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Master's Thesis

2025

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**The Ideological Fragmentation of the Italian Far-Right
on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

Master's thesis

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Study programme: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (MAIN)

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Year of the defence: 2025

Declaration

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In Prague on 07/01/2025

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Abstract

This thesis examines the positional mismatch within the Italian far-right regarding the ongoing war between Israel and Palestine. While mainstream far-right parties currently part of Italy's governing coalition—Fratelli d'Italia, Forza Italia, and Lega—align themselves with the state of Israel, extra-parliamentary far-right factions such as CasaPound and Forza Nuova instead support Palestine. This ideological divergence stems from the different narratives adopted by the two sides: the pro-Palestinian faction grounds its discourse in theories such as anti-imperialism, framing Israel as the *longa manus* of the West, while the pro-Israel bloc views the Jewish state as a defender of Western civilization, elevating it to a bulwark safeguarding Judeo-Christian values, building on civilizationism.

The use of Critical Discourse Analysis and Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Framework enabled a qualitative study of the Italian far-right's public discourse, analyzing posts on X and articles published by affiliated media outlets to uncover the narratives and rhetorical strategies employed by these actors.

The findings reveal that global conflicts and international relations issues are leveraged by the Italian far-right to reinforce domestic narratives, aligning with the theoretical expectations outlined in this thesis. This study makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the ideological and communicative dynamics of the far-right in Italy and calls for further comparative analysis within the European context.

Abstrakt

Tato diplomová práce zkoumá rozdíly v postojích italské krajní pravice ohledně probíhající války mezi Izraelem a Palestinou. Zatímco hlavní strany krajní pravice, které jsou v současnosti součástí vládní koalice v Itálii—Fratelli d'Italia, Forza Italia a Lega—se přiklánějí na stranu Izraele, mimoparlamentní frakce krajní pravice jako CasaPound a Forza Nuova podporují Palestinu. Tento ideologický rozkol vyplývá z rozdílných narativů přijatých oběma stranami: pro-palestinská frakce zakládá svůj diskurz na teoriích jako antiimperialismus, přičemž Izrael je vykreslován jako prodloužená ruka Západu, zatímco

proizraelský blok vnímá židovský stát jako obránce západní civilizace, povyšuje jej na baštu hájící judeo-křesťanské hodnoty, čímž navazuje na koncept civilizacionalismu.

Použití kritické analýzy diskurzu a třírozměrného rámce teoretizovaného Faircloughem umožnilo kvalitativní studii veřejného diskurzu italské krajní pravice. Byly analyzovány příspěvky na platformě X a články publikované přidruženými mediálními kanály, aby byly odhaleny narativy a rétorické strategie, které tito aktéři používají.

Zjištění ukazují, že globální konflikty a problémy mezinárodních vztahů jsou italskou krajní pravici využívány k posílení domácích narativů, což odpovídá teoretickým očekáváním nastíněným v této práci. Tato studie významně přispívá k pochopení ideologických a komunikačních dynamik krajní pravice v Itálii a vyzývá k dalším komparativním analýzám v evropském kontextu.

Keywords

Far-Right, CDA, Political Fragmentation, Clash of Civilizations, Anti-Imperialism

Klíčová slova

Krajní pravice, kritická analýza diskurzu (CDA), politická fragmentace, střet civilizací, antiimperialismus

Title

The Ideological Fragmentation of the Italian Far-Right on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Název práce

Izraelsko-palestinský konflikt a Ideologická fragmentace italské krajní pravice

Acknowledgement

To Gianmarco, who, even from afar, never stops fully supporting me. To him, my deepest thanks.

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1. Introduction

The rise of far-right movements in Europe has brought their influence on both domestic and international politics to the forefront. Despite often being perceived as monolithic blocs, far-right movements display significant internal differences, making them a crucial subject of study, particularly regarding their positioning on foreign policy. This study, therefore, aims to analyze the fragmented and contrasting stances of Italy's major far-right actors on the Israel-Palestine conflict: while prominent parties within the Italian government coalition, such as Lega, Fratelli d'Italia, and Forza Italia, openly support the state of Israel, portraying the conflict through a civilizationist lens that emphasizes a Judeo-Christian alliance against Islamic extremism, extra-parliamentary movements like CasaPound, Forza Nuova, and similar actors align with the Palestinian cause, framing their support as part of a broader anti-imperialist and anti-globalist agenda.

On October 13, 2023, less than a week after Hamas's attack that triggered the latest wave of violence in the region, Blocco Studentesco, CasaPound's university organization, displayed a banner in Rome during the international gathering of "European right-wing movements," attended by members of the United States Republican Party and Israel's Likud Party. The banner read "Free Palestine, free Golan, free Artsakh" (Ansa, 2023¹). This act symbolizes the ideological fragmentation within the far-right concerning foreign policy issues and underscores the importance of analyzing the discourses of these factions. It introduces the research question: Why do certain Italian extra-parliamentary far-right movements adopt a pro-Palestinian stance, contrasting with the pro-Israel position of mainstream far-right parties? What theories could explain this mismatch in their positioning, despite their ideological similarities?

This thesis employs Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis and Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Framework to investigate the textual analysis, discursive practices, and social practices in the discourse of the Italian far-right, aiming to answer the research question. The study is significant as it is the first to focus on the Italian case, which is particularly compelling given the coexistence of pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel factions within the same far-right spectrum, revealing internal ideological splits and contributing to understanding the

¹ https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cronaca/2023/10/13/palestina-libera-striscione-di-blocco-studentesco-a-roma_ebf4ff80-492d-42ea-85ab-010f834f9837.html

evolving strategies of far-right movements within global and domestic political contexts. Additionally, it highlights how extra-parliamentary far-right movements utilize discourse to distance and differentiate themselves from mainstream far-right entities, invoking values such as anti-imperialism and homeland defense to appeal to broader audiences.

Furthermore, it highlights how international events influence domestic discourse among the parties under analysis.

The subsequent research is structured as follows: the next chapter includes a literature review presenting the state of the art on far-right movements, particularly concerning foreign policy and the Israel-Palestine issue. Chapter 3 provides a focused review of theories such as Anti-Globalism and Anti-Imperialism, Far-Right Civilizationism, and the Clash of Civilizations. Chapter 4 covers the research design and methods, including CDA and Three-Dimensional Analysis, alongside the introduction of the software MAXQDA. Chapters 5 and 6 present the analysis results and their discussion, respectively, while Chapter 7 concludes the thesis.

2. Literature Review

A systematic literature review is a necessary step to provide a comprehensive analysis and establish a starting point for the research, as well as to identify potential gaps in the literature. In this case, the objective of this chapter is to provide a state of the art on the far right, analyzing its driving ideologies, as well as its various positions on issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This aims to develop a complete and in-depth theoretical framework, identifying possible theories that explain the misalignment within factions. In short, in relation to the research

objectives of this thesis, this chapter aims to provide the necessary information on the state of the art on the positioning of the far-right vis-à-vis the conflict in Palestine, identify gaps in the literature, and provide a baseline for the development of the research question of this analysis.

2.1 Literature on the Far-Right

The far right has been a rapidly growing phenomenon in Europe since the 1980s. In fact, the parties and movements that fall under this definition are the fastest-growing on the European continent (Golder, 2016). This growth is characterized by the emergence of new movements and parties that do not always present the same characteristics but are often marked by an ideological fluidity that transcends traditional distinctions in political positioning. The far-right thus becomes an umbrella term that encompasses both the populist radical right and the extreme right due to some common points in the ideologies of these groups, such as nativism and authoritarian values. The main difference between these two currents within the far right lies in their positioning regarding the established power: while both reject the established democratic order, the populist radical right operates within it, displaying the populist rhetoric that characterizes it, whereas the extreme right is anti-democratic and ultimately aims to overthrow the consolidated democratic system to establish an ideologically right-wing authoritarian state. The distinction between these two currents is not always immediate; indeed, it often represents a challenge for political science scholars, as there is often ideological overlap and actions, especially where populist radical right parties collaborate with extreme-right movements. This continuous overlap and collaboration between these parties and groups have led to the need for the creation of this umbrella term, "far right," to indicate their actions when they are collective to both factions (Pirro, 2023).

What, then, can explain this rapid and unprecedented growth of far-right movements and parties? Daphne Halikiopoulou and Tim Vlandas, in their 2019 article, attempt to provide an answer to this question. This exponential growth in support for these ideologies can be contextualized within the current of New Nationalism, characterized by populist rhetoric, sovereignty claims, and national preference policies, which best explain the behavior of the various far-right parties that populate Europe. However, there are important differences between nationalism and populism, as the former focuses on the difference between an in-group, generally identified as a homogeneous and indigenous nation of the place in question, and an out-group, which threatens the national integrity of the in-group and is identified as

the enemy of the in-group, while populism, although also based on an "us vs. them" rhetoric, focuses on two different groups: the people, represented as oppressed and victims of tyrannical elites, and the elites, the enemies of the people who represent an obstacle to the improvement of the people's quality of life. This distinction is of fundamental importance both to understand the dynamics that have driven the far right to gain so much support and for the ultimate purpose of this text. Indeed, the dynamics of in-group and out-group, as well as those of people vs. elite, and more generally those of "us vs. them" typical of the European far right, are an important piece in analyzing the discourse of the parties and their positioning concerning the ongoing conflict between Palestine and Israel.

Another important contribution comes from Golder (2016). In his article, the author explains how there is a clear difference between radical and extremist parties. The former, while basing their ideology on populism, emphasizes the difference between "pure people" and the "corrupt elite," and nationalism, both civic, meaning based on cultural uniformity, and ethnic, meaning based on ethnic uniformity, seek to operate within the democratic framework. In contrast, extremists aim to eliminate the democratic component.

2.2 Literature on the Relationship between the Far-Right and Palestine and Israel

The objective is to identify potential gaps in the literature concerning the positioning of far-right movements regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The way the far-right tends to portray itself is highlighted by Brown & Newt (2024), who discuss how the mainstream far-right uses distancing from fascism and its values to legitimize itself and become mainstream. This strategy allowed them to gain widespread electoral support in the 2022 elections, presenting themselves as a democratic force while still maintaining their exclusionary and authoritarian base, thereby normalizing post-fascist logic within far-right discourse.

From Owiredu's study (2024), it is evident that in Sweden, stances on the conflict are not primarily influenced by individuals' religious affiliation, although practicing Christians tend to be more inclined to support Israel. Instead, these positions predominantly depend on ideological identification along the left-right spectrum. Consequently, supporters of Palestine within the conflict tend to align ideologically with the left, while those who are pro-Israel align with the right. These findings highlight the role of ideological identity over

religious affiliation in shaping public opinion in Sweden, reflecting the secular nature of Swedish society.

Moreover, Brown & Newt (2024) discuss how far-right actors leverage social media to amplify nationalist and anti-immigration discourses, emphasizing the importance of these tools for far-right movements. These discourses and tools enable far-right movements, despite a historical continuity with fascism, as highlighted in the article, to self-classify as center-right movements. This underscores not only a strategic rebranding effort on their part but also a way to legitimize ideologies otherwise extremist and unacceptable to the majority of people and voters.

Kahmann (2017), in his paper "The Most Ardent Pro-Israel Party," further underscores the concept of strategic alignment. The study highlights how far-right populist radical-right parties (PRRPs) in Europe align with Israel to distance themselves from the image of Nazism, fascism, and anti-Semitism that lingers around far-right parties and movements, by analyzing stances of populist radical-right parties in Europe, such as Vlaams Belang, the Sweden Democrats, and Die Freiheit. This shift aims to align with mainstream Western values, increasing the party's legitimacy and appealing to more moderate electorates. The instrumentalization of anti-Muslim sentiment accompanies this instrumental use of pro-Israel positions, framing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within a broader context of a "clash of civilizations" that positions Israel as a bastion of resistance, at the forefront of a war against an enemy identified in Islamism. By aligning with Israel, these far-right parties elevate Israel as the defender and bulwark of Western civilization, framing any attack against it as an attack on European values within the context of a broader cultural alliance between Jews and Christians. Kahmann's findings complement existing literature on far-right ideology by demonstrating how solidarity with Israel serves as a tool to reinforce exclusionary and nativist agendas, a theme echoed in broader studies of civilizationism within radical-right movements.

From 2013 to 2019, the Italian party "Fratelli d'Italia" (abbreviated as FdI, currently part of the majority coalition in the Italian government and led by Giorgia Meloni, the current Prime Minister) (Italian Government Website²), underwent a rigorous transformation (Donà, 2022). The article highlights how Islamophobia is a central and foundational element of

² <https://www.governo.it/it/ministri-e-sottosegretari>

Fratelli d'Italia's ideology, playing a pivotal role in their ideological transformation toward the radical far-right. While Islamophobia in this context is primarily tied to issues such as immigration—connected to narratives associating Islam with terrorism or the concept of ethnic replacement—there is also a strong emphasis on the defense of Christian identity. This alignment underscores the party's proximity to Western values, which are framed as inherently more European. Furthermore, the paper uses a qualitative research design framework focusing on the discourse analysis of leaders, highlighting how qualitative discourse analysis, when applied to studies on political alignments, is particularly relevant in far-right cases.

Bland (2019) discusses the concept of Holocaust Inversion, the act of connecting Nazi atrocities to Israeli operations in Palestine, shifting the victimhood narrative toward Palestinians. The article focuses on the use of Holocaust inversion and anti-Zionism as rhetorical and tactical tools by British neo-fascists in the post-war period. It analyzes how the British far-right attempted to portray Israel as a new manifestation of Nazism, comparing its actions in Palestine to those carried out in concentration camps by the German regime. Anti-Zionism is thus employed to reframe traditional antisemitic narratives, repurposing them within a broader ideological and political context. The concept of strategic adaptation is here taken to the extreme, as such an expansion of ideological horizons by the far right can be read as a rebranding towards anti-Zionism to broaden their consensus base and reach a larger number of voters and audiences.

Birnbaum (2006) provides another significant contribution in his paper by analyzing the ideological evolution of the French radical right and its stance toward Zionism and Jews. During the previous century, Zionism was regarded by the French far-right as a solution to the "Jewish question" in France, effectively relocating Jews to Palestine. However, following the Algerian War, this narrative was reversed. From that point onward, Zionism came to be perceived as a tool of Anglo-Saxon imperialism and global capitalism, which the radical right viewed as undermining both French and Arab nationalism.

Hafez (2014) provides further insight into the position of the European far-right on issues such as Islamophobia. According to the author, Islamophobia has gradually become a widespread and accepted feature across the European far-right, effectively replacing anti-

Semitism in its rhetoric. This shift allows far-right parties to construct a shared narrative against Islam, portraying Muslims as common enemies of Europe and its civilization.

This ideological transition from anti-Semitism to Islamophobia is seen as a rebranding effort, enabling these movements to distance themselves from Nazi ideologies and present themselves as more palatable to the public. Muslims are thus depicted as “the other”, inherently incompatible with Europe and its inhabitants, and as a threat to Western values and freedoms, aligning with far-right narratives of cultural preservation.

Islamophobia draws on the "clash of civilizations" thesis, portraying Islam as fundamentally alien to Western values and European democratic civilization. This framing positions Muslims as an existential threat to European society, traditions, and cultural practices, reinforcing far-right narratives of cultural and societal preservation.

The ambivalent and intriguing position of the German far-right on the issue of the state of Israel and Jews is analyzed by Selent and Kortmann in their 2023 article. They highlight that, on one hand, a strong anti-Semitic component persists within the AfD, often fueled by the prevalence of conspiracy theories in far-right narratives. On the other hand, there is also a pro-Jewish stance, driven by widespread anti-Islamic rhetoric. Islam is regarded as an existential threat to Europe, framing Jews as allies within a "Judeo-Christian" civilization.

This perspective stems from a civilizationist narrative commonly employed by the German far-right. Pro-Israel stances are instrumentalized to support anti-immigration policies and to differentiate the AfD from overtly neo-Nazi parties, enabling them to present a more politically legitimate and mainstream image.

Regarding the pro-Israel narratives found in the literature, they tend to align with the Western framework, showing solidarity with Israel, seen as a bastion defending Western interests and democratic values, a strategic ally against the Islamic world, and also a defender of the Christian values upon which European civilization is based. Conversely, parties and movements using narratives framing themselves as defenders of oppressed peoples against Western imperialists, in this case, Israel, align with broader anti-globalization and anti-imperialist ideologies typical of these movements.

2.3 Relevance of the Study

This chapter has explored the far-right approach to various themes, such as its positioning regarding religion, wars, and social issues in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This literature review proves useful in demonstrating that there are significant differences in positioning even among movements belonging to the same faction. Religious differences, political alignments, as well as strategic rebranding, are variables that lead to notable differences within the far-right political landscape.

In addition to differences, many similarities have been highlighted, such as common themes, an appeal to religion, as well as a historical framing of the matter, which, depending on its characterization, has led to different conclusions.

By synthesizing these studies, insight has been provided into how the issue of positioning regarding Israel, Palestine, and the conflict is far from uniform among far-right alignments.

The study also sheds light on how far-right movements use social media and narrative strategies to legitimize their ideologies. These platforms amplify their discourses, allowing them to frame issues like sovereignty, security, and cultural preservation in ways that resonate with their supporters. Analyzing these narratives is crucial for understanding how extremism leverages global conflicts to gain legitimacy and influence political discourse. Moreover, by examining how these movements reinterpret anti-imperialist rhetoric, this research provides a fresh perspective on the far-right's ideological flexibility and its ability to adapt historical narratives to contemporary challenges.

This literature review reveals both significant differences and shared themes among far-right movements. While factors like religion, historical framing, and political alignments account for their divergent positions, commonalities such as appeals to religion and strategic rebranding efforts demonstrate broader trends within the far-right.

This inquiry contributes to a deeper understanding of how far-right ideologies and strategies are shaped by global conflicts, providing insights valuable to scholars, policymakers, and civil society organizations. Furthermore, it enriches theoretical frameworks by challenging prevailing assumptions of uniformity within the far-right, illustrating how ideological and strategic variations emerge in response to global and domestic pressures.

Furthermore, it is important to note that this research focuses on the case of the far-right in Italy, a topic that remains entirely unexplored in the existing literature. Following the October 7 attacks, as demonstrated in the subsequent analysis, there has been a significant increase in the publication of material related to the Israeli-Palestinian situation by far-right profiles and media outlets. This event could represent a turning point in the ideological stance of the far-right on the issue, given the extensive media exposure it has garnered. It serves as a potential stress test for the far-right, forcing these groups to either reaffirm their ideologies or potentially redefine them.

Finally, this research sheds light on the Italian case, which is particularly intriguing due to the coexistence of two factions within the same ideological spectrum that hold opposing stances on a contemporary international issue of significant relevance.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Overview of the existing theories

In this section, the main theories on the far-right will be briefly reviewed, before focusing more comprehensively on the two primary theories considered in this thesis: the clash of civilizations and anti-imperialism. These two theories provide a highly fitting framework for the chosen research design, and the selected material aligns coherently with these theoretical approaches.

3.1.1 Nativism

The whole concept of Nativism is based on the presence of two groups: an in-group and an out-group. This dichotomy is central to the rhetorical discourses of the extreme right, being a very recurrent and frequent theme in the analysis. Nativism is purportedly based on the exclusion of one of the two groups, the out-group, and by the presence of a clear and defined boundary vis-à-vis the in-group, the “native” group, which is threatened by the out-group (Betz, 2017). The core of nativism postulates that the state should primarily defend the interests and protect the benefit of the native inhabitants, who see the out-group as a threat to cultural, economic, or political cohesion (Newt, 2023).

Nativism turns out to be central to far-right ideology. The birth of nativism can be identified in relatively recent times. According to Betz (2017), nativism arose in response to large-scale immigration and the significant socioeconomic changes taking place in the 19th century. Thus, nativism arose as a defense of ethnic purity and the native in-group from external influences perceived as incompatible and non-compliant with in-group integration, identified as a threat to values and traditions, but also to national homogeneity. The erosion of traditional values and social norms is still the driving force behind nativism today. However, nativism has shifted from a more racial and ethnic dimension to one of

incompatibility of cultural values, often integrating with populist and sovereignist discourses, going on to emphasize the rhetoric of “us versus them” and national sovereignty.

3.1.2 Populism

Populism is an ideology typical of authoritarian right-wing movements. Like nativism, it involves setting two factions against each other: in this case, the "elite" versus the "people" civilian population, who are victimized and constrained by the elite (Pirro, 2023). The flexibility of populism allows the far right to adapt to the current political situation and exploit collective dissatisfaction with the ruling class as a way to channel grievances (Golder, 2016).

3.1.3 Nationalism and New Nationalism

Nationalism is one of the key theories associated with the far right. Nationalism aims to preserve the integrity of the nation-state, with a strong match between the concept of state and the one of nation (Golder, 2016). At the same time, Halikiopoulou and Vlandas (2019) highlights how emerging new right-wing movements are often linked to the concept of "new nationalism," a nationalism infused with contemporary political values and concepts, such as economical and cultural insecurities.

There are two forms of nationalism: civic nationalism, which refers to the concept of shared values and beliefs perceived as uniform and fair by members of a nation; and ethnic nationalism, which emphasizes the hereditary nature of belonging to a nation through a "blood bond" with the state in which one was born and where their family originated. This creates a highly exclusive and rigid ideology (Golder, 2016).

3.2 Main Theories of this Thesis

3.2.1 Civilizationism

On the other side of the spectrum, Civilizationism—often referenced via Samuel Huntington's (2000) *Clash of Civilizations* thesis—offers a different theoretical lens to explain pro-Israel positions among far-right groups.

The central idea lies in the assertion that civilizations, defined by shared history, language, culture, and religion, are and will continue to be the primary actors in international politics, driving wars and conflicts in the future. The underlying reasons for the inevitable clashes stem from the fundamental differences between civilizations—historical, religious, and value-based—and an increasing interaction among them due to globalization, which heightens the potential for conflict.

According to the author, the Iron Curtain has been replaced by the "Velvet Curtain of Culture," which now divides the world based on cultural differences expressed by each civilization. Additionally, the important concept of the "kin-country syndrome" is introduced, wherein members of a civilization instinctively side with their cultural group during conflicts. This highlights the inevitability of cultural clashes as civilizations assert their identities in an increasingly interconnected world

Therefore, rooted in the notion that cultural and religious fault lines drive global conflicts, far-right parties embracing this view typically depict Islam as a monolithic cultural adversary to a unified Christian or Judeo-Christian West. In this framework, Israel is seen not merely as a state but as a frontline bastion of Western values—a Judeo-Christian ally battling the expansion of "Islamic barbarism," to borrow the provocative language often employed by these groups.

According to Brubaker (2017), European populist movements are undergoing a shift from more traditional nationalism to an increased civilizationist framing of ideologies, presenting conflicts as cultural and civilizational rather than merely national. The primary reason for this shift lies in the growing narrative that positions Islam as a threat to the Judeo-Christian foundation of Western civilization.

This civilizational rhetoric underpins many far-right mobilization strategies, providing a cultural and historical foundation for contemporary policy stances on immigration, minority integration, and foreign alliances.

This narrative is rooted in Identitarian "Christianism," where Christianity is not merely viewed as a religion but as a cornerstone of Western civilizational identity. It aligns with secular and liberal values, emphasizing gender equality, gay rights, and freedom of speech in opposition to Islam's perceived illiberalism. However, parties employ this rhetoric selectively, using it to criticize Islam while maintaining predominantly conservative stances on other issues. The importance of Christianity in the far-right worldview is fundamental in explaining the pro-Israel stance of certain factions. According to Maher, Gunaydin, and McSwiney (2021), Christianity is identified as a foundational value and an essential marker of Western culture, transcending the purely religious dimension and connecting with cultural and social factors. This broad identification of Christianity as a cultural framework within which Europe operates—encompassing both practicing and non-practicing Christians—enables the far-right to appeal even to the secular segment of Europe, and to frame Islam as the main threat to the Western Civilization.

In contrast, Islam is perceived as the opposite of Christianity—a civilization incompatible with the cultural and religious traditions of Europe, which are strongly rooted in Christianity (Brubaker, 2017). In this context, far-right rhetoric tends to emphasize a clash between a predominantly Christian-based culture like that of Europe and a Muslim culture, such as that of the Middle East and North Africa.

Issues such as women's rights, general human rights, the status of LGBTQ+ individuals in predominantly Muslim countries, general freedoms, and forms of governance are often used by far-right actors to underscore a deep divide between these two worlds (Maher et al., 2021). The Middle East is frequently identified as a hub of extremism, viewed as incompatible with the potential integration of Muslim culture with European culture (De Groot Heupner, 2023). These arguments are fundamentally aimed at opposing multiculturalism and providing a rationale against integration and immigration (Brubaker, 2017).

Consequently, Christian identity for the far-right appears as a perfect pretext to unify both the religious and secular segments of the European population under a single banner.

Opposition to extremism and the establishment of a liberal and secular state are identified as defining features of Western society, which is moderate and democratic. Secularism becomes the claim used by the far-right to construct a civilizational identity positioned as superior to other cultures, including the Islamic one (De Groot Heupner, 2023).

This distinction perpetuates a division between the secular West, where religion is not seen as part of public affairs but is instead practiced predominantly in the private sphere and not at the political level, and other civilizations that do not distinguish between religion and politics. However, this behavior by the far-right is considered "selective," as their defense of Europe against foreign influences from cultures deemed incompatible with European ones often coincides with general support for promoting Christian policies within Europe, frequently in stark contradiction to the secular nature of their ideology (Brubaker, 2017).

Far-right movements frequently champion liberal values such as freedom of speech and gender equality, presenting these ideals as evidence of Western civilization's moral and cultural superiority (Maher, Gunaydin, & McSwiney, 2021). This emphasis enables them to depict Western civilization as progressive, modern, and enlightened in contrast to other cultures, particularly Islamic ones.

This contradiction becomes evident in the authoritarian tendencies of many far-right movements, which often demonstrate limited tolerance for dissent while actively promoting exclusionary and patriarchal policies (Brubaker, 2017). For instance, while advocating for freedom of speech in public discourse, these movements may simultaneously suppress opposing viewpoints within their own ranks or in the broader political arena. Such inconsistencies highlight how liberal values are weaponized as tools to legitimize anti-immigration and anti-multicultural agendas, rather than functioning as genuine guiding principles for governance (De Groot Heupner, 2023). These contradictions expose the selective and strategic nature of their engagement with liberal ideals, which are used to bolster civilizational narratives while concealing their inherently illiberal practices.

This reframing enables far-right groups to counter their association with reactionary or extremist ideologies by portraying themselves as progressive protectors of liberal principles. For example, far-right leaders often claim to support gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights,

using these commitments to justify their opposition to Islamic immigration, which they argue is incompatible with these values. However, this rhetoric is highly selective; within their domestic policies, these movements frequently oppose advancements in gender and LGBTQ+ rights, revealing their instrumental use of liberal values (Maher et al., 2021). By positioning themselves as champions of modernity and inclusivity while promoting exclusionary policies, far-right movements effectively broaden their political reach and legitimacy (Brubaker, 2017).

3.2.2 Anti-Imperialism and Anti-Globalism in Far-Right Ideology

A classic far-right perspective is expressed through a predominantly anti-imperialist and anti-globalist ideology.

Imperialism is viewed as a destructive force that undermines the national sovereignty of individual territories, historically rooted in colonialism, and threatens the cultural and political autonomy of states subjected to imperial rule (Laursen, 2019; Starr, 2004). Anti-imperialism, therefore, represents opposition to foreign domination and the rejection of societal restructuring within a "colonial" framework. According to Starr (2004), sovereignty is fundamental, and global powers are criticized for imposing cultures and political ideologies that lack autonomy on states subjected to imperialism.

Anti-imperialism emphasizes dismantling existing colonial structures to enable nations to regain political, cultural, and economic autonomy (Goldstein, 2021). Furthermore, it is important to note that anti-imperialist movements are inherently transnational, often glorifying resistance to imperialism and colonialism and frequently expressing solidarity with groups opposing these forces (Goldstein, 2021).

Similarly, anti-globalist movements are characterized by an anti-colonial perspective. They oppose large multinational corporations and major economic entities that undermine the independence of local economies and equity, favoring global elites and international institutions like the IMF and World Bank, whose economic policies perpetuate dependencies and inequalities between states (Bhagwati, 2004; Franzese, 2019). According to Franzese, the rise of anti-globalization populism stems from the lack of certainty and security brought about by globalization. This creates an opportunity for populist leaders to channel the

widespread economic and cultural anxieties of citizens, leveraging these concerns to build support and reinforce their narratives.

Beyond fostering economic dependency between countries, globalization also drives cultural homogenization, eroding traditions, customs, languages, and local cultures in favor of those of more dominant nations. As a result, national sovereignty and integrity—both from political-economic and cultural perspectives—are profoundly threatened by globalization, with resistance framed as the only safeguard against cultural homogenization (Starr, 2004).

Goldstein (2021) highlights how this selective transnational solidarity emerges in far-right communities that aim to blend nationalist ideals with anti-colonial or anti-globalist sentiments.

By framing Palestinians as a people resisting a “Western-backed” power, far-right groups co-opt an anti-imperialist narrative more commonly associated with left-wing or post-colonial movements. In doing so, they cultivate a rebellious image that resonates with constituents who perceive the European Union or broader globalization agendas as analogous “imperial” threats to Italian sovereignty. This approach underscores how anti-imperialism can be strategically adapted within a far-right political context, reflecting discursive rebranding efforts that simultaneously critique global hierarchies while upholding xenophobic or nationalist rhetoric domestically.

In conclusion, the intersection between anti-imperialism and anti-globalism lies in their shared rejection of neoliberal economic systems and global governance structures that privilege elite power over the well-being of smaller nations and communities (Bhagwati, 2004; Franzese, 2019). Anti-imperialist movements often inspire anti-globalist efforts by emphasizing the reclamation of sovereignty and resistance to exploitative systems, forming a foundation for transnational solidarity (Goldstein, 2021). However, these ideologies are frequently applied selectively, focusing on struggles that align with nationalist or cultural objectives while neglecting broader and more intersectional dimensions of oppression.

The choice of this theory as the primary theoretical framework for this thesis rests on several factors. First, this theory is highly relevant to the research question posed by this study: as seen in the analysis of the theory and the literature review, theories such as anti-imperialism (Laursen, 2019; Starr, 2004) and anti-globalism (Franzese, 2019; Bhagwati, 2004) have been

widely used to explain opposition by groups to neoliberal policies and global institutions, identifying globalization as a cause of the erosion of indigenous values and cultures, which resonates with far-right concerns about sovereignty and autonomy.

By juxtaposing these two frameworks, this thesis suggests a more nuanced understanding of far-right ideology. It is therefore expected that pro-Palestinian factions leverage anti-imperialist rhetoric to challenge perceived global hierarchies and align themselves with what they identify as an oppressed population. Conversely, pro-Israel factions view the conflict through the lens of cultural confrontation, reaffirming their commitment to defending Western civilization as they define it.

4. Research Design

4.1 Overview of Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative design, focusing on the language, discourse, and meanings employed by the far right in Italy. As the study centers on ideology, discourse, and its expression, a qualitative approach is most suitable, enabling a comprehensive understanding of how the far right formulate its positions within complex global conflicts. Furthermore, the research question—which investigates the motivations behind differing stances within the Italian far-right concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—necessitates an analysis of various ideologies, making qualitative analysis, and specifically Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the most fitting method for this research.

4.2 Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

This chapter aims to establish the theoretical and methodological foundations for analyzing the discourses on social media, focusing on their varying support for Palestine or Israel. In order to outline the theoretical and methodological foundations used for this research, Van Dijk's CDA (2015) will be applied on the analysis of social media posts and newspaper articles of to the analyzed parties and movements, in order to undercover the ideological

reasons why some far-right parties are siding with Palestine and others with Israel. The use of social channels and newspaper articles is aimed at uncovering their discourse on the topic from official statements and actual statements by leading political figures of the Italian far-right.

It is vital to understand the behavior, positioning, and discourse of the Italian far right in relation to the war in Palestine for numerous reasons. Social media is one of the main communication channels used by the far right to spread their messages, mobilize supporters, and influence public opinion, making the analysis of their online discourse relevant to understanding communication dynamics and potential consequences and impacts on international politics (Wahlström et al., 2021). Then, as emerged from the previous chapters, there is considerable ideological divergence among various far-right parties and movements, ranging from total and unconditional support for one faction or another to two-state solutions. Understanding these positions can reveal broader patterns in far-right ideology and strategy. Moreover, this entirely original and never previously presented analysis fills a gap in the literature by going on to analyze for the first time an empirical situation of extreme topicality and relevance, especially when applied to the Italian case, that witnesses the coexistence of both a pro-Palestine faction and a pro-Israel faction.

4.2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a method of discourse analytical research that enables the study of how text and talk in political situations influence “social power abuse, dominance, and inequality” (Fairclough, 1995). As a multidisciplinary approach, CDA integrates language and discourse within the analysis, aiming to explain how power relations and ideologies are both shaped by and influence these interactions (Van Dijk, 2015).

Furthermore, in his paper "Ideology and Discourse", Van Dijk (2012) highlights how ideology is defined as a system of socially shared beliefs held by a group of individuals, which profoundly influence their worldview and social identities. For this reason, this analysis builds on this concept, as ideologies enable a group to interpret events—expressed in this research as narratives on a current topic. Ideologies, therefore, influence discourse on multiple levels, making them a critical factor in this type of analysis.

For this research, CDA is crucial in uncovering and explaining the hidden power dynamics within far-right movements and parties. It provides a framework for understanding how language contributes to the maintenance and challenge of social inequalities, offering insights into the role of discourse in perpetuating or resisting systems of power. The use of CDA is justified by its critical role in analyzing and understanding political discourse, linking implicit meanings to broader power dynamics expressed through texts.

4.3 Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model

The framework applied is Fairclough's (2013), which is divided into three distinct dimensions:

- 1. Textual Analysis:** This dimension analyzes word choice, syntax, and rhetorical strategies. For instance, expressions in tweets like "barbaric Islamist threat" exemplify evocative and impactful language.
- 2. Discursive Practices:** This level examines how words are produced and made accessible to audiences, such as using hashtags to direct discourse towards specific, receptive audiences.
- 3. Social Practices:** This dimension connects discourse and units of analysis to the theoretical framework of the far right, linking them to themes such as nativism, civilizationism, or other theories.

4.4 Software and Analytical Process

4.4.1 MAXQDA

MAXQDA, a software for qualitative discourse analysis, is essential for analyzing large volumes of text and visual materials such as photographs, images, or videos. MAXQDA was selected for this study due to its versatility and the researcher's experience with the tool. The program allows for the analysis of various data categories (social media posts and newspaper articles in this research) and the application of consistent coding groups. The outcome of this approach includes clear and precise visualizations that indicate the prevalence of certain codes over others, helping to determine which aspects of CDA influence the ongoing analysis.

In this study, the unit of analysis will be the entire tweet and the entire article. This means that, in the MAXQDA analysis, a code can appear only once per unit of analysis to better capture the full scope of its rhetorical and ideological content. By analyzing tweets and articles in their entirety, rather than focusing on individual parts, the approach preserves the coherence of each element and ensures that the interplay between textual, discursive, and social practices is thoroughly explored.

4.5 Data Collection

Data collection is a fundamental part of this research as it directly determines not only which data are analyzed but also how the research is conducted. Two types of data are utilized:

1. **Social media data** from X (formerly Twitter). Those were selected using the advanced research on X, selecting the profile and two key words “OR”: “Palestina” and “Israele”. In total 79 tweets were retrieve from pro-Israel profiles and 21 from pro-Palestine profiles.
2. **Newspaper articles** from official outlets of the analyzed parties and movements. Those were selected based on the title from their website: if the title would include the words “Palestina” or “Israele” the article was selected. In total 12 articles from pro-Israel newspapers were retriive and 13 from pro-Palestine newspapers.

4.5.1 Social Media Data

X provides brief, immediate reactions and real-time communication with the public, making it a key platform for the far right's political communication (Bouvier, 2015). The far right uses platforms like X to amplify ideological narratives and target potential supporters who align with their messaging (Wahlström et al., 2021). Social media enables instant, unfiltered reactions to global events (Bouvier, 2015), such as the October 7th events in Palestine, when many far-right leaders immediately tweeted their unmediated opinions, offering a complete snapshot of their reactions.

The multimodal communication on X—combining text, images, videos, and hashtags—provides a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of shared ideologies. Furthermore, as presented by Bouvier (2015), the role of social media platforms like X significantly contributes to shaping public discourse by amplifying far-right rhetoric and

normalizing ideologies through repeated exposure. This discursive environment influences public perceptions, blending ideological content with broader societal debates.

Additionally, Wahlström et al. (2021) highlight how the far-right frequently employs highly emotive language, evoking strong feelings in their audience. Social media serves as an ideal space for disseminating emotionally charged discourse, enabling such rhetoric to resonate widely. The authors also note that the emotional intensity of these messages often transcends online narratives, manifesting in offline acts of violence driven by political ideologies.

4.5.2 Newspaper Data

Newspaper articles were selected based on their relevance to the research topic. Articles containing keywords such as "Palestine" and "Israel" in their titles or other relevant expressions were considered. Given their smaller number, these were manually screened for inclusion. Building on Wahlström et al. (2021), that mentions the usage of emotive language among far-right actors, also newspaper articles are of fundamental importance to unveil the discourse of certain parties and movements.

4.5.3 Timeframe

The data were collected between October 7, 2023, and March 16, 2024. This timeframe was chosen due to related events. On October 7, Hamas militants launched a targeted attack from Gaza, escalating tensions with Israel. The immediate reactions from political factions became pivotal for establishing the temporal framework. March 16 marked the beginning of the research process and finalized data collection. This broad timeframe allowed for capturing both immediate reactions and the evolution of discourse.

4.5.4 Analyzed Accounts

Twitter profiles analyzed include those of prominent Italian far-right leaders:

- **Giorgia Meloni**, Prime Minister of Italy and leader of Fratelli d'Italia (FdI) (Italian Government Website³).
- **Matteo Salvini**, Federal Secretary of Lega, originally a northern separatist movement that evolved into a national far-right party (Lega official Website⁴).

³ <https://www.fratelli-italia.it/esecutivo-nazionale-2/>

⁴ <https://legaonline.it/organigramma/>

- **Antonio Tajani**, National Secretary of Forza Italia (FI), founded by Silvio Berlusconi, and part of the current governing coalition (Forza Italia official Website⁵).
- **Roberto Fiore**, leader of Forza Nuova, a neo-fascist group (Forza Nuova official Website⁶).
- **Simone Di Stefano**, vicepresident of CasaPound, a neo-fascist group (Kenes, 2021)
- **Lotta Studentesca**, Forza Nuova's youth organization (Lotta Studentesca Official Website⁷)
- **Ignazio La Russa**, President of the Italian Senate, member of FdI (Fratelli d'Italia Official Website⁸)
- **Guido Crosetto**, current Minister of Defence, member of FdI (Fratelli d'Italia Official Website⁹)
- **Gianni Alemanno**, former mayor of Rome and member of many Far-Right parties, current secretart of Indipendenza! (Indipendenza! Official Website¹⁰)

Newspaper articles from official party outlets:

- **Farenight2022**, official newspaper of Forza Nuova (Newspaper Official Website¹¹)
- **Il Primato Nazionale**, newspaper directed by Adriano Scianca, former national culture responsible for CasaPound (Turi, 2018), and official Casapound newspaper¹²
- **Forza Italia News**, the official newspage of the party (Newspaper Official Website¹³)
- **Gazzetta Tricolore**, the official newspaper of Fratelli d'Italia (Newspaper Official Website¹⁴)

⁵ <https://forzaitalia.it/organi-e-funzioni-nazionali/>

⁶ <https://www.forzanuova1997.it/chi-siamo/>

⁷ <https://www.lottastudentesca.org/>

⁸ <https://www.fratelli-italia.it/esecutivo-nazionale-2/>

⁹ <https://www.fratelli-italia.it/esecutivo-nazionale-2/>

¹⁰ <https://www.movimentoindipendenza.it/organigramma/>

¹¹ <https://fahrenheit2022.it/>

¹² <https://www.ilprimatonazionale.it/>

¹³ <https://www.forzaitalianews.it/>

¹⁴ <https://www.fratelli-italia.it/gazzetta-tricolore/>

4.5.5 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

For Twitter posts, advanced search features filtered posts containing terms like "Israel" and "Palestine." Duplicate content (e.g., retweets between Salvini's and Lega's accounts) was excluded. For articles, those with titles or topics directly addressing Palestine, Israel, or relevant expressions were included. Data were organized by profile or publication outlet and compiled into a single document for efficient categorization, then imported into MAXQDA for analysis.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitive nature of the topic, ethical considerations are essential. The study focuses only on publicly accessible content, ensuring the possibility of repeating the research. Additionally, anonymization was prioritized; aside from cited profiles, no user comments or interactions were included. The anonymous research profile left no interactions with the analyzed accounts. Data collection adhered to X's platform guidelines, ensuring legitimate and regular use of the social network.

4.7 Limitations

- 1. Account Suspensions:** Despite X's minimal censorship, some analyzed profiles experienced suspensions or were permanently deleted, creating gaps in the timeline. However, the data collected were deemed sufficient for analysis.
- 2. Exclusion of Internal Narratives:** The focus on public discourse excludes potential internal narrative strategies, which could provide additional insights.
- 3. Platform Dependence:** Concentrating solely on X excludes narratives on other platforms or offline channels. However, as the research focuses on public discourse, X and newspaper articles remain the best alternatives for analysis.

By combining two source types, this approach enables a comprehensive understanding of discourse dynamics and the differences among far-right factions and parties. It also highlights how diverse communication tools shape their narratives.

4.8 Far-right actors inclusion criteria

CasaPound is an Italian neo-fascist movement (Castelli Gattinara & Froio, 2015), making it a perfect candidate for this research. During the 2019 European Elections, CasaPound was the most voted far-right group out of the mainstream far-right (La Repubblica, 2019¹⁵).

Moreover, one of the first actions in support of the Palestinian cause after the October 7 attacks was carried out by Blocco Studentesco, as seen in the introduction, a youth and university far-right organization directly controlled by CasaPound. The action, highlighted in an ANSA article (ANSA, 2023¹⁶), involved the display of a banner in solidarity with Palestine during a gathering of European right-wing groups in Rome. Consequently, the decision to include CasaPound in this research is both immediate and inevitable.

However, since CasaPound does not have an official X account, a 2288 characters tweet by its founder, Simone Di Stefano (Kenes, 2021), was analyzed, along with ten in-depth articles published in *Il Primato Nazionale*, the neo-fascist faction's official journal. Additionally, Di Stefano played a central role in the founding of *Indipendenza!*, a far-right movement led by Gianni Alemanno, a former mayor of Rome and a well-known figure in the Italian far-right, with several experiences in extraparliamentary far-right movements. Alemanno's profile was also included in the analysis, contributing a total of seven tweets.

Forza Nuova was included in this study as it was the second most-voted non-mainstream far-right movement in Italy during the 2019 European elections, following CasaPound. Founded by Roberto Fiore in 1999, the movement's analysis also relied on Fiore's personal X account, as no official page exists. Fiore contributed ten tweets on the topic, while the articles analyzed were sourced from *Farenight2022*, the movement's official publication.

Once the parties and groups to be analyzed were identified, the official X profiles of these entities or their most prominent members were located, along with the media outlets associated with these groups and parties. This was achieved through a search on their official websites, ensuring the inclusion of authoritative and representative sources for the analysis.

¹⁵ <https://elezioni.repubblica.it/2019/europee/italia/>

¹⁶ https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cronaca/2023/10/13/palestina-libera-striscione-di-blocco-studentesco-a-roma_ebf4ff80-492d-42ea-85ab-010f834f9837.html

For the mainstream parties, the inclusion criterion is their membership in the current Italian government, led by Giorgia Meloni as President of the Council of Ministers. Consequently, the three parties analyzed are Fratelli d'Italia, Lega Salvini Premier, and Forza Italia. The inclusion of Forza Italia, despite not being universally regarded as a far-right party (Bruno, 2022), is justified by its participation in the current government and the prominent role of its president, Antonio Tajani, who also serves as Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation¹⁷, making him a key figure in the Italian right-wing political landscape.

Regarding the inclusion of individual profiles, in addition to the official party accounts, the profiles of the three party leaders (Meloni, Salvini, and Tajani) were analyzed, along with those of two other prominent figures: Ignazio La Russa, the current President of the Italian Senate (Italian Senate Website¹⁸), and Guido Crosetto, the current Minister of Defense (Italian Minister Website¹⁹). These two profiles were included due to their significant institutional roles and their relevance to international relations and conflicts.

¹⁷ <https://www.esteri.it/it/ministro/>

¹⁸ <https://www.senato.it/presidente>

¹⁹ <https://www.difesa.it/ilministro.html>

5. Analysis

Chapter 5 aims to analyze the research conducted using the MAXQDA platform and present the results obtained from the qualitative study of the research question.

5.1 Overview of Fairclough's Framework

As discussed in the Research Design section of the previous chapter, the methodology employed in this study is based on the three-dimensional framework theorized by Fairclough (2013).

The first dimension involves textual analysis, focusing on linguistic features and rhetorical strategies, such as emotive language and delegitimization tactics. This analysis aims to explore how language creates meaning and conveys ideological perspectives embedded in the discourse by its creators.

The second dimension pertains to discursive practices, which examine the production, distribution, and consumption of discourse. In the specific context of this study, key actors and narratives are considered central to this dimension, as the inclusion or exclusion of particular elements in the text—shaped by narrative and actor selection—determines how the discourse is produced. The goal of this dimension is to assess how contextual factors influence the dissemination of discourse, particularly through digital media platforms.

The third dimension focuses on social practice, exploring how discourse interacts with societal structures to reinforce or challenge cultural norms, ideologies, and power structures. This level connects discourse to the identity constructions analyzed in the study, linking them to broader political and cultural dynamics.

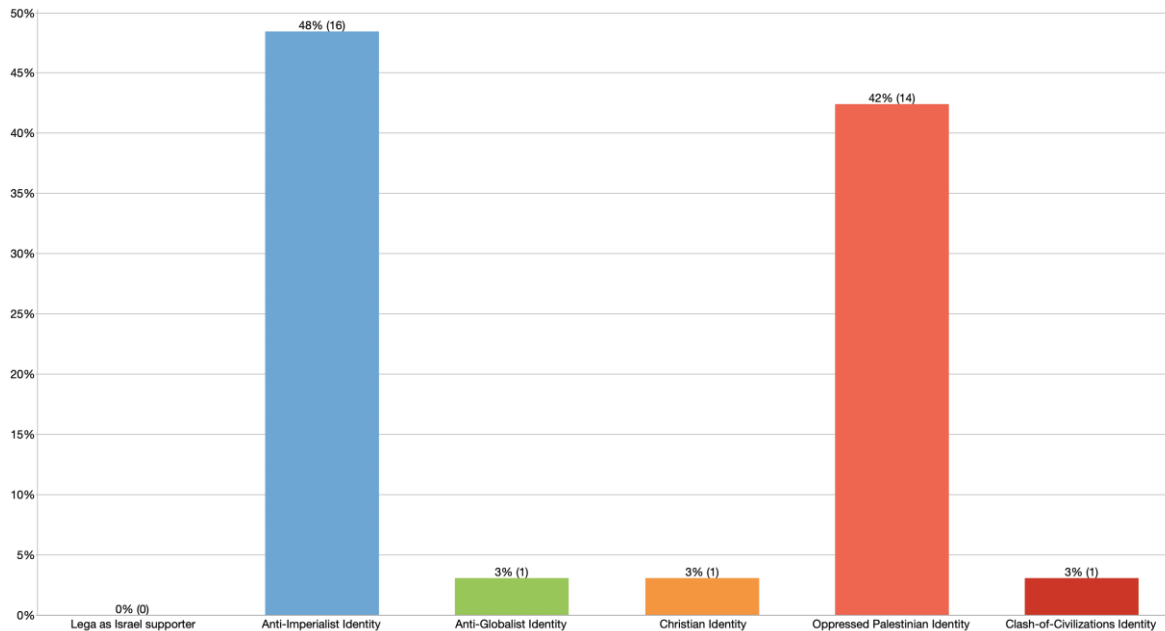
5.2 Chapter Objectives

The objective of this chapter is to analyze the ideological fragmentation within far-right parties in Italy concerning the conflict between Palestine and Israel.

The aim, therefore, is to provide a critical understanding of how language reinforces political ideologies using Fairclough's framework, through the analysis of tweets and newspaper articles from Italian far-right parties and figures, as outlined in the Research Design chapter.

The relevance of this section to the research and its contribution to the broader literature lies in providing a comprehensive lens to examine ideological fragmentation. This study establishes a connection between micro-level textual analysis and macro-level power structures, offering insights into how the pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian far-right shape their discourse to align with their ideological agendas.

5.3 Extraparliamentary Far-Right



5.3.1 Identity construction

The analysis reveals that the primary identity constructions within pro-Palestinian discourse are centered around an anti-imperialist identity and the portrayal of Palestinians as oppressed people. The anti-imperialist identity refers to a broader framework of collective struggle against global imperialism, which is particularly evident in articles from *Primato Nazionale*. Far-right actors emphasize the collective battle for the Palestinian homeland, positioning Israel as just one part of a larger global issue, thereby linking the far-right movement with a broader anti-imperialist and anti-Western narrative.

At the same time, there is a significant focus on framing Palestinians as victims of oppression by the Israeli regime. This narrative elevates Palestinian individuals as symbols of a wider resistance against injustice, highlighting the humanitarian crisis, the urgency for action, and the obstacles Palestinians face in their quest for a homeland.

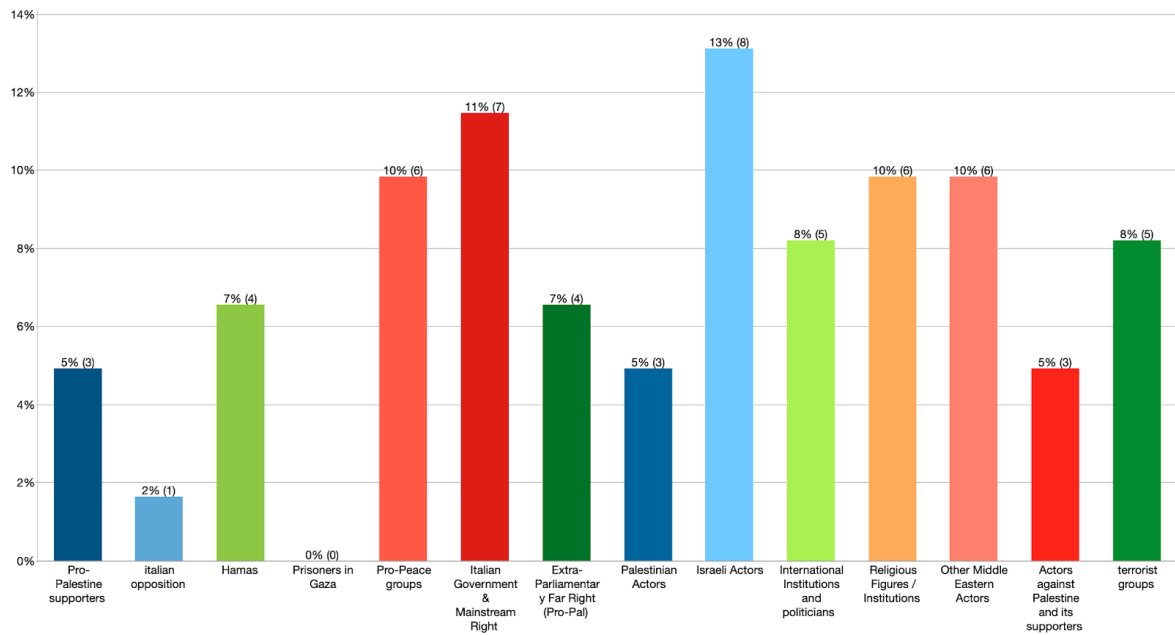
Though less prominent, identities related to anti-globalism and Christianity are noteworthy in two specific instances. First, an article in *Primato Nazionale* attributes the roots of the conflict to globalization, referencing Giulio Tremonti, a former finance minister under

Berlusconi and a current member of Fratelli d'Italia (World Economic Forum²⁰)—a party that holds differing views on the conflict compared to CasaPound, which is affiliated with Primato Nazionale. Second, a tweet by Roberto Fiore calls on Italian Christians to rebel against the government.

In conclusion, identity construction within far-right discourse heavily relies on anti-imperialist positions, utilizing the struggle of the Palestinian people to reclaim their homeland. These findings align closely with theoretical expectations.

5.3.2 Actors

²⁰ <https://www.weforum.org/people/giulio-tremonti/>

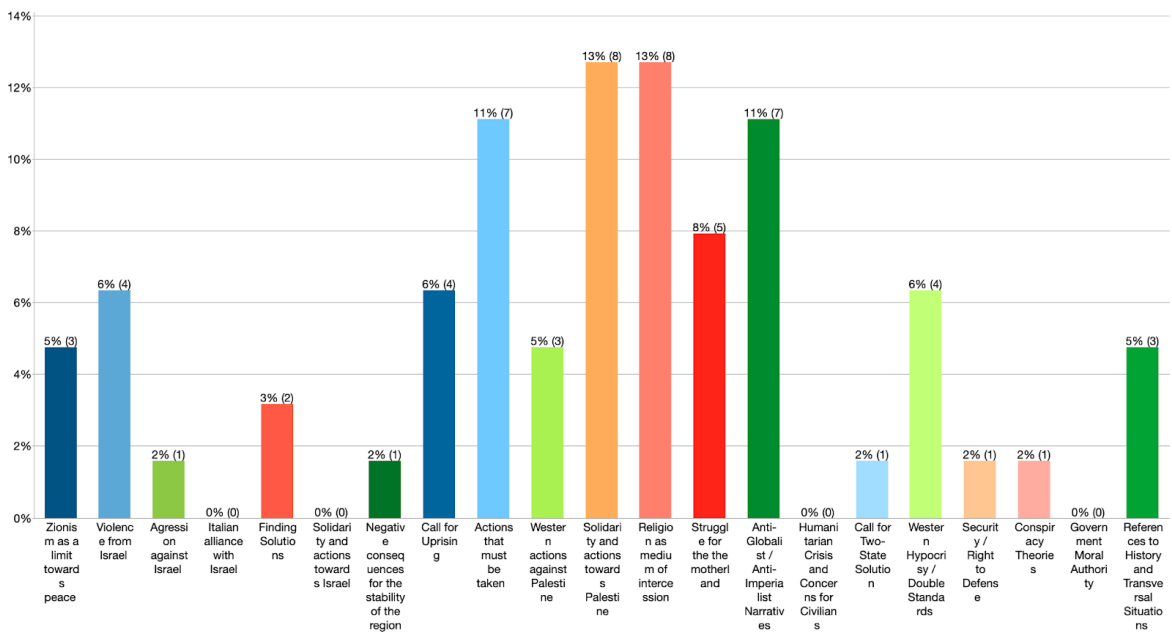


Regarding the primary actors mentioned by the pro-Palestinian far-right in the analyzed documents, the focus is predominantly on Israeli actors (such as local politicians and the IDF), who are frequently invoked and criticized negatively. Additionally, the Italian government and the mainstream right are held responsible for being complicit in the Western imperialism that is oppressing the Palestinian people.

Peace advocacy groups and religious figures are also mentioned, primarily in relation to Gianni Alemanno, who promotes an intense pro-peace agenda through religious intercession.

The presence of these actors highlights the fact that multiple stakeholders, including political groups, international institutions, and even religious figures, play active roles in shaping narratives surrounding the Palestinian cause. This reveals a highly complex discourse within the pro-Palestinian far-right.

5.3.3 Narratives

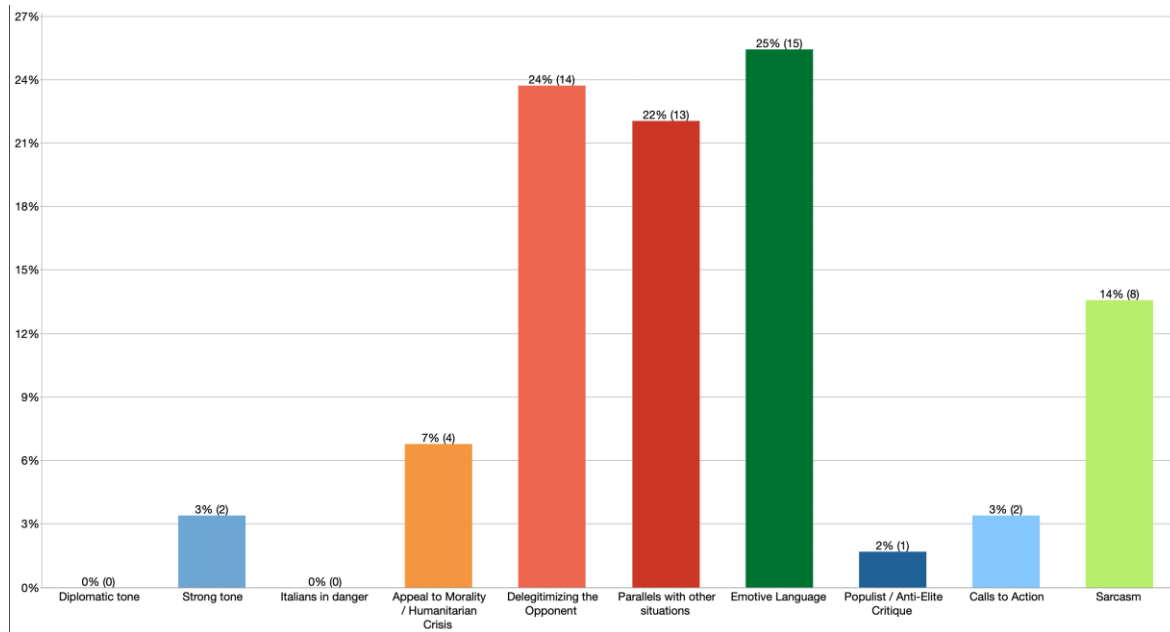


The prevailing narratives center on solidarity and actions supporting Palestine, indicating strong support for the Palestinian cause as the primary focus of this faction of the far-right. Additionally, the prominent presence of religion as a means of intercession—mainly due to the influence of Gianni Alemanno’s account, which heavily advocates for peace through religious discourse—highlights the role of religious themes within the far-right’s rhetoric.

Other anti-globalist and anti-imperialist narratives align perfectly with theoretical expectations, complementing the construction of an anti-globalist and anti-imperialist identity within the extra-parliamentary far-right. Moreover, there is a significant presence of discourses emphasizing the violence perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinian population and the obstacles posed by Zionism to achieving peace.

This analysis reveals that the core of these narratives is a strong emphasis on Palestinian resistance as a moral and legitimate response to systemic colonial oppression by Israel. This framing is reinforced by the frequent use of codes highlighting Israeli brutality and anti-imperialist rhetoric, portraying Palestinians as victims of a colonial system. These narratives are used to justify acts of defiance and uprisings as necessary struggles for survival and liberation.

5.3.4 Rhetorical Strategies

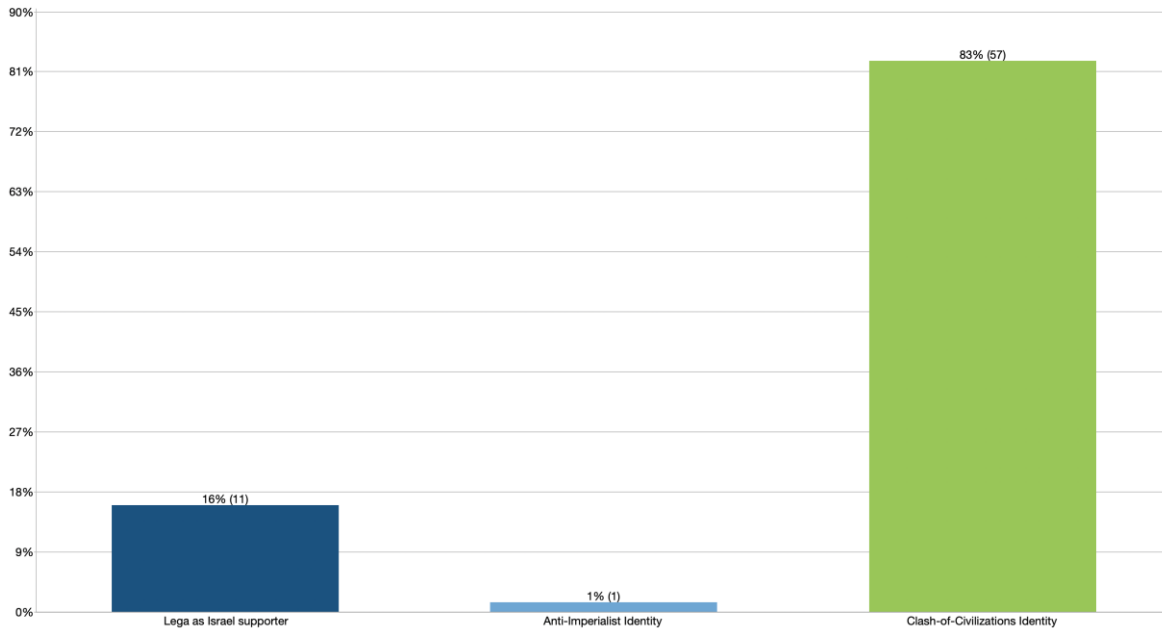


The primary takeaway from this chart is the strong use of emotive and evocative language, as expected by Wahlström et al. (2021), which helps create a heightened sense of urgency and crisis for the reader. This aligns with far-right strategies to position themselves as defenders of justice or as resistance against oppression.

Additionally, there is a significant component of delegitimizing the opposition, contributing to a stark bipolar and oppositional framing within the discourse. This reinforces the construction of an identity centered on anti-imperialist resistance, in this case expressed through the Palestinian cause.

The presence of "Appeal to Morality/Humanitarian Crisis" (7%) aligns with earlier findings that far-right groups frame Palestinians as victims to construct a broader anti-imperialist narrative. The underlying implication of a humanitarian crisis suggests that an imperialist power—Israel, in this case—is its cause, thereby legitimizing the Palestinian resistance.

5.4 Mainstream Far-Right



5.4.1 Identity Constructions

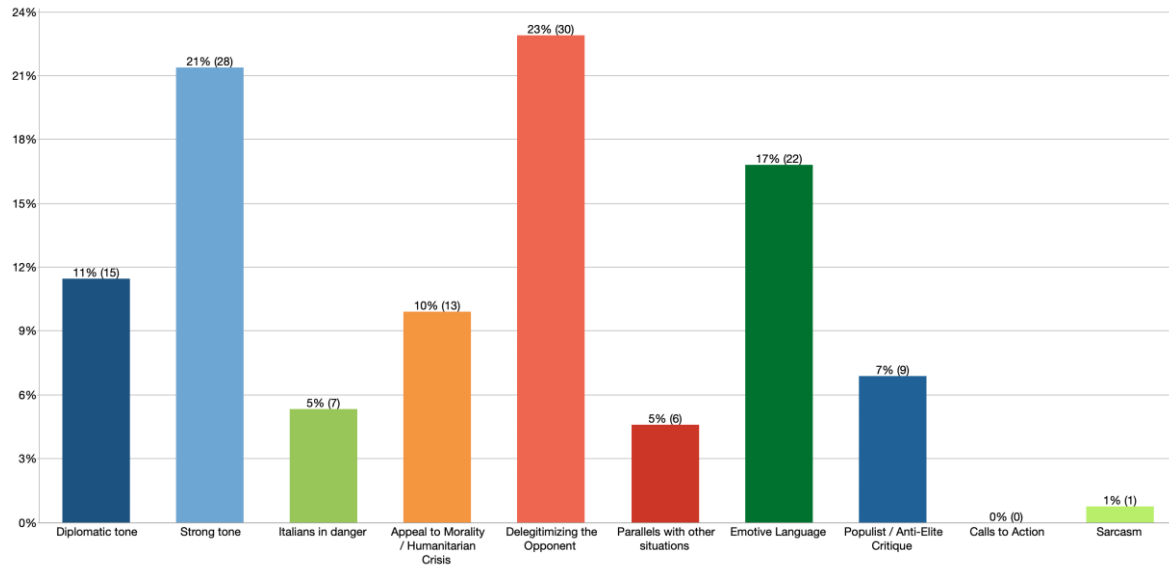
In this case as well, when discussing the identity construction of mainstream far-right parties, one code dominates: Clash of Civilizations Identity.

Regarding the dominant code, “Clash of Civilizations”, the conflict is framed as part of a broader global struggle between Western Judeo-Christian civilization and Islamic extremism, incorporating a strong global threat narrative that positions Israel as being at the forefront of defending Western values. This narrative fosters solidarity by aligning support for Israel with the defense of Western civilization through its association with broader Western political and ideological movements.

Another noteworthy code specifically pertains to the Lega, which constructs its identity as a close ally of Israel and positions itself as one of Israel's strongest supporters in Europe. This identity construction is evident in numerous tweets by the party, reflecting its desire to

elevate itself as a champion not only of Israel but also of the broader defense of Western civilization.

5.4.2 Rhetorical Strategies

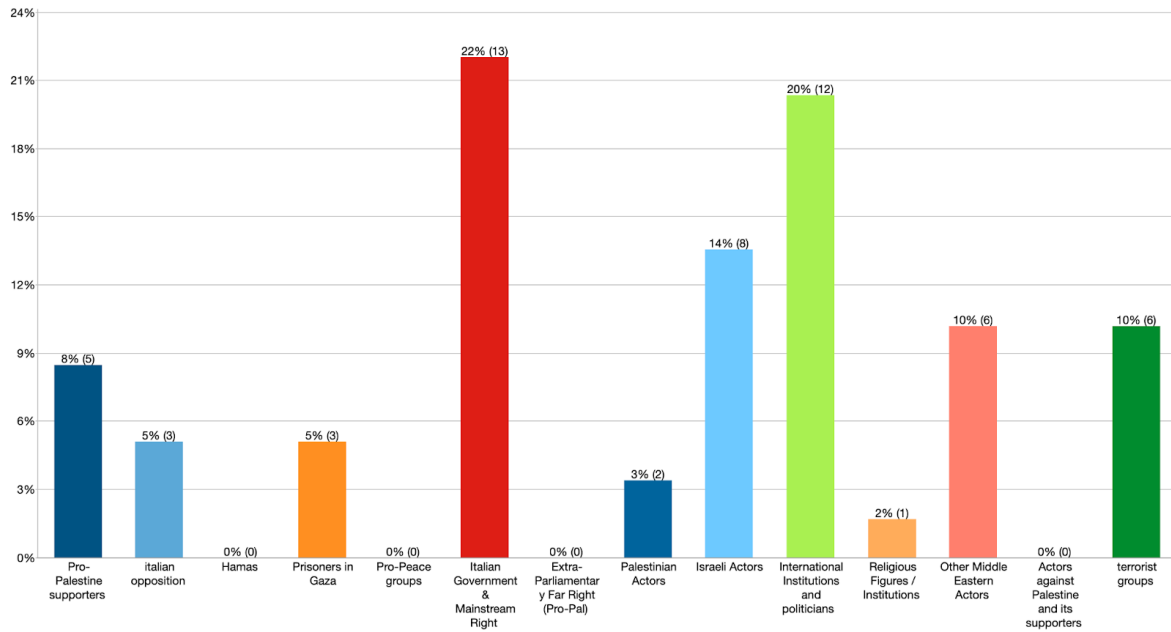


The primary rhetorical strategy employed is delegitimization of the opponent (e.g., Hamas, pro-Palestinian activists) as morally or politically invalid, often labeling them as extremists or terrorists. This strategy targets actors on both the Middle Eastern and domestic fronts, discrediting pro-Palestinian protesters by portraying them as dangerous enemies.

In addition to the use of emotive language and moral appeals, which are also characteristic of pro-Palestinian far-right discourse, this case features a particularly strong tone designed to convey authority and confidence, as well as a diplomatic undertone. The latter likely stems from the fact that these actors are currently members of the government, where a diplomatic tone is necessary to balance strong rhetoric with a veneer of diplomacy, thereby broadening Israel's support base.

Another notable element is the presence of the "Italians in Danger" code, which connects the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to Italian national security or cultural identity. This framing increases domestic support for pro-Israel policies by presenting them as matters of national interest.

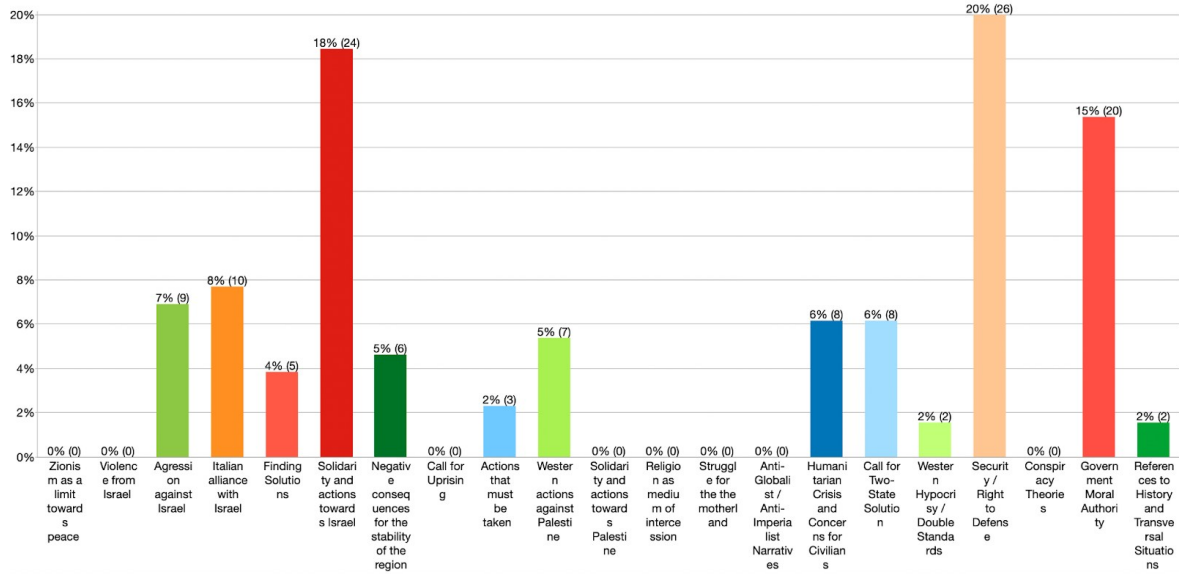
5.4.3 Actors



The dominant actors in this case are the Italian government and the mainstream Italian right, which include Italian governmental figures, mainstream political parties, and leaders advocating for pro-Israel positions. Additionally, International Institutions and Politicians and Israeli actors, including politicians, also play a significant role.

A common characteristic of these codes is the emphasis on predominantly political and institutional actors, demonstrating a focus on maintaining both international and domestic alliances. This framing positions Israel as a central pillar of stability and democracy in the Middle East, reinforcing its role as a key ally in global and regional contexts.

5.4.4 Narratives



The primary narrative in this case centers on security and Israel’s right to defend itself against terrorism and existential threats. This narrative aims to legitimize military actions by framing them as defensive rather than aggressive within a global counter-terrorism framework. Its objective is to establish Israel’s actions as morally and legally justified, leveraging international norms surrounding state defense.

The second most frequently used code, “Solidarity and Actions Toward Israel,” highlights global and domestic support for Israel, reinforcing its position as a legitimate state with broad international backing.

The moral authority of the government is frequently invoked to position Israel as aligned with Western democratic principles. This alignment serves to associate Israel’s actions with global democratic values, bolstering its international image and solidifying its role as a key ally in the democratic world.

This chapter examines the discursive practices, rhetorical strategies, and narratives used by the far-right factions supporting both Israel and Palestine. It highlights how these groups contribute to identity construction and political mobilization. Pro-Israel discourse predominantly adopts a state-centric perspective, focusing on security, humanitarian issues, and alignment with the West, while framing the situation as an “Us vs. Them” conflict inspired by the "Clash of Civilizations" narrative. In contrast, pro-Palestinian discourse

emphasizes grassroots resistance, anti-colonialism, and solidarity, portraying Palestinians as victims of imperialism within an “Oppressed Resistance” identity.

6. Discussion

This chapter will discuss the research findings and provide an interpretation of them using the Three-Dimensional Framework theorized by Fairclough (2013). The chapter will be structured according to Fairclough’s three levels, analyzing each one in relation to the discourses of pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel groups and parties. All the interpretations are based on the previous analysis, taking into account the results on the MAXQDA research.

6.1 Three-Dimensional Framework

The three-dimensional framework, as theorized by Fairclough (2013), is used for this analysis. The three dimensions involved in the analysis are Textual Analysis, Discursive Practice, and Social Practice. The goal of using this framework is to tackle how each of the three dimensions analyzed helps create a comprehensive discourse that the far right implements in justifying their political stance, combining micro-level features and macro-level features.

The first level is manifested in the analysis of the linguistic features of a text, such as vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure.

This level was analyzed in the research design on MAXQDA using the codes grouped under the category of “rhetorical strategies”, as the words and strategies employed by the far-right directly influence the rhetoric used to enhance and legitimize their discourse.

The purpose is to determine how the language used constructs meaning in discourse, and it underlines how, in this case, far-right parties are using words, phrases, and specific segments to evoke certain feelings and emotions needed to construct the narrative towards their way. Pro-Palestinian discourse tends to recall more evocative words, such as “massacre”, or “slaughter”, but also words that might evoke national and patriotic stances, while the Pro-Israeli choice of wording is meant to bring the audience towards a more civilizationist stance, elevating Israel as the defender of the West and the Western Civilization against Islam.

In contrast, the rhetorical strategies of the pro-Israel far-right tend to employ a strong, diplomatic, and governmental tone, reflecting the firm stance of these parties on the conflict.

The second level, focuses on processes of text production, distribution, and consumption. The ways in which the text analyzed is created, made public, and used by the audience to which it is administered are vital to understanding the social contexts in which it develops.

In this case, this level corresponds to the “actors” and “narratives” groups, as they represent the core content of the text. Identifying which actors and narratives are invoked in far-right discourse aids the analysis by revealing the textual production processes, highlighting the author’s priorities, as well as their strategies for producing and distributing the text.

The usage of both X and newspapers is crucial: the first one is important to give a sense of strong and urgent mobilization and real time messaging, while the latter is important to convey more complex and complete ideas through articles. Both ways are pivotal for the

analysis as they allow the research to be more complete, with a more immediate communication when X is analyzed and a more in-depth analysis of the global discourse when newspaper articles are taken into account, targeting a much wider range of audience. As for the third level, it focuses on how the text reinforces or contrasts with existing social norms, identities and ideologies. For this reasons, the codes used to analyze this level on MAXQDA are those called “Identity construction”, as they best connect with the existing theoretical framework analyzed. Contextualizing the text within social and cultural contexts leads to an understanding of how power relations are affected and influence the discourse itself.

In the next phase of the analysis, that goes into depth for each level, texts will be divided into far-right pro-Palestine profiles and far-right profiles that conversely support Israel, and each level analyzed on both sides.

6.1.1 Textual Analysis

Regarding the first level of Fairclough's analysis, textual analysis, when put in the function of the tweets and articles of pro-Palestinian far-right groups, there is a strong and strategic use of emotional language that evokes particularly strong emotions and images in the target audience. Sentences such as “strage spaventosa” (Tweet by Roberto Fiore), meaning “terrifying slaughtering” are crucial and used on a large scale to evoke emotional impact and drive the audience toward support for Palestine. These particularly evocative phrases and words are crucial to give the sense of urgency and emergency at the humanitarian level with respect to what is happening in Palestine.

For example, “The appalling massacre, killing 500 Palestinians in a #Gaza hospital, cries out for vengeance to Heaven.” In this tweet by Roberto Fiore there is an important example of the author's lexical choice. “Strage spaventosa” (terrifying slaughtering) and ‘Grida vendetta al Cielo ’(it screams for vengeance to Heaven) are lexical choices that necessarily lead the audience to create a form of empathy toward the Palestinian people, evoking a vivid and visceral image of horror and injustice, leading to a strong emotional reaction from the reader. Note, of extreme relevance to the analysis also later, how the word “Cielo” (literally “sky,” but in this case “Heaven”) is capitalized, recalling the religious dimension of the action. A religious dimension that is also recalled by this tweet, “Che coincidenza: #Gaza 99%

Musulmana and gli Israeliani commettono 2 massacri contro un ospedale cristiano e una chiesa Cristiana Ortodossa.” Which can be translated as “What a coincidence: #Gaza 99% Muslim and Israelis commit 2 massacres against a Christian hospital and an Orthodox Christian church. ” by Fiore, there are lexical choices in segments such as “massacres,” “Christian hospital,” and “Orthodox Christian church,” which serve to emphasize the targeting of Christian targets in Palestine despite the very low Christian population, aimed at creating an effect of empathy toward the Christian population in Gaza in order to make a discourse in which there is also a component of religious persecution against the major religion in Italy.

On the other hand, when tweets and articles of the pro-Israel right-wing representing the current governing coalition are analyzed, from the point of view of textual analysis there are important differences in many aspects. First of all, there is a wider usage of assertive language and imperative syntax in order to convey a sense of authority and legitimacy of the Israeli side of the conflict, which render to the reader a situation of necessity on the part of Israel to take these positions and the justification of the acts perpetuated by Israel over the course of these months as actions necessary for the defense, not only of the Israeli people but of the entire West. These discourses in fact put Israel in a position of bulwark to the defense of the West and its values, implying that Israel's war is also a war of the West against “Islamist barbarism” (Salvini).

“Islamist barbarism” and “defending the West” are examples of how the discourse is immediately shifted to a broader plane of ideological defense of the values of democracy and generally closer to the West typical of Israel in contrast to the ‘Islamist barbarism ’being perpetuated by Palestine. This phrasing aligns perfectly with the theoretical expectations of far-right civilisationism, where Israel is put in the function of the discourse as an ideological defender of the West and its values. “Condanno con fermezza l’attacco dell’Iran e dei suoi alleati, contro Israele.” (“We strongly condemn the attack by Iran and its allies against Israel.”) shows a clear element of toughness in the FdI’s stance, with the use of words such as “We strongly condemn” going to emphasize the narrative of moral and legal authority, and to reinforce the FdI’s position in line with the state of Israel and reaffirming their alliance with them.

It is also vital to analyze the broader textual structures and patterns that are present within the analyzed tweets. According to Fairclough this is vital as it makes possible a deeper analysis of the discourse created through the observation of how sentences are constructed,

the use of active or passive verb forms, and in general the coherence of the text presented. In the case of the pro-Palestinian tweets and articles, it is clear how the grammatical structures of the messages are often complex and relatively detailed, so that narratives of victimization and injustice are created, with a use of the active verb form that emphasizes Israel's accountability for the actions performed. In contrast, with regard to pro-Israel tweets, there are simpler syntactic constructions, straight forward and emphasizing clarity and decisiveness. There is a strong use of Imperative and Declarative Sentences, used to assert authority and call for action, which convey to the audience an element of decisiveness and importance of the actions taken. Crosetto's tweet "è vitale che il passo di Rafah sia aperto per permettere ai Palestinesi di lasciare Gaza." ("It is vital that the Rafah crossing be opened to allow Palestinians to leave Gaza.") is a prime example of this. The sentence is simply constructed, very directly, with an imperative tone also emphasized by the use of words like "vital." There is a clear call to the urgency and haste of the situation, which goes to emphasize a need on the part of the factions in play to create immediate measures to support the resolution of the situation.

Pro-Palestine groups make extensive use of terms such as "genocide," "massacre," "slaughter," and "martyrdom" to create a sense of urgency in their discourse. This language is often paired with moral appeals through humanitarian framing of the situation in Gaza, highlighting the deaths of children, bombed hospitals, or displaced civilians. These narratives aim to evoke empathy and position Israel as the aggressor. This emotive style appeals to supporters (and broader audiences) to stand against "atrocities" and "war crimes," thus justifying their pro-Palestinian alignment on human rights grounds. Additionally, this approach seeks to attract audiences who may not necessarily align with the far-right's broader political views (Starr, 2004).

Thus, it can be concluded that the textual analysis of pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian tweets using Fairclough's framework reveals distinct rhetorical strategies, but also different textual structures and lexical choices depending on the group they belong to, which go on to shape the discourse in unique and different ways. While on the one hand, Pro-Palestine tweets focus more on the use of emotional words and expressions and more detailed descriptions of recent events to highlight victimization and injustice, pro-Israel tweets are more focused on the use of imperative words, authoritative expressions to precisely convey a sense of authority and legitimacy, which is contextualized within a broader framework and with

references to cultural and historical situations of defense of Western values and the election of Israel as a bulwark of Western civilization against “Islamist barbarism.”

6.1.2 Discursive Practice Analysis

Discursive practice analysis, or the second dimension of Norman Fairclough's framework, focuses on the production, distribution, and consumption of materials used for analysis. This level examines how texts are created, how they are received by the target audience, how they circulate within the audience, in order to highlight the power dynamics present in the tweets and articles in question.

The first aspect to consider is the production of the texts. The texts from both sides are written in the form of either news articles or tweets. In the case of tweets, the messages are typically short and immediate due to the platform's character limit, whereas articles, as revealed by the analysis, contain a larger volume of material and consequently more codes overall. The narratives produced and conveyed during this stage of textual production are crucial for understanding the ideological alignment with one side or the other. The construction and framing of these narratives are therefore fundamental for both sides in achieving their objectives of textual dissemination.

The distribution of the message takes place, in both cases, through the social network X, FKA Twitter, which generally allows the publication of any kind of content without censorship, and newspaper articles from official parties 'newspapers. However, it is necessary to point out that despite these almost non-existent restrictions, some of the accounts taken into analysis were suspended for violating the guidelines after March 18, 2024. Since the tweets and articles are mainly written in Italian, the target audience is purely Italian. Another common element to the consumption of both cases is the prevalence of a right-wing and far-right target audience, who interpret the message differently according to their ideological positioning. A pro-Palestinian target audience will tend to interpret the tweet as a call for justice and international intervention in support of the Palestinian population, while conversely a pro-Israel user would interpret the text as expressions of necessary and indispensable actions for the security not only of the state of Israel but of the entire West.

On the side of the far-right pro-Palestinian groups, there is a strong reference to recent events in order to stir the collective consciousness in the direction of empathy toward the Palestinian cause. Those narratives are aimed to create a sense of immediacy and relevance through reporting specific events and incidents that have occurred recently. “La notizia drammatica di ciò che è accaduto a Gaza oggi...” (“The dramatic news of what happened in Gaza today...”), which emphasizes the current relevance of the events of the crisis is a perfect example of how Fiore pushed on daily and dramatic events. In contrast, pro-Israel tweets tend to contextualize the situation more historically and culturally, referring to the “Defense of the West” (Salvini) as the basis for the legitimacy of Israeli defense. The strategy here is to connect and refer to broader cultural values (in this case, the defense of Western values) and apply it to the case of Israel, elevating it to the role of a bulwark against the expansion of Islamism and a defense of the Western world, creating a broader ideological framework.

6.1.3 Social Practices

As highlighted by Fairclough (2013), social practices—the third level of analysis in the three-dimensional framework—address broader social structures that shape and influence discourse. For the sake of the research, this level was identified through the code group “Identity Construction”. In the context of the far right, this level reveals how language reflects fears and anxieties regarding globalization, sovereignty, and the preservation of cultural and racial identity. Regarding pro-Palestinian movements, the discourse analysis at this level manifests through numerous messages. Israel is framed as a manifestation of Western imperialism, while Palestinians are depicted as symbols of resistance against “colonial tyranny,” as described by Roberto Fiore in one of his tweets. There is also a strong appeal to religious framing, as evidenced by another tweet from Roberto Fiore, which states, “Israelis bomb Christian hospitals.” This aims to connect the suffering of Palestinians with Italy's Christian heritage, portraying the nation as a bastion of Christian values and framing Israel as an enemy of Christianity itself. In contrast, analyzing the pro-Israeli side shows how Israel is positioned as a defensive bulwark of Western civilization and its security, independence, and freedom, reinforcing the concept of a “clash of civilizations”. Matteo Salvini (Lega) describes Israel as the “bulwark of Western civilization,” emphasizing that the very survival of the State of Israel is essential for the survival of Europe and Western civilization as a whole. The perception of security, both regional and global, plays a crucial

role in the communication strategies of the pro-Israeli far-right. For example, Giorgia Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia) refers to Israel as an "indispensable ally," arguing that its success is fundamental to Italy's own security, particularly in anti-terrorism efforts. This analysis demonstrates the contrasting social practices and narratives adopted by different factions of the Italian far right.

The articles and numerous tweets, particularly from Gianni Alemanno, leverage religious framing and the issue of Christians in Palestine. These not only advocate for religious intercession to end the war but also highlight Christian targets, such as churches and Christian hospitals, in an attempt to portray Israel as opposing Christian culture and, by extension, Europe. This approach flips the usual "clash of civilizations" narrative. This tactic appeals to shared faith, resonating particularly with Catholic or Orthodox segments of the Italian population by reframing the conflict as an attack on Christian heritage rather than a strictly Muslim versus Jew confrontation. By emphasizing common Christian roots, these groups seek to cultivate legitimacy and foster empathy, positioning themselves as defenders of shared cultural and religious values. This narrative allows them to claim the moral high ground, presenting their support for Palestine not merely as a political stance but as a deeply rooted religious imperative.

6.2 Significance of the findings

These findings are significant for several reasons. First, as previously explained, they point out the coexistence of two different and opposite ideologies within the Italian Far-Right, making it a very interesting case. The Italian far-right is not uniformly pro-Israel but exhibits significant internal divisions, with certain factions adopting anti-imperialist perspectives that reveal ideological fractures. This calls into question the established narrative that the far-right is intrinsically tied to civilizationist rhetoric.

The discourse of the pro-Palestinian faction appears from the analysis to be focused on anti-imperialism, with a strong religious component both as a means of intercession and to create empathy toward members of the same religion who are victims of violence. On the other hand there is a strong dialectic focused on the clash of civilizations. These findings are perfectly in line with the theoretical expectations of the thesis.

Moreover, this research highlights the strategic use of anti-imperialism by these movements, as they seek to distance themselves from conventional far-right positions rhetorically aligning with global anti-war or anti-U.S. movements. On the other hand, the instrumental use of the clash of civilizations rhetoric is a characteristic feature of pro-Israel movements. The research has thus highlighted how, in the Italian case, there is a strategic instrumentalization of a conflict or disruption in international relations which, although geographically distant, profoundly influences the domestic discourse of actors in Italy.

An important shift is also evident in the religious framing. Instead of aligning with the traditional far-right civilizationist narrative of “us vs. them”—which pits Judeo-Christian culture against Muslim culture—Israel itself is framed as an enemy of Christians, targeting them on the same level as Muslim Palestinian civilians. This finding demonstrates how Christian arguments can be employed in entirely opposite ways by pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel far-right factions, creating conflicting rhetoric.

This phenomenon suggests ongoing conflicts within the far-right in Italy and raises questions about the situation in Europe. It invites consideration of whether some parties may also be shifting their positions more toward Palestine. Finally, these findings are essential for advancing the study of the far-right by contributing to an understanding of why and how the far-right incorporates traditionally leftist foreign policy themes like anti-imperialism. Through the use of CDA, this research uncovers nuanced strategies of ideological sharing that go beyond surface-level policy statements.

Conclusion

This thesis analyzed the fragmented and non-unified stances of the main far-right parties and movements in Italy, where mainstream parties offer clear support for the state of Israel, while extra-parliamentary movements align themselves with Palestine. Through the theoretical framework proposed, it was possible to observe that anti-imperialism and the clash of civilizations explain this positional mismatch, as the extra-parliamentary far-right aligns with the former and the mainstream far-right with the latter.

It also emerged how social media communication plays an important role, especially on the pro-Israel side, which frequently uses these tools to amplify narratives and shape public discourse. Furthermore, the research has shown how these groups and parties use international issues, such as conflicts, to express their ideologies and reinforce their national agendas, using rhetoric and narratives consistent with their positions.

This research contributes to the literature by filling gaps in the analysis of the Italian far-right's response to the Palestinian conflict, a topic not yet addressed, especially following the October 7 attacks, which may represent a turning point in the narrative around the conflict. Moreover, this thesis provides a complete view of how global and relatively distant conflicts exert a strong influence on the discourse and ideological evolution of the far-right.

From a methodological perspective, it is important to note the high effectiveness of the method employed, supported by the MAXQDA software, which, when applied to CDA, perfectly uncovered the ideological nuances present in the discourse. However, there are certain limitations, such as, for example, regarding the social media chosen, which limits the discourse solely to the public side, leaving out private conversations that could reveal differing positions and lead to different conclusions.

Recommendations for Future Research

A first potential future study could focus on the private discourse of far-right actors, with the potential to uncover different motivations for their stances and provide a more precise understanding of their actual positions, possibly considering theories not examined in this research.

Furthermore, while the Italian case is interesting because the two opposing positions coexist within the same ideological faction, a potential future study could involve a comparative analysis with other European far-right movements to identify common patterns and differences in the development of both ideology and discourse.

Lastly, it is possible to investigate the historical motivations behind this mismatch and the variables that lead a movement to align with one side or the other of the conflict, through a longitudinal study to observe how far-right positions evolve over time in response to both domestic and international factors.

In conclusion, the analysis shows how the far-right's position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is due to the interplay between the two theories analyzed, anti-imperialism and civilizationism. The research highlights the instrumentalization of international events by domestic groups, providing a solid and structured perspective on the Italian case, thereby filling a gap in the existing literature on the subject.

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