focus on Nazi annexation, not on other episodes of repressive annexation. Hence, while we believe our results are informative about other cases of foreign repression, caution should be exercised when extending the validity of our findings. We hope that our conclusions foster interest in studying related historical settings.

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Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article:

Online Appendix
Replication Package

Acronyms

CLN:	National Liberation Committee (Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale)
CPC:	Central Political Records (Casellario Politico Centrale)
DC:	Christian Democrats (Democrazia Cristiana)
EEC:	European Economic Community
FVG:	Friuli-Venezia Giulia
ITANES:	Italian National Election Study
MSI:	Italian Social Movement (Movimento Sociale Italiano)
OZ:	Operational zones
OZAK:	Operational zone of the Adriatic Littoral (Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland)

OZAV: Operational zone of the Alpine Foothills (Operationszone Alpenvorland)
PCI: Italian Communist Party (Partito Comunista Italiano)
PPI: Italian Popular Party (Partito Popolare Italiano)
PRI: Italian Republican Party (Partito Repubblicano Italiano)
PSU: Unitary Socialist Party (Partito Socialista Unitario)
RSI: Italian Social Republic (Repubblica Sociale Italiana)
THOR: Theatre History of Operations Reports

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