

Let's Split!

A Complete Guide to Separatist
Movements and Aspirant Nations,
from Abkhazia to Zanzibar

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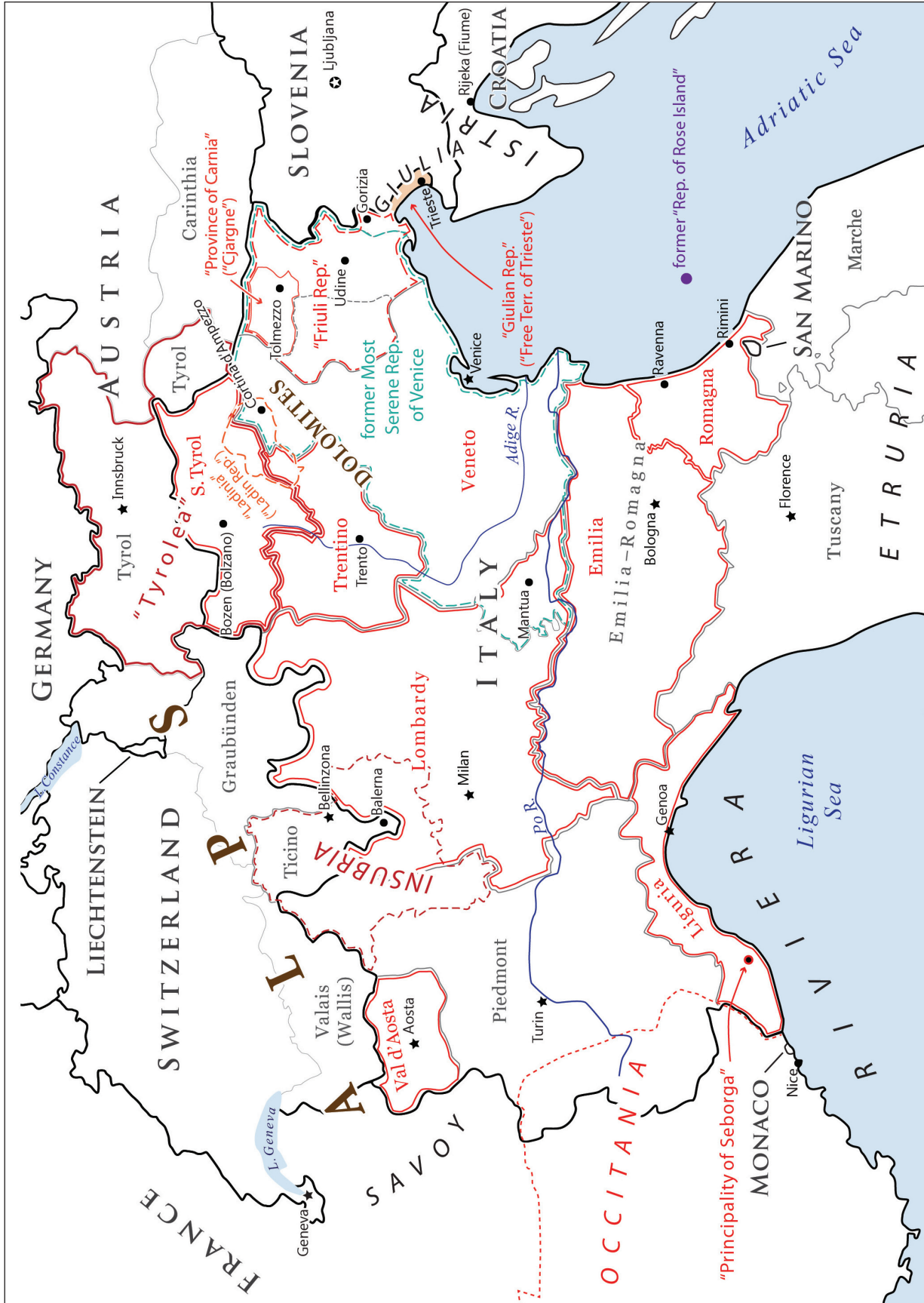
Italy

The idea of Italy as a nation is a relatively new one. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the Italian peninsula—*Italia*—was ruled for centuries by patchworks of monarchies and republics, ranging from minuscule city-states to mighty naval powers with overseas empires. By the early nineteenth century, various of these free towns, duchies, and principalities had merged into larger entities more often identified with the royal dynasties that ran them than with the ethnic or cultural identities of their citizenry. This made the peninsula politically vulnerable despite its centrality to the Mediterranean trade, and Italy was the prize in tussles among the Holy Roman Empire, the Germans, the French, the Austrians, and others. The Napoleonic wars hit the peninsula hard and, after Napoleon's defeat in 1815, many in the peninsula felt the necessity of a strong unified nation. At this point, northern Italy was under the sway of the Habsburg Empire and the south under the sway of the Papal States, i.e. the Holy See. In what came to be called the *Risorgimento* ("reunification"), Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi helped form the Kingdom of Italy in 1861, ruled by the House of Savoy. This replaced the Papal States, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, the Kingdom of Lombardy–Venetia, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, and other independent entities. But the local cultures—and even political identities—continued, and continue, to thrive, especially in the north and on the large islands of Sicily and Sardinia.

The Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini (who hailed from near Bologna, in Emilia–Romagna) took power in 1922 and began to suppress local cultures. His defeat in the Second

World War and the eventual integration of Italy into the European Common Market (precursor to the European Union) gave Italians the leisure to contemplate alternatives to their vast, overly bureaucratized, and wildly fractured and contentious political system, which seemed to bring a measure of prosperity only in spite of itself. Splits between the more relaxed and family-based Mediterranean culture of the south and the urbane, fast-paced, almost at times *Nordic* lifestyle of Milan and Turin to the north—differences that were always there—became politically significant. Unlike major European nations which have just a few separatist movements of any significance, Italy is being pulled in so many directions that one could be forgiven for fearing it might, like Yugoslavia, come unzipped all at once instead of being picked away at in a few places at the edges. Although Italy is no Yugoslavia, it is heterogeneous, fiercely regionalist, decentralized, and becoming more so.

In a sense, Italy's baroquely Balkanized past, as a constantly shifting mosaic of scores of diverse monarchies, mini-empires, republics, and city-states of varying sizes, is echoed in its political landscape today. (San Marino, Europe's oldest republic, and Vatican City, the shrunken kernel of the former Papal States, are two independent states on the peninsula that are vestiges of this former profusion.) Italy's post-war democracy is famously, almost comedically volatile. There have been over 60 different governments since 1946, and there are hundreds of political parties, some championing obscure causes or minuscule constituencies, and these parties are constantly merging, splitting, and falling in



and out of coalitions. It is not considered unusual when porn actresses or television comedians or ex-criminals suddenly skyrocket to brief political stardom. In this climate, there is plenty of room for fringe ideologies like monarchism, libertarianism, Fascism (with a capital *F*), communism (Communism with a capital *C* was during the Cold War stronger in Italy than anywhere else in western Europe), or the most quixotically local separatisms to gain a foothold. This more than anything else allowed the intemperate and initially very marginal secessionists of Lega Nord to surge in the 1980s and transform the very structure and direction of the republic.

Lombardy and Padania

And so we begin in the north, where most of Italy's centrifugal force is being generated, especially in the idea of an independent northern Italy called **Padania**. The name *Padania* is recently invented, derived from the name of the River Po. But it evokes the **Transpadane Republic**, a Napoleonic puppet state which existed briefly in the 1790s, with a capital in Milan. Modern Padanism consolidates and to some extent replaces several post-war autonomist movements identified with individual regions like Lombardy, Piedmont, Liguria, even South Tyrol (each discussed below). The League's base is not just in the north but more specifically in the central and western portions of the north, where the major cities of Turin (Piedmont's capital) and Milan (Lombardy's) led a post-war economic miracle in the 1950s and '60s that raised the region's standard of living far above that of the impoverished southern Italy that had put Mussolini in power and more in line with the efficient, prosperous economies of central and northern Europe. The north, as defined by Padanists, is responsible for 60% of Italy's gross domestic product, though it accounts for less than half the population and less than 40% of the land.

More recently, the European financial crisis, a contagion which in 2011 spread from Greece to Italy, Iberia, and beyond, exposed cultural rifts in the EU, reinforcing stereotypes of thrifty, responsible, hard-working Northerners and lazy spendthrifts and cod-

dled civil servants along the Mediterranean rim. More than anything else, these attitudes are the motivating psychological and cultural force behind Italy's *Lega Nord per l'Indipendenza della Padania* (Northern League for the Independence of Padania). Padanian separatism is the premier example of what I sometimes call "prosperity secessionism"—the phenomenon of the most prosperous and comfortable, rather than the most beleaguered or persecuted, region seeking independence, as a way of avoiding subsidizing poorer regions. Ideologically, this kind of agenda (see also Catalonia, pp. 71-73; Bavaria, pp. 109-11; Flanders, pp. 52-54; etc.) is more politically right-wing, and Northern separatism does on the whole tend to be far more politically conservative than more populist, egalitarian movements in places like Sicily or Sardinia.

The first stirrings of the modern Northern devolution movement began, in Lombardy (*Lombardia*), with the Lombard League, founded in 1984 by the flamboyant and combative Umberto Bossi as the *Lega Autonomista Lombarda*. It used advocacy of full secession initially, as a way of pushing a more realistic agenda

Federal Republic of Padania

active regional independence movement

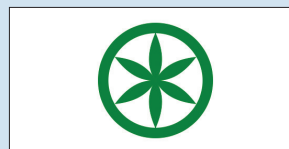
currently: 8 (or 11) administrative regions in northern Italy (proposals vary)

goal: independence

area: 120,243 km² (8 regions) or 161,076 km² (11 regions)

population: approx. 28,000,000 (8 regions) or approx. 34,000,000 (11 regions)

proposed capital: Venice



flag: "official" national flag



Lombardist variant with St. George's Cross

prospects: low to medium

proponents: Lega Nord party, including regional affiliate parties; Padanian Union; Alpine Padanian Union

Republic of Lombardy

active regional autonomy/independence movement

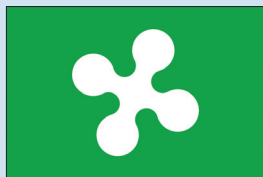
currently: Lombardy administrative region, Italy

goal: enhanced autonomy; independence; autonomy within independent Padania (above)

area: 23,844 km²

population: approx. 9,750,000

capital: Milan



flag: official regional flag



some separatists prefer variants on Milan's flag, with St. George's Cross (identical to flags of England, p. 42, and Genoa, below)

prospects: for enhanced autonomy, medium; for independence, low

proponents: Lega Nord party, including its regional affiliate, Lega Lombarda

Republic of Insubria

semi-active regional autonomy/independence movement

currently: non-administrative "Euroregion" covering 5 Italian provinces and 1 Swiss canton

goal: independence

area: 9,709 km²

population: approx. 2,653,346

proposed capital: Balerna, Ticino (current Euroregion headquarters)

flag: Insubrian separatist flag, essentially that of former Duchy of Milan

prospects: very low

proponents: Domà Nunch



of more and more devolved autonomy. Its success gradually spawned similar movements in other northern regions, especially Veneto and Liguria. With nearly ten million people and the global fashion capital Milan, Lombardy is the most populous and prosperous of Italy's

twenty regions and the heartland of the pre-Roman Celtic culture that makes northern Italy historically distinct from the south. Moreover, Lombards are—though in an attenuated historical fashion which Padanists are fond of overstating—ethnically Germanic a way that other Italians are not.

One by one, in the late 1980s and early '90s, the Lombard League merged with five other similar autonomist groups—the Venetian League (*Liga Veneta*), Autonomous Piedmont (*Piemont Autonomista*), the Ligurian Union (*Unium Ligure*), the Emilia–Romagna League (*Lega Emiliano-Romagnola*), and the Tuscan Alliance (*Alleanza Toscana*)—to form the Northern Alliance (*Alleanza Nord*), which was renamed *Lega Nord*, headed by the charismatic Bossi.

In the party's home turf of Lombardy, Lega Nord won 13% of votes in the 2013 regional elections, putting its party leader, Roberto Maroni, in office as Lombard president. Lega Nord also runs half of Lombardy's twelve provinces.

A small number of Lombards with very different political views would prefer to be citizens not of Padania or a Republic of Lombardy but of something called **Insubria**. This does not correspond to any current political entity, but since 1995 the Council of Europe has recognized a "Euroregion" called Regio Insubrica, encompassing three Lombard provinces, two Piedmontese ones, and Switzerland's one predominantly Italian-speaking canton, Ticino. (Euroregions are not political entities, but rubrics intended to spur culturally allied communities across national borders to cooperate in environmental and cultural policy and development of tourism.) Insubria, which includes one of the Alps' most picturesque lake regions, is named for a Celtic tribe the Romans called *Insubres*. Their territory later formed much of the Holy Roman Empire's Duchy of Milan for about a half-millennium, well into the nineteenth century. The modern idea of Insubrian identity is mostly the brainchild of a linguist named Lorenzo Banfi, who in 2005 founded the "eco-nationalist" party *Domà Nunch* ("Only Ours," in Lombard dialect). It advocates independence for the region, though there seems to be much less interest

in the idea on the Swiss side of the border—and only a tiny bit on the Italian side anyway. Being a fuzzy, green, leftist concept, Insubria also does not get much support from Lega Nord. (For Ticino's relationship to Lega Nord, see p. 117.)

Piedmont and Liguria

Among the regions of Bossi's northwestern heartland, Piedmont (*Piemonte*) has little historical nationalist momentum, though the party does well there (16.7% in the last regional elections). (See p. 63 for valleys in western Piedmont which consider themselves part of the French region of Occitania.) In Liguria, on the other hand, memories of national glory are a palpable part of the political landscape: the modern region of **Liguria** approximates the heartland of what used to be the **Most Serene Republic of Genoa** (*Serenissima Repubblica di Genova*), which in its heyday rivalled and sometimes exceeded the Venetian republic (see below) as the dominant naval power in the Mediterranean. Genoa ruled Corsica and Sardinia and hinterlands that included today's Piedmont. (It was also, of course, Christopher Columbus's home town.) The Genovese re-

public existed from 1005 until it was annexed by the First French Republic in 1797 in the guise of a puppet state known as the **Ligurian Republic** (*Repubblica Ligure*). Napoleon officially absorbed the territory in 1805, but after his fall in 1815 it was taken over by the Kingdom of Sardinia, of which it remained a part until Sardinia joined the new Kingdom of Italy (see below for more on Sardinia).

In 2001, some Lega Nord members in Genoa founded the Ligurian Independence Movement (*Movimento Indipendentista Ligure*), citing what they call the illegality of the transfer of Liguria to the Sardinian branch of the House of Savoy under the Treaty of Vienna. The Movement aims for an independent Federal Republic of Liguria and the establishment of a Swiss-style confederation of its constituent provinces.

The movement remains marginal in the region, though the larger anti-centrist ideology of Lega Nord is popular. Lega Nord Liguria won 10% in the 2010 regional elections.

No discussion of Liguria is complete without mentioning the **Principality of Seborga** (*Principato di Seborga*). Within walking distance of the fully recognized microstate of the

Federal Republic of Liguria

active regional autonomy/independence movement

currently: Liguria administrative region, Italy

goal: enhanced autonomy; independence; autonomy within independent Padania (above)

area: 5,422 km²

population: approx. 1,575,000

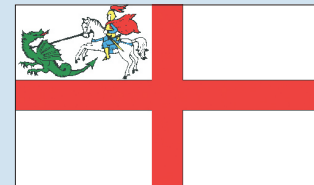
capital: Genoa



flag: official regional flag



traditional Genovese flag
(identical to flags of England,
p. 42, and Milan, above),
used by some separatists



Lega Nord variant

prospects: for enhanced autonomy, low to medium; for independence alone, very low;
for independence as part of Padania, low

proponents: for independence alone, Ligurian Independence Movement; for independence as part of Padania, Lega Nord party, including its regional affiliate, Unione Ligure

Principality of Monaco just a stone's throw across the Italian–French border, this unrecognized micronation is coterminous with the municipality of Seborga (population *ca.* 300). Seborga was an independent city-state until it was taken over by the Kingdom of Sardinia in 1729, but modern Seborgan separatists claim the transfer was never formalized (using a similar argument to that of Ligurian separatists; see above). Nor was Seborga taken into account in the Treaty of Vienna after the Napoleonic Wars or in the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861. And it was never formally incorporated into the new Italian Re-

public after the Second World War.

The Seborgan crown is not hereditary. Giorgio Carbone, the head of the town's flower-growing co-op, who has no connection with the old royal line, was elected head of state in an unofficial referendum in 1963 and became Prince Giorgio I. In 1995, Giorgio held a referendum, with Seborgans opting for independence 304-4. The next day, the principality adopted the *liuigino* as its currency. Seborgan sources say San Marino was the first to recognize Seborga's sovereignty, followed by Burkina Faso and more than a dozen other African states—though this proves hard to confirm. The current prince, Marcello I, is Marcello Menegatto, a businessman from Monaco, who was crowned in 2010. He has pushed more aggressively to raise the principality's profile, including opening several foreign "consulates." But chances of formal recognition for his principality are near nil. The United Nations and the government in Rome completely ignore it.

Principality of Seborga

active micronation project / de facto state

currently: municipality in Liguria, Italy

goal: recognition of sovereignty

area: 15 km²

population: approx. 315

capital: Seborga

flag: "official" national flag

prospects: for full recognition, very low

proponents: Principality of Seborga



Vallée d'Aoste (a.k.a. Val d'Outa, a.k.a. Val d'Aosta)

active regional autonomy/independence movement

currently: autonomous region in Italy

goal: enhanced autonomy; independence; autonomy within independent Padania or Savoy

area: 3,263 km²

population: approx. 127,000

capital: Aosta



flag: official regional flag, used also by nationalists



Lega Nord variant

prospects: for enhanced autonomy, low to medium; for independence alone, very low; for independence as part of Padania, low

proponents: for autonomy, Union Valdôtain and coalition partners; for independence alone, Nation Val d'Outa; for independence within Padania, Lega Nord Vallée d'Aoste

Val d'Aosta

The **Val d'Aosta (Aosta Valley)** autonomous region, locally called *Vallée d'Aoste* or, in dialect, *Val d'Outa*, is the smallest and least populous of the Italian Republic's constituent regions, the only one too small to be subdivided into provinces. Historically and culturally, this warren of high Alpine valleys is barely Italian at all. The main language is a dialect of French called Valdôtain, closely related to France's Savoyard dialect (pp. 64-65), which, with the Geneva French of Switzerland, forms the Arpitan grouping of dialects. A small minority in Val d'Aosta also speaks Walserdeutsch; spoken mostly in the neighboring Swiss canton of Wallis (Valais), this is sometimes called the most isolated and distinct dialect of Swiss German or perhaps of any kind of German. Aosta was part of the Duchy of Savoy and thus part of the Kingdom of Sardinia before joining the new Kingdom of Italy in 1861. Mussolini tried to suppress Aosta's local culture and languages in the name of "Italianization," which led to Valdôtain people demanding their own autonomous region after the Second World War. Achieving au-

onomous status in 1948 largely took the wind out of the sails of the separatist anger that had thriven under Mussolini. The region is led by a left-leaning autonomist regionalist coalition government led by the *Union Valdôtaine* (UV) party, which pulled in just over a third of the vote in the regional elections in 2013 and dominates local politics. Probably because the UV is built on a solid foundation of the valley's radical-leftist past, Lega Nord Vallée d'Aoste is one of the poorest performing Lega Nord affiliate parties. It only got between 3% and 4% of the vote in the 2013 regional elections. A fully separatist party called Aosta Valley Nation (*Nation Val d'Outa*) got less than a quarter of 1% of the vote. In 1993, however, radical separatists wanting to reunify with neighboring parts of France, to form an independent Savoy republic (pp. 64-65), got 5% of the vote.

Tyrolea

It is in northeastern Italy that Lega Nord must compete with other movements for the strong anti-Italian and anti-centrist feelings that pervade this part of the north as much as they do the northwest. This is true for slightly different reasons in the Tyrol, the Venetian territories, and Emilia-Romagna, each of which is discussed here in turn.

South Tyrol (called *Alto Adige* in Italian and *Südtirol* in German) and **Trentino** are doubly autonomous already, being the two autonomous provinces that make up Italy's Autonomous Region of Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol. This mouthful is one of the five of Italy's twenty regions so designated, the others being Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Sardinia, Sicily (see below for discussions of those), and Val d'Aosta (see above). As such, South Tyrol and Trentino have considerably more separation from Rome than many full-fledged regions, including legislative and tax-levying authority. Because of this, there is no movement for the secession of Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol as a whole, but there is considerable separatist feeling at the level of those two provinces and for the region's linguistic minorities: speakers of Ladin and of Austro-Bavarian dialects of Alemannic German.

This area was part of the Austrian portion

Free State of South Tyrol

active regional/ethnic autonomy/independence movement

currently:

goal: separate autonomous region within Italy; independence; autonomy within independent Padania (above)

area: 7,400 km²

population: approx. 510,000

capital: Bozen (Bolzano)



flag: official provincial flag

Lega Nord variant

prospects: for enhanced autonomy, medium; for independence alone, low; for independence within Padania, low

proponents: for enhanced autonomy, South Tyrolean People's Party; for independence alone (and possibly reunification with Austria), die Freiheitlichen; for independence within Padania, Lega Nord Alto Adige/Südtirol

Tyrolea

dormant regional/ethnic autonomy/independence irrendentist movement

currently: South Tyrol province, Italy, plus Tyrol state, Austria

goal: unification of Italian and Austrian Tyrol regions, either as independent state or as part of Austria

area: 20,084 km²

population: approx. 1,250,000

proposed capital:

Innsbruck (Austria)

flag: current flag of Tyrol state, Austria, used by nationalists

prospects: nil

proponents: not currently active



of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until the First World War. Italy was at first nominally neutral, but in the secret Treaty of London in 1915 the Italians agreed to declare war on the Central Powers (the Austro-Hungarian, German, and Ottoman empires) in exchange for Rome's right to annex the entire Tyrol (includ-

Ladinia (a.k.a. Ladin Republic)

semi-active ethnic autonomy/independence movement

currently: region including parts of Trentino and South Tyrol provinces, Italy

goal: separate autonomous region within Italy; independence

area: approx. 1,000 km² (claims vary)

population: approx. 40,000 (total Ladin-speaking pop.)

proposed capital: Cortina d'Ampezzo

flag: regionalist flag

prospects: for autonomy, low to medium; for independence, very low

proponents: for autonomy, Ladin Autonomist Union

(Trentino), Ladins Political Union (South Tyrol); for independence, not currently organized



ing Innsbruck in what is now Austria), Istria (p. 163), Trieste (see above), and Dalmatia (in what is now Croatia; see pp. 138-39). The Italian army then invaded the eastern Alps and took the entire Tyrol, thus pushing its boundaries up against Germany itself. At the end of the war, Tyrol was bisected by the new Italian-Austrian border, an indignity which stoked Tyrolean nationalism. The Tyrolean Regional Assembly began planning for an independent **Tyrolea**, a loose federation of “cantons” based explicitly on the Swiss model (pp. 113-15). The confederacy was also to include equal rights for speakers of Italian and of Ladin, a Rhaeto-Romanic language related to Friulian (see below) and to the Romansh language of Switzerland’s mountainous Graubünden canton. A declaration of Tyrolean independence in April 1919 was scotched by the Italian king, who soon formally annexed the South Tyrol but, as a concession, granted considerable cultural and linguistic rights to German- and Ladin-speaking populations. These rights came to an end when Fascists came to power in the 1920s and, as elsewhere in Italy, clamped down on minority languages, driving them underground, and further hardening Tyrolean nationalistic resolve.

After the Second World War, a still-not-fully-de-Nazified Republic of Austria wanted

to retake the provinces, resulting in the Gruber-De Gasperi agreement of 1946, which granted a large degree of autonomy, especially language rights, to the mostly German-speaking Tyroleans who ended up on the Italian side of the border (today numbering more than 200,000). Nevertheless, the Austrian irredentist cause continued to be championed by the terrorist South Tyrolean Liberation Committee (*Befreiungsausschuss Südtirol*, or BAS), whose violent methods tainted the reunification agenda in many eyes. Today, the integration of Austria and Italy in the EU, along with considerable autonomy granted to the South Tyrol by Italy, has dampened the reunification movement but certainly not extinguished it.

South Tyrol province is the more culturally and linguistically diverse half of the region. German-speakers make up nearly 70% of the South Tyrolean population, and Ladin-speakers nearly 5%; only a quarter speak Italian as their native tongue. Regional politics are dominated by the left-of-center South Tyrolean People’s Party (*Südtiroler Volkspartei*, or SVP), which represents German- and Ladin-speakers and won nearly half the votes in the 2008 and 2013 elections. But a more radical party called *die Freiheitlichen* (roughly translatable as “the Libertarians,” though not equivalent to American libertarians) has ties to the depressingly popular Austrian Freedom Party. *Die Freiheitlichen* advocate secession from Italy of a **Free State of South Tyrol** (*Freistaat Südtirol*), with equal rights for Italian- and Ladin-speaking minorities—and possible eventual unification with Austria. This message lured nearly 15% of South Tyrolean voters in 2008, and 17% in 2013. Another group, South Tyrolean Freedom-Free Alliance for Tyrol (*Süd-Tiroler Freiheit – Freies Bündnis für Tirol*, or STF), openly advocates unification with Austria and won over 7% of votes in 2013. Unification with Austrian Tyrol is somewhat taboo because it smacks of imperialism or, worse, Nazi irredentism. When the right-wing-extremist Austrian parliamentary president Martin Graf suggested in 2009 that South Tyrol was “part of Tyrol” and only “currently” part of Italy, he was pounced on by the media and even by his own far-right-extremist Austrian Freedom

Party (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, or FPÖ).

After the war, Ladin-speakers, too, who number only about 40,000, formed a Committee for National Liberation (*Comitate de Liberazione Nazionale*) and petitioned the newly formed UN for an independent **Ladin Republic**, or **Ladinia**, but got nowhere. Nor have they had luck in their push for a special autonomous region within Trentino–Alto Adige/Südtirol or as a constituent part of Italy as a whole. The Ladin area, in the Alps' Dolomite mountains, consists of two valleys in Trentino, one in South Tyrol, and one in the adjacent province of Veneto region. In 2000, however, with Rome's blessing, they did form a (largely symbolic) national council with a president.

In **Trentino**, the mildly autonomist Union for Trentino party (*Unione per il Trentino*, or UpT) got just over 13% of the vote in the 2013 provincial elections, while the more assertive Trentino Tyrolean Autonomist Party (*Partito Autonomista Trentino Tirolese*, or PATT) got over 17%. Lega Nord Trentino got 6.2% (down from nearly 15% in 2008), while the Ladin Autonomist Union (*Union Autonomista Ladina*, or UAL) got only 1.1%. About 3.5% of Trentino's population is Ladin-speaking, while speakers of German dialects make up less than 1%.

Since 1996, Tyroleans have enjoyed sym-

bolic recognition by the Council of Europe of a transnational but politically inconsequential "Euroregion" of **Tyrol–South Tyrol–Trentino** encompassing the Austrian province of Tyrol and the Italian provinces of Trentino and Südtirol/Alto–Adige.

Venice and Veneto

Until it was carved up by Napoleon and the Habsburgs in the 1790s, the **Most Serene Republic of Venice** (*Serenissima Repubblica di Venezia*) had flourished for more than a thousand years as a center of European culture and as a colossal naval power, its territory embracing what is now the far northeast of the Italian Republic. Today, nostalgia for the Serene Republic survives in a nationalist movement called *Venetismo* which crosses the political spectrum in a way that Lega Nord's reactionary, xenophobic separatism does not. Venetists challenge the validity of the 1866 referendum which made the administrative region of Veneto—as well as most of what is now Friuli–Venezia Giulia region and Lombardy's easternmost province, Mantua—part of the new Kingdom of Italy. But Venetism also refers specifically to separatists who do not follow Lega Nord's vision of an independent Padania, no matter how federalized. The

Trentino

active regional autonomy/independence movement

currently: autonomous province within Trentino–Alto Adige/Südtirol autonomous region, Italy

goal: separate autonomous region within Italy; autonomy within independent Padania (above)

area: 6,212 km²

population: approx. 535,000

capital: Trento



flag: official Trentino–
Alto Adige/Südtirol flag



official Trentino provincial flag



Lega Nord variant

prospects: for autonomous region, medium; for independence within Padania, low

proponents: for autonomous region, Trentino Tyrolean Autonomist Party, Popular Autonomist Movement, Autonomist Trentino; for independence within Padania, Lega Nord Trentino

Most Serene Republic of Venice

active regional independence movement

currently: Veneto administrative region, plus Mantua province (Lombardy) and Pordenone and Udine provinces (Friuli–Venezia Giulia), Italy

goal: independence

area: 27,918 km²

population: approx. 6,000,000

proposed capital: Venice



flag: original republican flag, used, with variations, by restorationists

prospects: low

proponents: Most Serene Venetian Government, Indipendenza Veneta, Venetians Movement, etc.

Republic of Veneto (a.k.a. Republic of Veneto, a.k.a. Autonomous Province of Veneto, a.k.a. Venetia)

active regional autonomy/independence movement

currently: Veneto administrative region, Italy

goal: enhanced autonomy; independence; autonomy within independent Padania (above)

area: 18,399 km²

population: approx. 4,875,000

capital: Venice

flag: official regional flag, of which most independentists use some variant



prospects: for autonomy, medium; for independence alone, low to medium; for independence within Padania, low

proponents: for autonomy, Liga Veneta Autonomo, Liga Veneta Repubblica; for independence alone, Independentist Youth, Veneto State, North-East Project, etc.; for independence within Padania, Lega Nord Veneto

an attempt to woo northeasterners who are lukewarm to Bossi's worldview and to position the League as the voice of the whole North.

In the late 1980s, some members of the Lega Nord–allied Veneto League (*Liga Veneta*, or LV) split away to push a more aggressive agenda, declaring a **Most Serene Venetian Government** (*Veneto Serenissimo Governo*, or VSG) to be Venice's legitimate government. Stunts by Serenissimists, as this specific type of Venetist is known, included a 1997 “attack” on the iconic St. Mark's Plaza in Venice with an elaborate, flag-bedecked military tank. A more serious radical separatist party called the Venetian Republic League (*Liga Veneta Repubblica*, or LVR) split from the LV in 1998 and began to do well in elections before an ill-fated embroilment with a more libertarian-oriented Northeast Project (*Progetto NordEst*, or PNE) movement began harming its popularity. In October 2012, thousands of Venetians, buoyed by developments in Scotland (pp. 33-38) and Catalonia (pp. 71-73), delivered a symbolic declaration of independence to the local government offices by special delivery via gondola.

Liga Veneta is by far the Veneto region's largest party. It took 35% of the vote in 2010, with (grudging) Lega Nord support, and seats nearly a third of the region's legislators. Luca Zaia, the LV party leader, is also president of Veneto. In the 2013 general election, however, only 10.5% of Veneto's voters chose Zaia's Lega Nord–VL coalition, while a more right-wing coalition between the national Lega Nord grouping and the People of Freedom party (*Popolo della Libertà*, or PdL) pulled in nearly a third, leaving only 1.1% for the Serenissimist group Veneto Independence (*Indipendenza Veneta*, or IV), the group that organized the October 2012 independence rally. But locally—and, most crucially, when it comes to Veneto's future—Venetians still tilt Venetist: in March 2014, IV rallied the LV and other separatists by holding a nonbinding online referendum on independence for Veneto. The “yes” side got 89%, even exceeding the highest estimates of separatist sentiment. Though the ruling LV is not nearly as anti-Brussels and xenophobic as Lega Nord,

existence of Venetism is probably why Lega Nord chooses Venice as capital of a future independent Padania, rather than a more obvious choice such as the larger (and more solidly pro–Lega Nord) cities of Turin or Milan; it is

the 2014 referendum's questions on whether to stay in the EU, the Euro Zone, and NATO got "yes" votes of only 55%, 51%, and 65%, respectively. Venetist nationalism has far more momentum than Padanism right now, and constitutes Italy's current most serious fissure.

Friuli–Venezia Giulia

Like Val d'Aosta or Tyrolea, Friuli–Venezia Giulia is a crossroads of different cultures on Italy's northern rim and its ethnolinguistic diversity and recent history of separation from Rome's authority make it especially liable to separatist sentiment.

The capital of Friuli–Venezia Giulia, Trieste, is a geographical outlier, sitting on an arm of territory surrounded by the Republic of Slovenia. More than a fifth of Trieste's population speaks Slovenian. Starting in the nineteenth century, Trieste was a free city-state within the Austro-Hungarian Empire until it was attached to the Italian Republic after the First World War. An attempt to declare a **Republic of Venezia-Giulia**, with a capital in Trieste, was rejected by the League of Nations. This small region, including the Istrian peninsula, was a horrific battleground during the Second World War in a tug of war between Italians, Austrians, and Yugoslavs. After the war, in 1947, Trieste and an area surrounding it were declared an independent **Free Territory of Trieste** (*Territorio Libero di Trieste*), a UN-mandated buffer zone between the still-hostile Italy and Yugoslavia. During this time it functioned as an independent state. (pp. 135–36 for more on the Istrian peninsula and on another disputed city, Fiume.) In 1954, Italy and Yugoslavia negotiated the Treaty of Osimo, which dissolved the Free State and divided its territory between the two countries, Italy getting the strategic city itself.

This was a mixed result for the small population of Italian-speakers around Trieste and Gorizia calling themselves Giulians (sometimes, in English, Julians, with the region known as the Julian March), who pushed successfully in the post-war period to have their small region added to the formal name of the region. In the 1990s, the Giulian Front

(*Fronte Giuliano*) was founded as a political party seeking the establishment of the tiny Province of Trieste as a separate autonomous region. Although the Front has at times had links to Lega Nord—and refers to the Italian government by the Lega Nord catchphrase *Roma Ladrona* ("thieving Rome")—it tends to be more pro-EU than the Lega Nord mainstream. In local elections in 1993, more than half the votes went to separatists, autonomists, federalists, and others deeply discontented with Trieste and environs' current political status. The Giulian Front got about 8% of Trieste province's vote in the late 1990s, but has drastically declined in popularity since then.

Bordering Austria and Slovenia, modern Friuli–Venezia Giulia has minority populations of German and Slovenian speakers, but the dominant language in the jurisdiction is not Italian but Friulian (*friulano*, in Italian), the most widely spoken and successful of the otherwise threatened Rhaeto-Romanic languages that also include Romansh and Ladin (see above). Linguists call the Rhaeto-Romanic languages the closest living languages to clas-

Free Territory of Trieste (a.k.a. Giulian Republic)

active regional independence movement

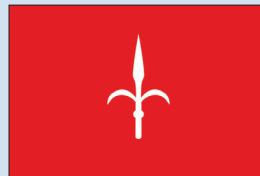
currently: Trieste province, Friuli–Venezia Giulia, Italy; plus parts of Slovenia and Croatia

goal: independence, either for Trieste province alone, or for entire territory

area: 212 km² (Trieste province) or 738 km² (entire area)

population: approx. 240,000 (Trieste province) or approx. 330,000 (entire area)

proposed capital: Trieste



flag: flag of former Free State, used by modern separatists

prospects: very low

proponents: Giulian Front, but not currently very organized



Lega Nord variant

Friuli (a.k.a. Friuli Republic)

active regional/ethnic autonomy movement

currently: 3 out of 4 provinces in Friuli–Venezia Giulia, Italy

goal: separate autonomous region, within either Italy or independent Padania (above)

area: 7,646 km²

population: approx. 970,000

proposed capital: Udine



flag: Friuli national flag



variant

prospects:

proponents: for autonomy, Moviment Friul; for independence within Padania, Lega Nord Friuli–Venezia Giulia

Province of Carnia (Cjargne)

active regional/ethnic autonomy movement

currently: 28 municipalities in Udine province, Friuli–Venezia Giulia, Italy

goal: autonomous province within Friuli–Venezia Giulia

area: 1,222 km²

population: approx. 40,000

proposed capital:

Tolmezzo (Tumieç)

flag: regional flag

prospects: medium

proponents: Comitât pa Province da Cjargne



sical Latin. Friulian has about a half-million speakers and is quite distinct from Italian. Speaking or writing Friulian was outlawed by Mussolini, and the Second World War brought further depredations, with many Friulians fleeing to Romansh communities in Switzerland and others suddenly finding themselves on the Yugoslavian side of the border after the war (see Istria, p. 136). In response, Friulians founded the Friulian Movement (*Moviment Friuli*, MF, or, in Friulian, *Moviment Friûl*) in 1948, and nationalism surged after 1954, when the annexation of Trieste (see above) diluted the Friulian share of the region's population—

which had been more significant following the exodus of Friulians west at war's end.

In 1968, nationalists from the MF, pushing for an autonomous or independent **Friulia** or **Friuli** (all of Friuli–Venezia Giulia except for Trieste, essentially—the ancient region of Aquileia) garnered 5% of Friuli–Venezia Giulia's vote, but starting in the 1980s it lost ground there to Lega Nord and the broader Padania independence movement. Unlike Lega Nord, Friulian nationalists tend to be pro-EU and want the creation of a special Friulian region within the current Friuli–Venezia Giulia boundaries to go hand in hand with further European integration. Lega Nord does especially well in Friulian areas, while the MF is not currently very active.

In one small corner of Friuli–Venezia Giulia, near the Austrian border, a Friulian-dominated area called **Carnia** (*Cjargne*, in Friulian) is not an official political entity but would like to declare itself an autonomous province within Friuli–Venezia Giulia. The *Comitât pa Province da Cjargne* now carries the Carnian banner, after voters in the 28 Carnian municipalities defeated a 2004 referendum measure to create a **Province of Alto Friuli** (Upper Friuli), 54-46%.

Electorally, separatists do less well in Friuli–Venezia Giulia than in Veneto. In the 2013 regional elections, Lega Nord Friuli–Venezia Giulia (LNFVG) garnered 8.3% of the vote regionwide, and it now runs Udine province. Lega Nord aims to create separate autonomous Friulian and Giulian regions within a federal Padania. Venetian separatist parties that want to include nearly all of Friuli–Venezia Giulia—and part of Lombardy—in their republic have almost no support outside Veneto.

Emilia–Romagna

Of the local separatist movements in the north, that in **Emilia–Romagna** is perhaps the most openly hostile to the Lega Nord approach. Ironically, for a region that produced the Fascist Mussolini, Bologna, the region's capital, has long been a hotbed of socialist and communist views, a center of the so-called Red Belt region that persisted for much of the Cold War. Though Emilian nationalists

have a devolutionist, and at times separatist, agenda similar to Lega Nord's, some Emilians broke off from the League in 1994 to protest its rightward tilt and founded a party called Nation of Emilia (*Nazione Emilia*). Another left-leaning group, Emilian Freedom (*Libertà Emiliana*), was formed in 1998 and soon after merged with *Nazione Emilia*. However, Lega Nord still came to Emilians' defense when *Nazione Emilia* came under attack by both neo-Fascists and Mafia apologists in the mid-1990s. A Lega Nord Emilia and Lega Nord Romagna coalition got 13% of the votes in the 2010 regional elections. *Libertà Emilia*–*Nazione Emilia*, by contrast, is not very active. Nor is its Romagnolo equivalent, the Movement for the Autonomy of Romagna (*Movimento per l'Autonomia della Romagna*, or MAR), which does not have a significant independentist, as opposed to autonomist, component.

In 2014, Emilia–Romagna's nine provinces are to be reorganized into five larger provinces, with three of the four coastal provinces merging as a new Province of Romagna, but this is unlikely to appease partitionists. If anything, it weakens Romagnolos' say in Emilia–Romagna politics, but Emilians have always anyway been more autonomist than Romagnans.

Just 11 kilometers off the coast of Ro-

magna, near Rimini, was a brief-lived experiment called the **Republic of Rose Island**, or *Respubliko de la Insulo de la Rozoj*, as it was known in its declared official language, Esperanto (for another Esperantist micronation project, see Neutral Moresnet, p. 55). Like several similar enterprises, Rose Island was inspired by the Principality of Sealand, off the coast of southern England (pp. 49-50). The Rose Island republic began in 1967, when an Italian engineer named Giorgio Rosa (hence the republic's name) built an approximately-400-square-meter sea platform in the Adriatic which he dubbed *Isola delle Rose* and atop it built a nightclub, souvenir shop, post office, and other amenities. The following summer, Rosa declared the "island" an independent nation, with himself as president. The Italian government did not share his light-hearted attitude toward sovereignty. Treating it as a sinister tax dodge, Rome sent military police and treasury officers to the platform, took control, and evicted its occupants. Later, the navy blew the tiny republic sky-high with explosives, an act commemorated in special postage stamps issued by a so-called government-in-exile.

Lega Nord's prospects

Unlike many quixotic separatist movements in industrial Europe, the Northern League,

Emilia

active regional autonomy/internal-partition movement

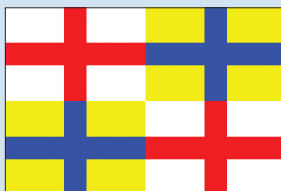
currently: 6 provinces in Emilia–Romagna, Italy

goal: separate region within Italy; independence; autonomy within independent Padania (above)

area: 17,349 km²

population: approx. 3,335,000

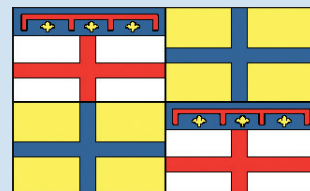
capital: Bologna



flag: separatist flag



alternate separatist flag



Lega Nord variant

prospects: for separate region, medium; for independence by itself, very low; for secession as part of Padania, very low

proponents: for separate region or independence by itself, *Libertà Emilia*–*Nazione Emilia*; for secession as part of Padania, Lega Nord Emilia

Romagna (a.k.a. Rumagna)

active regional autonomy/internal-partition movement

currently: 3 provinces in Emilia–Romagna region, Italy, set to be merged in 2014

goal: separate region within Italy; autonomy within independent Padania (above)

area: 5,098 km²

population: approx. 1,100,000

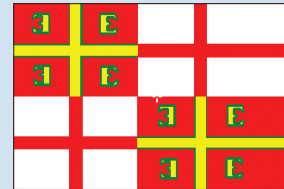
capital: Ravenna



flag: Romagna autonomist flag



alternate autonomist flag



Lega Nord variant

prospects: for autonomy, low; for secession as part of Padania, very low

proponents: for autonomy, Movement for the Autonomy of Romagna; for secession as part of Padania, Lega Nord Romagna

under Bossi's leadership, became the third-largest party in Italy, crowding out national parties in northern regions. Today, it is the main political party in Veneto and the second-largest in Lombardy. In 1996, in Venice, Bossi staged an elaborate but wholly symbolic declaration of independence for a **Federal Republic of Padania**. The following year, Lega Nord held elections for a symbolic Padanian Parliament, in which over 4 million voters participated. In 2008, the League joined Silvio Berlusconi's center-right People of Freedom (*Popolo della Libertà*, or PdL) government as the king-making junior partner, and this put the cause of greater devolved federalism in Italy squarely on the front burner. Berlusconi's political agenda in part reflected that.

But then came the 2011 currency crisis. Many Northerners shared the general northern European view that it was a culture of laziness exemplified in places like Greece, Spain, and southern Italy that created the Euro mess, and this galvanized separatist feelings. This would theoretically be a moment for Lega Nord to claim vindication ("see, this is what comes of letting southerners run things"), but at the same time, disputes over how to confront the crisis brought about Berlusconi's downfall. The new, more centrist and pro-Brussels government of Mario Monti (ironically, like Bossi, a Lombard) left the

right-wing Lega Nord out in the cold. This led first to a serious revving up of Bossi's separatist rhetoric. In December 2011 he unveiled a map of what he envisioned as a **Greater Padania** which would also take in Switzerland, Austria, Savoy, and Bavaria (see pp. 111-12 for a similarly envisioned *Allemania*), and the League's disdain for the EU (which Bossi calls Stalinist and Fascist) has been deepened.

But then in April 2012 Bossi and members of his family and inner circle were swallowed up by a serious corruption scandal and Bossi resigned. Lega Nord's popularity at the national level plummeted (pulling in only 4% of voters in the 2013 general elections), but at the regional level it continues to do quite well. Right now, all three large northern regions—Lombardy, Veneto, and Piedmont—are run by separatists. Lega Nord has been losing credibility nationally due to its overt xenophobia, but anti-immigrant feeling polls well in the North.

Central Italy—Tuscany, Umbria, Marche

Tuscany is perhaps the least outright separatist of the northern regions, and Lega Nord fares less well there than elsewhere in the north. Tuscany, Umbria, and Marche form a strip of land that is included in some maps of Padania's proposed borders but not others.



One Padanist intellectual, the political scientist Gianfranco Miglio, has proposed dividing Italy into three parts: Padania in the north, **Etruria** in the center, and **Mediterranea** in the south (never mind that all three regions would have Mediterranean coastlines). The name *Etruria* refers to the Etruscans, an ancient civilization whose heartland was in modern Tuscany and who greatly influenced the early Romans, who then gradually displaced them in the Italian peninsula. But modern Tuscans, Umbrians, and Marchigiani do not think of themselves as “Etruscan” and do not particularly appreciate any apparent invocations of the **Kingdom of Etruria**, Napoleon’s puppet state in the region (which had nothing Etruscan about it but its name).

Lega Nord and its local affiliate have never brought in votes in the double digits in any of these three regions—which, along with Emilia–Romagna (see above), form Italy’s left-wing “Red Belt.” Nor are there individual separatist movements there.

Ausonia and southern separatism

In 1991, *Lega Sud* (Southern League) was founded as a sister party to Lega Nord. Dominated by Neapolitans and other mainlanders, rather than by Sicilians and Sardinians, who have such strong separatist movements themselves (see below), it has proven to be far less popular than its northern counterpart,

partly because anti-southern prejudice is such a strong component not just of the rise of Lega Nord but of the larger decentralizing agenda in modern Italian politics. By the 2000s, Lega Sud was finding more success using an approach more critical of Padanism. The 2011 currency crisis has, understandably, made southerners even more bristly about cultural differences between north and south. Lega Sud activists call for more devolution to the regions or even for a **Federal Republic of Ausonia**, *Ausonia* being an old term for the southern Italian mainland (which is also sometimes called the Mezzogiorno).

In 2005, center-right politicians in Sicily founded the Movement for Autonomies (*Movimento per le Autonomie*, or MpA), which spread throughout southern Italy and pushed for general devolution. In 2006, it formed a loose coalition with the Sardinian Action Party (see below) and Lega Nord (see above). We the South (*Noi il Sud*, or NS—later renamed Autonomy South (*Autonomia Sud*, or AS)), a regionalist party based in Campania, split from the MpA in 2010. In 2012, it, along with Lega Nord, became part of Berlusconi’s coalition—a very small part of it—but after Berlusconi’s fall it too was out of power again and has currently no representation in Rome. Of the mainland Ausonian regions, Apulia and Campagna have the most autonomist sentiment: in Apulia, the Apulia First party (*La Puglia Prima di Tutto*, or PPdT) got 7.1% of the vote in the 2010 regional elections, while in Campagna the same year, MpA got 5.8% and We the South 3.6%. The Southern Action League (*Lega d’Azione Meridionale*, or LAM) is also active in Apulia.

Other groups harken to the **Kingdom of the Two Sicilies**, a merger of the Sicilian and Neapolitan kingdoms which lasted for almost 50 years until the mid-nineteenth-century Risorgimento. (The kingdom’s odd name derives from the nickname Second Sicily given by Moors to the southern Italian mainland.) The Kingdom of Sardinia’s annexation of the Two Sicilies was in fact the signal moment which made the unification of the entire peninsula inevitable. For Italian monarchists, then, nostalgia for the Two Sicilies reinforces

Federal Republic of Ausonia (a.k.a. Southern Italy)

semi-active ethnic autonomy/independence movement

currently: 7 southernmost regions of mainland Italy, plus Sicily and Sardinia

goal: enhanced autonomy; independence

area: 140,262 km²

population: approx. 26,000,000

proposed capital: Rome

flag: Italian national flag, used by many Ausonian

separatists because their state would include Rome

proponents: for more autonomy, Movement for Autonomies, Great South, We the South, Southern Action League; for independence, Lega Sud Ausonia



a resentment of the northern House of Savoy (which ran Sardinia and the Kingdom of Italy as well) and a preference for the Spanish-derived House of Bourbon, which ruled Naples and Sicily with a more relaxed, Mediterranean style. But it is mainly Neapolitans, rather than Sicilians (see below), who are drawn to Two Sicilies revanchism, just as the MpA, though it emerged in Sicily, always drew more followers from the mainland as well.

Ausonian separatism runs the gamut from those wanting to remain in the EU to those who are just as anti-immigrant and anti-Brussels as Lega Nord, but on the whole the very idea of Lega Sud is that it is less right-wing, less individualistic, and less “Nordic” in its attitudes and more oriented to egalitarianism, community ties, and socialism—the very qualities which Padanian nationalists revile as clientilism, cronyism, and dysfunction.

Prospects for partition

In the short term, a partition of the Italian peninsula is not likely. Lega Sud is marginal, and most southerners would actually fight tooth and nail to stay connected to the north. Doing so is their only real hope of maintaining what first-world levels of prosperity they still have. (Italy, after all, is the world’s eighth-largest economy, but without the north it would be more like another Portugal or Bulgaria within the EU.) Devolution, which is the current trend throughout Europe, is likely to continue apace, however, and if the Euro zone or the EU itself begins to fracture, then the fault line between Padania and the rest of Italy will be a major stress point and may gather a momentum that southerners will be powerless to resist. How much Padania distances itself from the south—let alone what would then become of Tuscany, Umbria and Marche, which neither Ausonianists nor Padanists seem to want—depends quite a bit on how long the financial crisis persists and how far it reverberates politically.

Italy’s two large islands, Sicily and Sardinia, need to be considered quite separately. They have never felt particularly “Italian,” compared to mainlanders, and their motivations for separatism are, on the whole, more

Kingdom of the Two Sicilies

semi-active regional restoration/independence movement

currently: 6 southernmost regions of mainland Italy, plus Sicily

goal: independence

area: 41,646 km² (current 3 voivodeships) or 12,334 km² (Silesia voivodeship only) or approx. 4,664 km² (1920-1939 borders)

population: approx. 19,000,000

capital: Naples

flag: pre-1848 Two Sicilies national flag, preferred by modern separatists over later variants with Italian tricolor

prospects: very low to nil

proponents: Movement for the Autonomy of the Two Sicilies, Cultural Association for the Two Sicilies



cultural, linguistic, and deep-historical than those of the Northern League. (The third-largest Mediterranean island, Corsica—which, like Sardinia, blends Spanish, French, and Italian influences—is ruled by France and discussed on pp. 65-66.)

Sicily

Perhaps the Italian region with the strongest non-Italian national identity, **Sicily** (*Sicilia*) has the most generous terms under the constitutional provisions for the five autonomous regions. Namely, Sicily can keep 100% of the tax revenue that it raises (in addition to extra funds it gets from Rome)—whereas the other four autonomous regions (Sardinia, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Val d’Aosta, and Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol; see above for full discussions) can keep far smaller shares—and ordinary regions no more than 20%.

Sicily’s history is one of invasions: by Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, and Romans in antiquity; Vandals, Ostrogoths, Byzantines, Arabs, Berbers, Normans, Teutons, and Angevin Franks in the Middle Ages; Spaniards during the Renaissance; and in the modern era Savoyards, Austrians, the Spanish again, and then Napoleon. After helping defeat Napoleon, Sicily merged with Neapolitan

Sicily (a.k.a. Republic of Sicily)

active regional/ethnic autonomy/independence movement

currently: autonomous region in Italy

goal: enhanced autonomy; independence

area: 25,711 km²

population:

approx. 5,000,000

capital: Palermo

flag: official regional and national flag



prospects: for enhanced autonomy, low to medium for independence, very low

proponents: for enhanced autonomy, Movement for Autonomies, Sicilian People's Movement, Autonomist Democrats, New Sicily; for independence, not currently organized

rulers to form the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (see above), ruled by Bourbons. A revolution in 1848, during the continent-wide “Spring-time of Nations,” resulted in a brief period of independence—the first since a century of independence from 1302 to 1412 (between the Angevins and Spaniards; see above). Independence ended a second time when forces loyal to Garibaldi annexed Sicily to the new Kingdom of Italy in the 1860s. All this long and bloody history has left the Sicilian nation a linguistic and cultural *mélange* unlike any other. The Sicilian language, though Italian at base, is filled with Greek, Arabic, and other locutions, and still today there are families who distinguish themselves by their specific Norman, Greek, or Moorish ancestries.

Sicilian separatism, snuffed out by Garibaldi, blossomed again during the Fascist period, especially since Mussolini attempted to eradicate the Mafia, which was (and to an extent still is) a quasi-government woven into the fabric of Sicilian family, economy, and society and not merely an antisocial criminal class as it is in the United States. The Mafia is a scourge, make no mistake, but Sicilians have always resented heavy-handed attempts by mainlanders to eradicate it. Sicilians especially had no use for Fascists and in the 1920s were fond of pointing out that, since the time of the Caesars, Sicily had only really spent a

couple generations or so under Rome's rule. In 1942, the Committee (later Movement) for the Independence of Sicily (*Movimento Indipendentista Siciliano*, or MIS) was founded, and the following year the US military liberated Sicily from Fascist control and occupied the island. The US occupiers were welcomed and in some cases even aided by the Mafia and their sympathizers, who learned to romanticize America from Hollywood gangster films. Additionally, the fact that emigration to America had for generations been a safety valve for Sicily's rampant population growth meant nearly every family on the island had relatives among the millions of Sicilian-Americans in American cities. The Allies tolerated the separatists, who continued to have strong ties to the Mafia. Sicilian nationalists were convinced that their friends the Americans would help them reestablish independence, and some, including the Robin Hood-style separatist folk hero Salvatore Giuliano, campaigned aggressively to make Sicily the 49th state. After the war, the US-statehood party even elected one member to Sicily's regional legislature. But enthusiasm for the idea in the US itself hovered at approximately 0%.

But once the Italian mainland fell to the Allies (by now including Sicilian regiments) at war's end, the post-Fascist government in Rome was quick to reassert its control, and some Sicilians felt betrayed by the Americans, British, and other Allies for not intervening to prevent the island's reabsorption into the Italian state. Sicilian separatist parties regularly got 8 or 9% of the vote in the late 1940s. But eventually the MIS disbanded, and as Italy modernized the historical association with the Mafia—whose criminal tentacles extended to the mainland and even, it was thought, into national politics—did not enhance public opinion of Sicilian nationalists. Nor did Sicilian separatism gain from the rise of Lega Nord in the 1980s and '90s; after all, Padanism holds up impoverished, crime-ridden, and culturally-Mediterranean Sicily as the quintessential example of everything the North was trying to secede *from*. In the last Sicilian regional elections, in 2012, an autonomist coalition including local branches of the pan-southern

umbrella groups Great South (*Grande Sud*, or GS) and MpA got 15% of the vote. Ausonian (see above) and Sicilian independentists did not even make a showing.

As European national independence movements go, Sicily's crime and poverty make it a poor candidate for a fellow state that the rest of Europe would welcome. But if Padania ever secedes, further fractures might be unavoidable.

Sardinia

The farther of the two large islands from the Italian mainland, Sardinia has always been politically and culturally distinct from the rest of Italy. From the fourteenth to the eighteenth century, the island belonged to the Spanish, and it absorbed many Spanish customs and forms of speech during that period. After the Spanish repelled an Austrian invasion of Sardinia in the Wars of Spanish Succession, the territory was handed over to the House of Savoy in the Treaty of London of 1718. An uprising in support of independence in the 1790s was interrupted by Napoleon's invasion of the Kingdom of Savoy and the exile of its royal family to Cagliari, Sardinia's capital. This led, after Napoleon's fall, to the rise of the Kingdom of Sardinia as a composite state that also encompassed Savoy's mainland territory, including Piedmont and Liguria (see above). Nonetheless, Sardinia was at the forefront of the movement in the 1860s to unite the different regions in a Kingdom of Italy. In fact, in terms of institutional continuity, the Kingdom of Italy actually *was* the Kingdom of Sardinia, which formally annexed all the other regions to create the new kingdom. Sardinia's king, Vittorio Emanuele II, of the House of Savoy, became united Italy's first king.

Sardinia is outside the Northern League's nominal area of operation, but Sards were on the vanguard of the modern separatist wave in Italy. In 1968, as part of the general uprising of youths and radical leftists across Europe, Sardinia saw a wave of separatist activism to which Rome responded with military force. In 1983, a militant separatist became president of the regional parliament, and since then Sardinian separatists have been on the rise, espe-

cially the Sardinian Action Party (*Partito Sardo d'Azione*, or PSdAz), which had long claimed that Sardinia should be a separate member-state alongside Italy in a united Europe. Sardinian separatists sometimes cooperate with Lega Nord, but for the most part they are left-wing, having their roots in Sardinia's anti-Fascist resistance during the Second World War.

Sardinia's current regional government is run by a narrow coalition which includes the PSdAz and MpA as junior members. An out-

Sardinia (a.k.a. Republic of Sardinia)

active regional/ethnic autonomy/independence movement

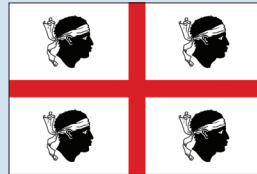
currently: autonomous region in Italy

goal: enhanced autonomy; independence

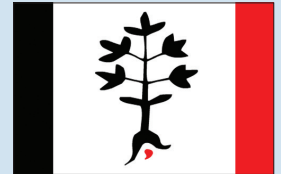
area: 24,090 km²

population: approx. 1,650,000

capital: Cagliari



flag: official regional flag, used by most nationalists



variant, using device of medieval state of Arborea

prospects: for enhanced autonomy, low to medium; for independence, very low

proponents: for enhanced autonomy, Movement for Autonomies, Lega Nord; for independence, Sardinian Action Party, Independence Republic of Sardinia

Republic of Mal di Ventre (a.k.a. Republic of Malu Entu)

dormant micronation project

currently: island within Sardinia region, Italy

goal: independence (as part of larger project of Sardinian independence)

area: 0.8 km²

population: uninhabited

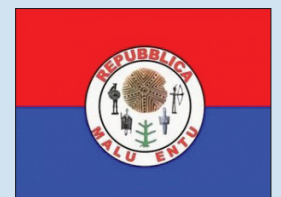
capital: n/a

flag: "official" national flag

prospects:

for independence, nil

proponents: Salvatore Meloni and supporters



right separatist group, the Independence Republic of Sardinia (*Indipendèntzia Repùbrica de Sardigna*, or IRS), got more than 3% of the vote in the last regional elections. As this book goes to press, Sardinia Possible (*Sardegna Possibile*, or SP) is a new major player, but polls predicting a 24% share in the February 2014 regional election were not borne out: SP fell far short of the 10% threshold for coalitions to have seats in the legislature.

Just off the west coast of Sardinia is the island of *Mal di Ventre* (literally, “stomach-ache”), which a 65-year-old Sardinian truck driver named Salvator Meloni in 2008 declared an independent **Republic of Malu Entu** (using the Sardinian name for the island). The stunt was designed to raise the profile of Sardinian nationalism, and Meloni’s presidential palace, a makeshift tent, flew the Sardinian national flag. But right-wing vigilantes stormed the island and planted an Italian tricolor surrounded with barbed-wire, and Meloni’s plans to create a tax haven came to naught. In 2012, Meloni was arrested for

evading taxes, which he refuses to pay on the grounds that Italy is a foreign country.

Off of Sardinia’s northeastern coast is the so-called **Kingdom of Tavolara** (*Regno di Tavolara*). Known as Hermea by the Romans and Tolar by the Arabs, the island of Tavolara, only 2 square miles in size, was reportedly uninhabited in 1815. Later, its self-styled ruler, one Giuseppe Bertoleoni, claimed that Carlo Alberto, King of Sardinia, visited the islet during a hunting trip in 1836 and verbally named him King of Tavolara. The Bertoleonis passed down the monarchic title and ruled the island with no interference from the Italian state until King Giuseppe’s great-grandson, Paolo II, died in 1962. A NATO base was established on the island, which called for the removal of most of its small population, and it was put for the first time under Italian administration. But it was never formally ceded. In 1997, Tavolara and surrounding waters were made into a marine preserve. Today, half the island is occupied by the military base. The other half of the island is open for tourism, including a restaurant called Da Tonino run by Tonino Bertoleoni, Paolo II’s son, the current monarch. In 2002, King Tonino appealed to Prince Vittorio Emanuele, son of the last King of Italy, for formal recognition of the Kingdom of Tavolara, but without success.

Kingdom of Tavolara

semi-active micronation project / regional

independence movement

currently: island within Sardinia region, Italy

goal: international recognition

area: 5 km²

population: approx. 50?

capital: La Punta del Canone

flag: “official” national flag

prospects: very low

proponents: royal family



Principality of Filettino

active micronation project

currently: village in Lazio region, Italy

goal: recognition of independence

area: 78 km²

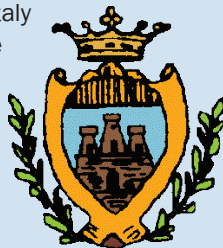
population: 524

capital: n/a

flag: Filettino coat-of-arms
(no flag)

prospects: nil

proponents: mayor and many residents



Filettino

Though the currency crisis has caused many in the north to rethink centralism, at least one southern community feels the same way and offers a solution other than bisection of the nation. In Lazio, a.k.a. Latium, the region surrounding Rome (and home to the original Latin-speakers, hence the region’s name), the village of **Filettino** (population 524) was in late 2011 threatened with consolidation into a neighboring town to save administrative expenses. Filettino’s mayor declared independence from Italy and began issuing a new currency, the *fiorito*. The secession made headlines against the backdrop of the financial crisis just then spreading to Italy, but it has not been recognized by the Italian government. The mayor went so far as to ask Prince Emanuele Filiberto, grandson and theoretical heir of Italy’s last

king, to rule Filettino, but he declined. Without being asked, Berlusconi's controversial former interior minister, Carlo Taormina, was invested as the new prince. Taormina—sorry, Prince Carlo I—was a member of Berlusconi's Forza Italia party while in office but has also founded his own party, called Lega Italia. This party is supposed to be much in the Lega Nord mold when it comes to many policies—including separatism, and the pseudo-prince says that his tiny fief is a project in accord with Bossi's principles of decentralization.

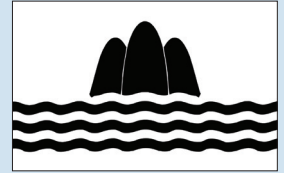
Malta and Gozo

Just south of Italy is the Republic of Malta, the world's ninth-smallest recognized independent state, the smallest EU member-state in both area and population, and, behind St. Kitts–Nevis (p. 429) and the Maldives (p. 300), the third-smallest state to have a separatist movement within it. In fact, Malta arguably has two subdivisions of sorts hankering for independent legitimacy.

First, the archipelago is home to a curious entity known as the **Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta**, sometimes called the **Sovereign Military Order of the Knights of Malta (SMOM)** or the **Knights of Malta** for short. This Catholic religious order, which played a key part in the Crusades, was first recognized as sovereign by the Pope in 1113 and ruled Malta (and at times Rhodes, in Greece) as a full and sovereign government until Napoleon conquered it in 1798. Malta became British after Napoleon's defeat and then independent again in 1964. But while it is now a republic with a secular government, the SMOM persists and is regarded under international law as a sovereign entity just like the 193 fully-recognized sovereign states. Its real estate in Malta, Rome, and elsewhere is considered "extraterritorial," like embassies, and it has its own license plates and formal diplo-

Independent Catholic Republic of Gozo

active regional autonomy/independence movement
currently: second-largest island in Republic of Malta
goal: independence
area: 67 km²
population: approx. 31,000
proposed capital: Victoria
flag: regional flag prospects:
very low
proponents: not currently
organized



matic relations with 104 countries, including most of Europe and most majority-Catholic countries. The Order's odd status as a sovereign nation without land may well serve as a model for peoples seeking a similar status, such as the Roma (Gypsy) people, the Chagosians (pp. 298-99), or for low-lying nations in the Indian and Pacific oceans that might have to relocate if climate change inundates their territories as sea-levels rise.

But Malta also has a good-old-fashioned traditional separatist movement on its second-largest island, Gozo. Called *Ghawdex* in Maltese (which is related to Arabic), Gozo is presumed by many to be Ogygia, where Odysseus and his crew were ensnared and ensorcelled by the nymph Calypso in Homer's *Odyssey*. Gozo was briefly *de facto* independent during the Napoleonic period and has always considered itself distinct. A referendum which introduced divorce for the first time in the Republic of Malta exposed difference between the main island, a financial and tourist hub where the vast majority live, and the far more rural and devout Gozitans. Some call for an **Independent Catholic Republic of Gozo**—i.e., a theocracy, just like in the old days. If the Knights of Malta aren't too proud, they might consider setting up shop there and finally have some dirt under their feet. It certainly couldn't hurt tourism.