

Institute for
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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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Marlene Laruelle, Joseph Cerrone,
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IERES Occasional Papers, no. 22, March 2024
“Transnational History of the Far Right” Series

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TransHistFarRight

Transnational History of the Far Right
A Collective Research Project led by Marlene Laruelle

At a time when global political dynamics seem to be moving in favor of illiberal regimes around the world, this research project seeks to fill in some of the blank pages in the contemporary history of the far right, with a particular focus on the transnational dimensions of far-right movements in the broader Europe/Eurasia region.

www.historyofthefarright.org/

The European far right is divided in its geopolitical preferences. Some parties have an old affinity with Russia, especially visible in France with the Le Pen family, in Germany with AfD, and in Hungary with both Fidesz and Jobbik. Others have exhibited an Atlanticist preference, with strong pro-US and pro-NATO alignment, including the Polish PiS and the Spanish Vox.

These geopolitical orientations have ideological, personal, and institutional roots. The Atlanticist far right developed during the anti-communist fight of the Cold War decades, born from the cradle of Nazi sympathizers recruited by Western and especially US services to fight Communism. Conversely, the Russophile far right¹ was inspired by the tradition of the German Conservative Revolution and “Third Way” theories that developed among minority far-right groups during the Cold War decades. They dissociated communism, seen as the enemy, from an autocratic and Orthodox Russia, which they considered a reliable partner in the fight against liberalism.

In this landscape, Italy is unique due to the presence of both far rights—the Russophile and the Atlanticist—which, despite their differences, work together in the current coalition government. Georgia Meloni’s Fratelli d’Italia represents the Atlanticist far right, with its roots extending to Mussolini era and the MSI (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*) of the Cold War period, while Matteo Salvini’s Lega and the late Silvio Berlusconi embody the pro-Russian far right. Their diverging geopolitical orientations do not hamper these figures’ ability to govern together, as foreign policy issues are always less salient than domestic topics and classic far-right frames, such as immigration and identity. Additionally, the opportunistic need to form a majority takes priority over divergent opinions. A relatively similar division² can be found among the most radical far-right movements too. CasaPound Italy has continued a very anti-Russian line, calling for the rescue of the Western world and Ukraine from an Asian, barbaric Russia animated by Sovietism and Eurasianism. By contrast, Forza Nuova,³ an ultranationalist and neofascist party, has been divided between pro-Ukrainian and pro-Putinist (more than pro-Russian per se) constituencies, the latter being especially admiring of Vladimir Putin’s “Duce” qualities.

Yet, there has been a recent revival of tensions regarding the relationship to Russia that is again dividing the Italian far right. Two new, explicitly pro-Kremlin groups have emerged and begun to attack Meloni on her pro-US stance—*Comitato Fermare La Guerra* (Committee to Stop the War) and *Vento dell’Est* (Wind of the East). They received some media coverage in January 2024, when they tried to organize events (so far postponed) commemorating the assassination of Daria Dugina (the daughter

¹ Laruelle, Marlene, ed. *Entangled Far Rights: A Russian-European Intellectual Romance in the Twentieth Century*. 1st edition. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018.

² Guerra, Nicola. “The Russia-Ukraine War Has Shattered the Italian Far Right.” *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 0, no. 0 (2023): 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2023.2206468>.

³ Counter Extremism Project. “Forza Nuova.” Accessed February 27, 2024. <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/forza-nuova>.

of the far-right ideologue Aleksander Dugin), whom Russia believes was killed by the Ukrainian services, which were likely targeting her father. At another event, they even invited Dugin himself to speak (virtually, as he currently under sanctions in the US and Europe). These two groups have their roots in the part of the Italian far right that has longstanding ties to Russia and appear to be linked to the newest pet project of a veteran Italian far-right politician, Gianni Alemanno.

Gianni Alemanno and *Indipendenza*

Gianni Alemanno, a former mayor of Rome, has a long political career in the Italian far-right landscape, having participated in a plethora of political structures. He joined the MSI's Youth Front in the 1970s and quickly became one of its leaders. He faced criminal charges three times⁴ in the 1980s in connection with his activities in the Youth Front: in 1981 for assault; in 1988 for throwing Molotov cocktails at the embassy of the Soviet Union; and in 1989 for organizing a pro-fascist protest honoring the soldiers of the Salò Republic during President George Bush's visit to the American military cemetery. In 1988 he became the national secretary of the Youth Front, which until then had been led by Gianfranco Fini. During this period, Alemanno would go on to marry Isabella Rauti,⁵ the daughter of Pino Rauti of MSI and Ordine Nuovo (ON) fame.

Alemanno was among the founders of the National Alliance (AN), a party established following the dissolution of the MSI and the *Svolta di Fiuggi* (the Fiuggi turn) at the MSI's 1995 party congress, at which it was decided⁶ to abandon the direct links to fascism and adopt a more mainstream conservative turn. His reasons for joining the new party were twofold,⁷ stating that "on the one hand, I considered it indispensable to break with the nostalgic; on the other hand, I was and am convinced that one can hold strong ideological positions without thereby renouncing the ability to form alliances and create alternative forms of governance," adding that he "never regretted that choice, even though, at a certain point, AN lost itself and its own right-wing vocation."

The new millennium kicked off with Alemanno serving as the campaign manager for Francesco Storace,⁸ the former head of the MSI press office, who won with 51% of the popular vote in the election for the presidency of the region of Lazio (which includes Rome). The following year, Alemanno served as the program manager for Antonio Tajani of *Forza Italia* during his campaign for mayor of Rome; he would go on to lose against Walter Veltroni⁹ and his center-left coalition, obtaining only 48% of the vote. That same year Alemanno was re-elected to the Chamber of Deputies, where he had sat since 1994.

On November 26, 2023, Alemanno launched a new political party, *Indipendenza*, alongside the former National Secretary of CasaPound, Simone DiStefano. Other politicians that have joined the party

⁴ "Chi è Gianni Alemanno, Ex Sindaco Di Roma?" Accessed February 27, 2024. <https://www.lasvolta.it/10586/chi-e-gianni-alemanno-ex-sindaco-di-roma>.

⁵ Online, Redazione. "Isabella Rauti: «Mi separo, di nuovo, da Alemanno» Militanza e addio: fotostoria." *Corriere della Sera*, February 1, 2018. http://www.corriere.it/politica/18_gennaio_02/isabella-rauti-mi-separo-nuovo-alemanno-io-meloni-lui-salvini-cb7c149a-ef8f-11e7-ae90-7494db7ac3d7.shtml.

⁶ Chielli, Giulia. "The Flame Has Reignited: Fratelli d'Italia and the Failure of the Fiuggi Turn | Illiberalism.Org." <https://www.illiberalism.org/>. Accessed February 27, 2024. <https://www.illiberalism.org/the-flame-has-reignited-fratelli-ditalia-and-the-failure-of-the-fiuggi-turn/>.

⁷ Secolo d'Italia. "Alemanno: «Per la prima volta una destra vera (e non camuffata) al governo»," January 27, 2015. <https://www.secoloditalia.it/2015/01/alemanno-per-prima-volta-destra-vera-non-camuffata-governo/>.

⁸ Eligendo. "Eligendo Archivio - Ministero dell'Interno DAIT." Accessed February 27, 2024. <https://elezionistorico.interno.gov.it>.

⁹ Archivio - la Repubblica.it. "Campidoglio, Veltroni batte il candidato del Cavaliere - la Repubblica.it," May 28, 2001. <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2001/05/28/campidoglio-veltroni-batte-il-candidato-del-cavaliere.html>.

include Vito Comencini, a former Legista who left the party since Salvini is no longer focused on identitarian issues,¹⁰ and Marcello Tagliatela, former MSI-AN-FdI member.¹¹ The party has been described as anti-globalist, sovereigntist, and Catholic.¹² In addition to the above mentioned Comencini, Tagliatela, and DiStefano, the vice-secretary of the party is Massimo Arlechino, a publicist and the creator of the AN's party symbol, and Luigia Passaro, former member of the anti-revisionist splinter Communist Party¹³ founded by Marco Rizzo.¹⁴ In fact, Rizzo, who is now the leader of Democrazia Sovrana Popolare,¹⁵ was present at the party's launch event.¹⁶ Finally, another member with a noteworthy past is Daniele Avolio,¹⁷ a former candidate for the M5S, who will represent the party in Romagna.

The party is explicitly anti-Atlanticist and anti-FdI. Its platform states¹⁸ that “we are the militant communities coming from the social right and the national-popular world, rejecting the neo-conservative, liberal, and ultra-Atlantic transformation of the current center-right and its party of relative majority.” The group is vocally Catholic, and some speculate that Alemanno is trying to fill the space left by the DC.¹⁹ The party writes²⁰ that they associate with “that broad part of the Catholic world that has not given up defending non-negotiable values of life, family, human dignity, and the natural order of human solidarity, understanding the deep connection between defending these principles and protecting the social rights of the people.”

The party also showcases strong anti-vax sentiments by, for example, calling the GreenPass²¹ system “authoritarian.” Alemanno has also highlighted the party's pro-Palestinian attitude and at one point remarked the Meloni government should be ashamed of its stance on the UN Gaza vote.²² Furthermore,

¹⁰ VeronaSera. “Vito Comencini dà l'addio alla Lega: «Ha perso ogni spinta identitaria».” Accessed February 27, 2024. <https://www.veronasera.it/politica/comencini-addio-lega-2023.html>.

¹¹ Ciardullo, Angelo. “A volte ritornano, Alemanno e il sogno del sorpasso a destra.” Formiche.net, November 25, 2023. <https://formiche.net/2023/11/alemanno-destra-meloni-midas/>.

¹² RomaToday. “Cattolici, no vax e sovranisti: Gianni Alemanno lancia il suo nuovo partito.” Accessed February 27, 2024. <https://www.romatoday.it/politica/gianni-alemanno-partito-movimento-indipendenza.html>.

¹³ IL PARTITO COMUNISTA - Sito Ufficiale. “STATUTO DEL PARTITO COMUNISTA APPROVATO AL CONGRESSO 2017.” Accessed February 27, 2024. <https://ilpartitocomunista.it/statuto/>.

¹⁴ QuiFinanza. “Marco Rizzo,” August 29, 2023. <https://quifinanza.it/personaggi/marco-rizzo/>.

¹⁵ Democrazia Sovrana Popolare. “Democrazia Sovrana Popolare.” Accessed February 27, 2024. <https://democraziasovranapopolare.net>.

¹⁶ L'INDIPENDENTE. “È nato Indipendenza: il nuovo partito ‘antisistema’ di Gianni Alemanno,” November 27, 2023. <https://www.lindipendente.online/2023/11/27/e-nato-indipendenza-il-nuovo-partito-antisistema-di-gianni-alemanno/>.

¹⁷ Il Resto del Carlino. “Ecco il Movimento Indipendenza. Con Alemanno c'è Daniele Avolio,” December 10, 2023. <https://www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/forli/cronaca/ecco-il-movimento-indipendenza-con-alemanno-ce-daniele-avolio-8e3e5c94>.

¹⁸ Movimento Indipendenza. “Chi Siamo,” November 24, 2023. <https://www.movimentoindipendenza.it/chi-siamo/>.

¹⁹ RomaToday. “Cattolici, no vax e sovranisti: Gianni Alemanno lancia il suo nuovo partito.” Accessed February 27, 2024. <https://www.romatoday.it/politica/gianni-alemanno-partito-movimento-indipendenza.html>.

²⁰ Movimento Indipendenza. “Chi Siamo,” November 24, 2023. <https://www.movimentoindipendenza.it/chi-siamo/>.

²¹ L'INDIPENDENTE. “È nato Indipendenza: il nuovo partito ‘antisistema’ di Gianni Alemanno,” November 27, 2023. <https://www.lindipendente.online/2023/11/27/e-nato-indipendenza-il-nuovo-partito-antisistema-di-gianni-alemanno/>.

²² La Stampa. “Nasce a Roma ‘Indipendenza’. Il partito di Alemanno tra cattolici, difesa della vita e sociale,” November 25, 2023.

https://www.lastampa.it/politica/2023/11/25/news/nasce_a_roma_indipendenza_il_partito_di_alemanno_tra_cattolici_difesa_della_vita_e_sociale-13888181/.

unlike Meloni and the FdI, the party supports the *reddito di cittadinanza*,²³ a form of guaranteed minimum income granted to all Italian citizens, stating that it offers much needed financial assistance to citizens in trouble.²⁴

Vento dell'Est

Vento dell'Est was founded on October 30, 2022, by Lorenzo Berti. It describes its mission²⁵ as “contributing to establishing and strengthening the traditional relations of friendship and collaboration between Italy and Russia.” Furthermore, it positions itself as a pragmatic association that seeks to leverage Italy’s geopolitical position in an increasingly multipolar world—stating that a “turn to the East...is the only way to guarantee our national interests.” The organization is primarily engaged in echoing the narratives generated by the Kremlin.



Vento dell'Est's logo depicting a bird flying East, with Russian and Italian colors (Facebook)

Vento dell'Est has focused most of its attention on the war in Ukraine—criticizing Italy’s support for the “criminal” regime in Kyiv, promoting Russia’s right to “liberate” Donbas, and decrying the general “Russophobia” that has overtaken the West. Perhaps most tellingly, the banner image on its homepage contains the slogan: “Italy must become an eternal element of the Russian soul.” The organization claims to have a charitable mission for children and the elderly in Donbas, which it describes²⁶ as “fighting for its independence from Ukraine since 2014.” In 2023, it conducted three humanitarian missions in the city of Luhansk, where it distributed basic necessities to the residents and built a children’s playground—which it claims was all paid for through donations²⁷ from members.

Similar to many fringe organizations, Vento dell'Est fomenters distrust of the mainstream media, which it describes as²⁸ “mere propagandistic instruments at the service of their financiers.” Instead, the organization offers its own “objective” news coverage on its website (where it has published approximately 50 original articles, plus press releases on its activities)²⁹ and its active social media presence (where it shares articles from various sources).³⁰ As part of this mission, Vento dell'Est

²³ “Reddito Di Cittadinanza Da Aprile, Scatta Mese Successivo Alla Domanda | ANSA.It.” Accessed February 27, 2024. https://www.ansa.it/amp/sito/notizie/economia/2018/12/31/reddito-di-cittadinanza-da-aprile-scatta-mese-successivo-alla-domanda_53403ad2-c21a-4588-af4b-9b94563e53c9.html.

²⁴ RomaToday. “Cattolici, no vax e sovranisti: Gianni Alemanno lancia il suo nuovo partito.” Accessed February 27, 2024. <https://www.romatoday.it/politica/gianni-alemanno-partito-movimento-indipendenza.html>.

²⁵ “Chi Siamo | Vento Dell'Est,” December 5, 2023.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20231205223801/https://ventoest.it/chisiamo-associazione-volontariato-vento-dell-est/>.

²⁶ Chi Siamo | Vento Dell'Est,” December 5, 2023.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20231205223801/https://ventoest.it/chisiamo-associazione-volontariato-vento-dell-est/>.

²⁷ “Le Nostre Iniziative | Vento Dell'Est,” December 5, 2023.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20231205224336/https://ventoest.it/iniziativa-volontariato-russia-donbass-italia/>.

²⁸ “Chi Siamo | Vento Dell'Est,” December 5, 2023.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20231205223801/https://ventoest.it/chisiamo-associazione-volontariato-vento-dell-est/>.

²⁹ For articles, see: <https://ventoest.it/approfondimenti-donbass-russia/>. For press releases and events, see: <https://ventoest.it/iniziativa-volontariato-russia-donbass-italia/>.

³⁰ Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ventoest2022>; Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/ventodellest2022/>; Telegram: <https://t.me/s/ventodellest2022>.

organized approximately 30 events (e.g., conferences, webinars, etc.) during its first year in existence.³¹ Furthermore, its members have participated in at least 10 public protests,³² almost all regarding the war in Ukraine.

Lorenzo Berti is the founder and president of Vento dell'Est. A former member of CasaPound who served as the founder and spokesperson for its branch in Pistoia,³³ he gained notoriety for his leadership of an effort by CasaPound militants to scrub unfavorable references about the group from Wikipedia³⁴—as well as to insert a neofascist narrative into articles about the Mussolini regime, the Resistance, and other historical events.



Lorenzo Berti (Facebook)

The effort began in 2010 and was organized by Berti via a private Facebook group³⁵ called “Notre avant-guerre” (a name that was taken from a book by the French collaborationist Robert Brasillach). Berti instructed members on how to create credible editor accounts on Wikipedia³⁶ so as to hide their true intentions, using his own Wikipedia account under the pseudonym “Pietro Chiocca” as a model (his pseudonym comes from the main character of the 1974 Alberto Sordi film *Finché c'è guerra c'è speranza* [As Long As There's War There's Hope], who is an Italian arms trader). The operation continued until at least 2016, when it was uncovered by the defunct blog *La Meteora*.

Berti ran for the Chamber of Deputies for CasaPound³⁷ in the February 2013 election, when the party list was headed by Simone Di Stefano, as well as the March 2018 election.³⁸ He also ran for mayor in Pistoia as a CasaPound candidate³⁹ in the municipal elections of June 2017, but he barely won more than one percent of the vote. He ran for the Pistoia city council in the municipal elections of June 2022, but this time as a League candidate.⁴⁰ He explained his move to the League as a consequence of

³¹ For a full list of events, see: <https://ventoest.it/iniziativa-volontariato-russia-donbass-italia/>.

³² “Le Nostre Iniziative | Vento Dell’Est,” December 5, 2023.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20231205224336/https://ventoest.it/iniziativa-volontariato-russia-donbass-italia/>.

³³ Berti was quoted in the *Financial Times* on December 13, 2011, after the right-wing extremist Gianluca Casseri (b. 1961) killed two African street merchants in Florence. Casseri was known to be associated with the Pistoian branch of CasaPound, and in the article Berti stated: “like many other hundreds of people in Tuscany, Mr. Casseri was a sympathizer... He wasn’t a member but did sometimes go to events organized in our headquarters in Pistoia.”

³⁴ Greco, Santiago. “Come l’estrema destra italiana sta cercando di manipolare Wikipedia.” *Vice* (blog), June 4, 2016. <https://www.vice.com/it/article/9kn39v/estrema-destra-italia-wikipedia>.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ PisaToday. “Elezioni politiche: i candidati di Casapound Italia alla Camera in Toscana.” Accessed February 27, 2024. <https://www.pisatoday.it/politica/elezioni/politiche-2013/elezioni-2013-candidati-casapound-italia-camera-toscana.html>.

³⁸ “Comune Di Altopascio - Elezioni On Line Altopascio - Camera Dei Deputati 4/03/2018 -.” Accessed February 27, 2024.

https://comune.altopascio.lu.it/ele/client/modules.php?name=Elezioni&id_cons_gen=12&id_comune=46001&id_circ=&op=candi&lettera=B&ordine=

³⁹ “Pistoia - Amministrative 2017 - Quadro Elezioni Riassuntivo.” Accessed February 27, 2024.

https://elezioni.comune.pistoia.it/client/modules.php?op=gruppo&name=Elezioni&id_comune=47014&file=index&id_cons_gen=23;%20https://www.linealibera.info/bottegone-berti-casapound-solo-noi-al-fianco-dei-residenti-prima-della-campagna-elettorale/.

⁴⁰ “Pistoia - Amministrative 2022 - Voti Partito.” Accessed February 27, 2024.

https://elezioni.comune.pistoia.it/client/modules.php?name=Elezioni&id_gruppo=218&id_circ=32&id_cons_gen=31&id_lista=327&op=partiti&voti_lista=1524&perc_lista=4.164&id_comune=47014.

CasaPound's decision to forgo direct electoral competition and his "programmatic affinity" with his new party.⁴¹ While not openly mentioned, the League's close ties to Russia almost certainly played a role in his choice. Yet, his run for office became the center of public controversy⁴² when it was revealed that he had marked Liberation Day on April 25, 2021, with an Instagram post that claimed it was "the bleakest day of the year" and contained a hashtag that equated the holiday to "national mourning."

Berti made numerous trips to Luhansk,⁴³ including to commemorate the opening of a playground⁴⁴ funded by Vento dell'Est supporters (see photo of Berti and spokesperson Fabio De Maio, posted on Facebook on August 29, 2023). Beyond the war, Berti has been a vocal critic of the Italian government's anti-Russia stance more generally. For example, during a press conference in Luhansk⁴⁵ on February 16, 2023, Berti stated: "Many Italians remember the humanitarian aid from Russia when we had a difficult COVID situation. Ordinary people don't forget Russia's helping hand."



Berti, on the left, in Donbas (Facebook)

Berti has also represented Vento dell'Est at numerous events hosted by other far-right and pro-Russian organizations. On November 26–27, 2022, he represented the then-newly established organization at the national assembly of the Committee to Stop the War,⁴⁶ which had been founded on May 27, 2022, by Alemanno. Additionally, on September 9, 2023, he attended⁴⁷ the "Festival of the Sun" organized by Lealtà Azione [Loyalty Action], a neofascist organization based in Milan known for igniting violent altercations. Most recently, the group organized an attack outside a soccer match⁴⁸ on October 8, 2023, during which multiple people were sent to the hospital and four Lealtà Azione members were arrested (searches of their homes uncovered hordes of fascist paraphernalia, including copies of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and clothing with images commemorating the Salò Republic).

⁴¹ www.quinewspistoia.it. "L'ex candidato sindaco Berti sale sul Carroccio." Accessed February 27, 2024. <https://www.quinewspistoia.it/pistoia-ex-candidato-sindaco-berti-casapound-lega.htm>.

⁴² "Pistoia, Il Candidato Della Lega Lorenzo Berti: «25 Aprile Lutto Nazionale». Il Pd: «Il Partito Si Dissoci» - Open." Accessed February 27, 2024. https://www.open.online/2022/05/14/pistoia-lega-lorenzo-berti-vs-25-aprile/?refresh_ce-cp.

⁴³ Lorenzo, Berti. "Facebook Post by Lorenzo Berti." Social Media. Facebook. Accessed February 27, 2024. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=339673898396761&set=pb.100070624609858.-2207520000&type=3>.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ "Lugansk Media Centre – Italian People, despite Authorities' Position, Remember Russian Assistance during Pandemic - Activist," February 16, 2023. <https://lug-info.com/en/news/italian-people-despite-authorities-position-remember-russian-assistance-during-pandemic-activist>.

⁴⁶ "Chi siamo – Comitato Fermare la guerra." Accessed February 27, 2024. <https://www.comitatofermarelaguerra.it/chi-siamo/>.

⁴⁷ Lealtà Azione | Sito Ufficiale. "Chi Siamo | Il sito ufficiale di Lealtà Azione." Accessed February 27, 2024. <https://www.lealta-azione.it/chi-siamo/>.

⁴⁸ MilanoToday. "La spedizione dei neofascisti: Lealtà Azione dietro la guerriglia alla partita, sette indagati." Accessed February 27, 2024. <https://www.milanotoday.it/cronaca/scontri-parabiago-sant-ilario-indagati-lealta-azione.html>.

The January 2024 events

Vento dell'Est was planning to organize two events in January 2024: one commemorating the assassination of Darya Dugina (entitled “Darya Dugina and the Donbas” [“*Darya Dugina e il Donbass*”]) on January 14, 2024; the second a roundtable entitled “Toward a New Multipolar World” [“*Verso un nuovo mondo multipolare*”]) on January 27. Both events generated outcry on social media, with the event featuring Dugin being postponed to an unknown date at the time of this writing.⁴⁹

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Flyers advertising the two Dugin-related events sponsored by Vento dell'Est in January 2024. Source: Provinciali, Giorgio. 2024. “Mariupol’ Outraged Again.” Medium, January 5. <https://medium.com/@giorgioprovinciali/mariupol-outraged-again-c4b5539db64f>.

The expected speakers at these events were to include numerous figures known for their pro-Russian stances, such as Alberto Bradanini,⁵⁰ former Italian Ambassador to Iran (2008–2012) and China (2013–2015), who has taken a critical view of the West’s approach to Russia and the war in Ukraine⁵¹—arguing that the US and Europe have armed Ukraine against the will of their populations and for the purpose of harming Russia. Also featured on the programs were Rossella Maraffino,⁵² a freelance

⁴⁹ Luccaindiretta. “La conferenza con l’ideologo di Putin si farà. Vento dell’Est medita una richiesta danni,” January 9, 2024. <https://www.luccaindiretta.it/politica/2024/01/09/la-conferenza-con-lideologo-di-putin-si-fara-vento-dellest-medita-una-richiesta-danni/388220/>.

⁵⁰ Pirelli. “Alberto Bradanini.” Accessed February 27, 2024. <https://www.pirelli.com/corporate/en-ww/governance/board-of-directors-and-corporate-bodies/board-of-directors/a-bradanini>.

⁵¹ Rose, Mathew D. “Alberto Bradanini - Random Reflections on War and Its Surroundings.” Brave New Europe (blog), December 13, 2023. <https://braveneweuropa.com/alberto-bradanini-random-reflections-on-war-and-its-surroundings>.

⁵² L’INDIPENDENTE. “In viaggio a Lugansk, la Persefone che non vuole arrendersi,” June 29, 2023. <https://www.lindipendente.online/2023/06/29/in-viaggio-a-lugansk-la-persefone-che-non-vuole-arrendersi/>.

translator and journalist who works as a correspondent for *L'Indipendente*, based in Luhansk as of summer 2023, and Eliseo Bertolasi,⁵³ a former associate researcher at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Geopolitics and Auxiliary Studies (2011–19) and currently a senior analyst at the Vision & Global Trends International Institute for Global Analyses. A correspondent for Sputnik-Italia (since 2015), Bertolasi has been based in Donetsk and served as an “election observer” in the region⁵⁴ for the Russian-organized annexation referendum on September 23–27, 2022.

Marco Battarra and the Spazio Ritter Bookstore

The Daria Dugina event was co-sponsored by Spazio Ritter, a small radical-right bookstore located in Milan and owned by Marco Battarra. At the age of 15 Battarra joined the MSI's Youth Front. Following the murder of Sergio Ramelli,⁵⁵ he established a small library next to the MSI federal secretary's office⁵⁶ but in 1980, due to political dissent, he was forced to leave the party. For two years he worked for the publishing house *Il Falco* and in 1982 he joined a library called *La Bottega del Fantastico* (The Fantasy Store), that published fantasy books and, after Battarra joined, began to publish esoteric books by Julius Evola and René Guénon.⁵⁷ He and another co-worker would run the library for 27 years, with it eventually evolving into Spazio Ritter.

Battarra claims to have “brought Dugin for the first time to Italy” and many of his books published in Italian by Maurizio Murelli,⁵⁸ an old friend of Battarra, are sold in the bookstore.⁵⁹ The library sells books with a distinctly fascist flair: authors that one can find there include Venner, Dugin, Mishima, Evola, Romualdi, and Brasillach.

Moreover, Battarra's idea of a publishing house was inspired by his friend and French collaborationist Jean Mabire; in an interview⁶⁰ Battarra stated: “In France I had occasion to meet a very famous person, Jean Mabire, who was a French Waffen SS volunteer, having served in the XXXIII SS Waffen Grenadier Division Charlemagne. He was probably the one who published, in the French language, the largest number of books on the subject. The idea of publishing in our turn Jean Mabire's books translated into Italian led the undersigned, together with two friends, to create by notarized deed of incorporation on



Logo of Spazio Ritter, which includes the armed fist symbol of the *SS Pz Grenadier Division Gotz von Berlichingen*. (*scomunicando.it*)

⁵³ “Eliseo Bertolasi Элизео Бертолази.” Accessed February 27, 2024. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/eliseo-bertolasi-%D1%8D%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B5%D0%BE-%D0%B1%D0%B5%D1%80%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B8-62519929/?originalSubdomain=it;%20https://www.fakeobservers.org/biased-observation-database/details/bertolasi-eliseo.html>.

⁵⁴ EPDE. “Eliseo Bertolasi - Biased Observers Database.” Accessed February 27, 2024. <https://www.fakeobservers.org/biased-observation-database/details/bertolasi-eliseo.html>.

⁵⁵ “Assassination of Sergio Ramelli.” In Wikipedia, January 9, 2024. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Assassination_of_Sergio_Ramelli&oldid=1194505658.

⁵⁶ “L’editoria di Destra? Esiste e ha qualcosa da dire. Incontro con Marco Battarra - Ricognizioni,” November 30, 2021. <https://www.ricognizioni.it/leditoria-di-destra-esiste-e-ha-qualcosa-da-dire-incontro-con-marco-battarra/>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ “Maurizio Murelli.” In Wikipedia, December 13, 2023. https://it.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Maurizio_Murelli&oldid=136874001.

⁵⁹ Giudici, Cristina. “Il libro nero | Nel centro di Milano c’è una libreria che fa da ritrovo per i neofascisti.” Linkiesta.it, October 26, 2021. <https://www.linkiesta.it/2021/10/milano-libreria-neofascista/>.

⁶⁰ Ereticamente. “Intervista a Marco Battarra.” EreticaMente (blog), April 27, 2015. <https://www.ereticamente.net/intervista-a-marco-battarra/>.

September 25, 1998 the Ritter Publishing House (from Ritterkreuz), whose logo is a reproduction of the coat of arms of the XVII SS Pz Grenadier Division Gotz von Berlichingen.”

As we can see from this brief review, geopolitical orientations may be minor in the electoral politics of the Italian far right, as voters are usually less interested in foreign policy than domestic issues, yet they contribute to divide the far-right landscape and are correlated to individual and institutional competition between groups and their leaders. In the current case, one can see that the radical right, located to the right of the current governing coalition, is trying to leverage against Meloni’s pro-US stance and to reclaim a pro-Kremlin positioning. While these actions are peripheral to “mainstream politics,” they are consequential nonetheless, as they may contribute to shift the general tone of the Italian far right on geopolitical issues central for Europe, and may reverberate at the EU level, where the global illiberal movement is also divided in its relationship to the Russo-Ukrainian War.