

ONLINE APPENDIX

The empirical material analyzed in this article derives from a broader qualitative research project on Brothers of Italy (Fdi). The analysis presented here draws selectively on that dataset: only those interview segments addressing respondents' views on the reasons behind Fdi's rise are considered, with the relevant questions reproduced in the main text of the article. A uniform interview guide was used across all interviews. While the wording of questions remained consistent throughout, the semi-structured nature of the design meant that probes were tailored to individual responses where appropriate, and follow-up questions were occasionally introduced to pursue unanticipated themes or allow more sustained exploration of topics that arose organically during the conversation.

Data collection took place from September 2023 through February 2024, spanning a total of twenty-one interviews. The large majority — nineteen — were conducted in person. In two cases, logistical circumstances — specifically, late changes to interviewees' availability that could not be resolved through rescheduling — necessitated a shift to remote format.

The research team built access to party members through a variety of channels: drawing on prior contacts, initiating outreach online, and establishing connections at local Fdi branches. Participants were then recruited directly by the authors. Interviewees were generally willing and engaged; the principal constraint encountered was availability rather than reluctance. Each participant received, in advance, a written information sheet covering the research goals, the likely duration of the interview, and its thematic scope. No interview questions were shared beforehand. Participants were additionally briefed on how their data would be stored and used, and were made aware that withdrawal from the study was possible at any point without consequence. At the start of each interview, respondents confirmed they had reviewed the information sheet, consented to recording, and had no outstanding questions before proceeding. Interview length proved variable — the shortest ran 26 minutes, the longest 1 hour and 17 minutes — with individual engagement being the primary determining factor.

Full anonymization has been applied to all participants; as a result, only general descriptive information about the sample can be disclosed. The composition of the sample was shaped by a deliberate effort to capture variation across multiple dimensions: geography, gender, age,

and party role. Fieldwork was distributed across three Italian regions, with seven interviews per region. The first, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, holds particular symbolic significance for the party — it is the border region in which FdI ratified its defining ideological document, the Trieste Theses, and it is also an area where the party has achieved substantial electoral results. The second, Marche, presents a contrasting case: historically dominated by center-left politics, the region has nonetheless seen FdI win two back-to-back regional elections since 2020. The third, Lazio, constitutes the party's original stronghold. Interviews within each region were spread across multiple localities, covering both urban and non-urban settings. Individual respondents' locations are withheld from the interviewee list to protect anonymity.

Women account for two participants in each regional subsample, bringing their overall share to roughly 30 percent of the total — a figure that mirrors FdI's female representation in the Italian Parliament. Each subsample likewise includes one member of Gioventù Nazionale (GN), the party's youth organization. Age diversity was a further sampling criterion: the pool ranges from newer, younger activists to seasoned politicians whose careers extend back to FdI's forerunner organizations, Alleanza Nazionale (AN) and the Italian Social Movement (MSI). Institutionally, the sample spans multiple levels of Italy's political system, incorporating Members of Parliament as well as elected members of regional and local councils. In the list that follows, interviewees holding roles within the party's national governing bodies are identified under the label 'national executive.'

List of interviewees

Interviewee 1 - Member of a Municipal Council, national executive. Face-to-face interview, 9 September 2023 (male), duration: 36:24

Interviewee 2 - Member of a Municipal Council, national executive. Face-to-face interview, 26 September 2023 (male), duration: 35:45

Interviewee 3 - Member of a Municipal Council. Face-to-face interview, 23 October 2023 (female), duration: 51:00

Interviewee 4 - Municipal commissioner. Face-to-face interview, 23 October 2023 (male), duration: 1:01:01

59 Interviewee 5 - Member of the Chamber of Deputies, national executive. Face-to-face
60 interview, 3 November 2023 (male), duration: 28:54

61 Interviewee 6 - Member of a Municipal Council, national executive. Face-to-face interview, 22
62 November 2023 (male), duration: 52:34

63 Interviewee 7 - Member of a Municipal Council. Face-to-face interview, 22 November 2023
64 (male), duration: 44:47

65 Interviewee 8 - Member of a Regional Council. Face-to-face interview, 23 November 2023
66 (male), duration: 26:21

67 Interviewee 9 - Senator, national executive. Face-to-face interview, 24 November 2023
68 (female), duration: 1:17:30

69 Interviewee 10 - Member of a Municipal Council. Face-to-face interview, 27 November 2023
70 (female), duration: 53:30

71 Interviewee 11 - Member of a Municipal Council. Face-to-face interview, 27 November 2023
72 (male), duration: 1:00:46

73 Interviewee 12 - Member of the Chamber of Deputies, national executive. Face-to-face
74 interview, 29 November 2023 (male), duration: 39:05

75 Interviewee 13 - Senator, national executive. Face-to-face interview, 30 November 2023
76 (male), duration: 37:16

77 Interviewee 14 – Mayor of a province capital, national executive. Face-to-face interview, 4
78 December 2023 (male), duration: 37:11

79 Interviewee 15 - Member of a Municipal Council. Face-to-face interview, 4 December 2023
80 (female), duration: 29:07

81 Interviewee 16 - Member of a Municipal Council. Face-to-face interview, 6 December 2023
82 (male), duration 53:30

83 Interviewee 17 - Municipal commissioner. Face-to-face interview, 6 December 2023 (male),
84 duration: 43:02

85 Interviewee 18 - Municipal commissioner. Face-to-face interview, 7 December 2023 (female),
86 duration: 49:29

87 Interviewee 19 - Senator, national executive. Face-to-face interview, 12 December 2023
88 (female), duration: 1:02:31

89 Interviewee 20 - GN executive. Remote interview, 26 January 2024 (male), duration: 57:23

90 Interviewee 21 - Member of a Municipal Council. Remote interview, 29 February 2024 (male),
91 duration: 44:21