

No, Nazis were Not Leftists: Or, How to Debunk Right-Wing Propaganda

It is generally considered good practice not to “feed the trolls”— that is, not to engage in commentary with strangers on the internet who thrive on aggressive verbal hate and cruelty. But when the president himself is little more than a troll and the entire right-wing media apparatus increasingly relies on weaponized trolling (as well as the overwhelming spread of misinformation) as a primary means of producing propaganda, it becomes necessary to occasionally step up and defend ideas and history from the perversion of alternate realities.

That brings us to the inspiration for this piece: a [recent article](#) in the right-wing website The Federalist titled “Read a Pile of Top Nazis Talking about How they Love Leftist Marxism” by Paul Jossey. The subtitle is “From the moment they enter the political fray, young right-wingers are told, ‘You own the Nazis.’ Much of the historical record says exactly the opposite.” The article begins with this in-your-face provocation: “The Nazis were leftists.” I hope that most of our readers will instantly recognize the absurdity of the article from those few lines, but it warrants examining in closer detail to understand exactly what the author is trying to do and why.

First of all, what is The Federalist? It is clearly a [right-wing website](#) whose main driving force is to oppose gay marriage and whose main contributors are connected to those ubiquitous right-wing plutocrats, The Koch Brothers. The website itself strangely provides no information or mission statement in the form of an “About” page, but they do use this uncredited line as a footer: “Be lovers of freedom and anxious

for the fray," a quote that apparently comes from a 1918 speech by Calvin Coolidge, of all people. The Nazi article in question is categorized as "History," and the author's past publications all seem to be revolve around fake free speech grievances.

The introduction concludes by stating "But evidence Adolf Hitler's gang were men of the left, while debatable, is compelling." It is interesting to note that the author does not go so far as to apologize directly for the Nazis, or to explain why they "weren't really so bad." Let's stop for a moment and at least recognize and praise this author for not supporting or praising the Nazis. The fact that this has to be emphasized says something revealing about the toxic state of political discourse in this country.

Everything else the author does in his article, however, is part of a cynical ploy to rewrite history by cherry-picking isolated facts and fitting them into a false context. The author claims that his thesis, that the Nazis were actually Leftists, is debatable, but compelling. *It is actually neither.* No actual historian or political scientist maintains has gone on the record to claim that Nazis were Leftists. Accordingly, there is no citation given of any such person in the article because they don't exist. This means that the author's thesis is not actually debatable. It is settled history. I am not personally an academic specialist in the Nazi party, but I am an amateur historian with two history degrees who has read and thought much about World War Two over the course of my life. A very quick bit of research has led me to conclude with a high degree of certainty that there is basically universal consensus by scholars that the Nazis occupied territory on the far-right of the political spectrum. The few skeptics to the "far-right-wing Nazi consensus" seem to place more emphasis on the *sui generis* nature of the Nazi political beast by characterizing it as neither right nor left, but a unique populist syncretic movement. Even such a rare

opinion does not go so far as to characterize the Nazis as unequivocal members of "the Left". That is because it is by definition an absurd and offensive statement. That is like saying that Nazis were secretly communists because of a short-lived and cynical peace treaty with Josef Stalin (Actually, the author does make that ridiculous point in the article). There is no new history to be written on the main, big picture history of World War Two and the Nazi party. There is no hitherto secret knowledge or conspiracy that the author has just revealed despite decades of settled history determining what everyone knew at the time and until now: the Nazis were a far-right party—as far right as a party could conceivably be on the political spectrum. Everything else in the article is merely lies and propaganda (which are usually the same thing) to further his own right-wing views.

It is not hard to imagine why one wouldn't want to share ideological real estate with the Nazis, and once again I do in fact applaud the author for not wanting to admit such. The fact remains though, that they were a hyper-right-wing party, and he is an ideologue in the far-right-wing American conservative movement. That is why he attempts to portray the Nazis as a *Leftist* party—to make himself and his likeminded peers feel better about themselves while simultaneously making the other guys look bad. He might as well just wave his arms and shout at the top of his lungs "I'm not a Nazi! You're the Nazi!" This playground tactic is actually a well-known and useful tool of propaganda called "transference" or "projection." It is one of the many techniques of propaganda I mentioned in my article of the same name ([The Techniques of Propaganda](#)). The current president famously does it nearly everytime he speaks, most famously in a debate with Hillary Clinton when he screamed "No Puppet! No Puppet! You're the puppet!" The fact that he is, in fact, a puppet is secondary to the strategy of constantly maintaining a consistently aggressive and mendacious stance towards political foes in an attempt to smear *them* with *your* own crimes and faults. This is

also a type of “whataboutism” which has long been used by Trump’s mentor, Putin. It’s like saying “Yeah, the Nazis were bad, but *what about* Stalin and Mao?! (or Native American genocide or slavery?!)” It shouldn’t be too hard to understand that such statements are intentionally intellectually dishonest distractions from the point, but the fact remains that for a lot of people, especially ones primed to follow right-wing talking points and emotionally based arguments, such propaganda is often quite effective.

The second paragraph of the article continues by citing the infamous right-wing polemicist and fake historian [Dinesh D’Souza](#) as one of the sources of recent alternative histories. The author then claims that “the vitriol and lack of candor [such “alternative histories] produces from supposedly fact-driven academics and media is disturbing, if unsurprising. They stifle dissent on touchy subjects to maintain their narrative and enforce cultural hegemony.” Lots of big words and academic-sounding language here, all in an effort to say “why do experts call us out when we make shit up?” D’Souza is a convicted felon, provocateur, and far-right hack who is popular with theocratic crowds for writing a ton of “history” books that completely make shit up and basically blame “liberals” for everything from slavery to 9/11. The fact that D’Souza is the only person cited in the article regarding such “alternative histories” is telling. He even appears to have written a trashy “history” book in 2017 called *The Big Lie* claiming contrary to all evidence that Hitler and his coterie were “secret leftists,” a dog-eared copy of which is no doubt on the author’s shelf. For real historians, fact-checking D’Souza is like playing Super Mario Brothers with the cheat codes on, and luckily for us there is a tireless history professor named [Kevin Kruse](#) who has taken up this challenge.

The author continues by saying that “alternative views of the Third Reich exist and were written by the finest minds of their time,” and claims that such opinions “perhaps carry more

weight because they are unburdened by the aftermath of the uniquely heinous Nazi crimes.” Once again, props to the author for having the courage to admit that Nazi crimes were heinous, something becoming more difficult by the day for many of his fellow travelers. Even the president, famously even-minded and hesitant to draw hasty conclusions, wouldn’t want to go so far because there were probably many “good people” on the Nazi side. Anyway, the only “finest mind” that the author cites in the entire article is a certain Austrian economist, F.A. Hayek. Hayek does have the benefit of having actually rejected and fled the Nazi regime in real-time, which not every German-speaking intellectual could claim (looking at you, [Martin Heidegger](#)). He was also a life-long friend of liberal philosopher Karl Popper despite their many political differences, which reflects well on Hayek in my book (Popper’s *The Open Society and its Enemies* was written in 1944, the same year as Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom* was published. Here is my [article](#) on Popper explaining why I find him more convincing than Hayek). He has also been basically the main, and the only, inspiration for that always dubious and now-extinct animal known as the “reasonable, principled right-wing intellectual.”

If we are to be generous and fair to Hayek, we must admit that he was apparently a relatively honorable person with some nuanced and well-considered positions on politics and economics. For the purposes of right-wing politicians, it has long been enough to cite him as the simplified intellectual basis for their dogma that free markets must always be unfettered and wealth must never be distributed by the government (by which they mean of course that it should never be distributed *downwards*; they have always been happy to distribute it *upwards*). This was the dogma of the Thatcher-Reagan axis, but it could have just as easily been Ayn Rand rather than Hayek providing the “philosophy.” In any case, the author here has used a few throwaway, out-of-context phrases from early Hayek to make his entire case that the Nazis were

leftists. In addition, Hayek loved dictators and somehow made the case that authoritarianism (which he supported!) was different than totalitarianism (which he was against). He personally supported and sometimes collaborated and befriended right-wing dictators and war criminals like Pinochet (he claimed that Allende was totalitarian!) and Salazar (maybe let's reconsider that thing I said about his being "honorable"). So that is a summary of the most intellectually important right-wing thinker of the century.

The official name of the Nazis was the National Socialist German Workers' Party. They didn't like to be called Nazis. If you look carefully, you will even find the word "Socialist" (not to mention "Workers") in the name of party. This must mean they were Socialist, and, *tout court*, Leftist. Case closed. I guess all this actually proves is that political parties choose names that do not always signify their actual ideology. This is more common outside of America, with the Polish Law and Justice party, the Brazilian Social Liberal Party, the French Socialist party, and the Australian Liberal party coming immediately to mind (not to mention the Russian United Russia party). The author goes on to give example after cherry-picked example of actual Nazis making quotes that make them appear friendly to what we think of as Socialism, or of denigrating the "western capitalists" of the time. He says, for example, "Hayek describes Nazism as a 'genuine socialist movement' and thus left-wing by modern American standards." That's a pretty big red herring, oversimplification, and non sequitur all in one short phrase (three techniques of propaganda! Go read my previous [essay](#) and learn them all by name). He goes on to say, "British elites regarded Nazism as a virulent capitalist reaction against enlightened socialism—a view that persists today." Yeah, it persists because it's the historical truth. By the way, that's actually being far too gentle with Nazism—calling it a "virulent capitalist reaction" is probably the most unsuperlative thing you could truthfully say about it—and "British elites" (many of whom actually

supported Hitler up to and, in some cases, during the war).

As the article continues, the author gives some ad hoc definitions of "right" and "left", and their sloppiness illuminates the ways he probably thinks his is a logically sound argument. He says the "right" consists of "free-market capitalists, who think the individual is the primary political unit, believes in property rights, and are generally distrustful of government by unaccountable agencies and government solutions to social problems. They view family and civil institutions, such as church, as needed checks on state power." He says the "left" consists of people who "distrust the excesses and inequality capitalism produces. They give primacy to group rights and identity. They believe factors like race, ethnicity, and sex compose the primary political unit. They don't believe in strong property rights...They believe the free market has failed to solve issues like campaign finance, income inequality, minimum wage, access to health care, and righting past injustices. These people talk about 'democracy'—the method of collective decisions." He then claims that these definitions prove somehow that the Nazis were Leftists.

The only thing he didn't say about the "left" is that they have a penchant for human sacrifice and cannibalism. If you think there is something just a bit made up, just a bit Fox-Newsy about his definitions, you are not wrong. Obviously it is not easy to portray all the nuance of the variagated "right-left" political spectrum with such facile definitions, especially considering the disconnect between economic and cultural perspectives. There is a convincing case to be made that from the "right" perspective, everything that they think is wrong with the world is de facto part of the "left." If you define everything not you as bad, and everything bad as "left," Nazis will by necessity become leftists. Much of today's "right" also thinks of the "left" exclusively in terms of identity, as opposed to other political ideology. Thus,

anything in history that used identity in bad, or deviant ways was therefore part of a leftist plot or conspiracy. It would be easier to list the key words and ideas generally associated with each camp. In political science, it is generally accepted that the "left" tends to emphasize ideas like freedom (!), equality, fraternity, rights, progress, reform, and internationalism, while the "right" tends to emphasize ideas like authority (!), hierarchy, order, duty, tradition, reaction, and nationalism. Any disputes here? I didn't think so.

You might have noticed those key words of freedom, and authority. Despite the American right-wing appropriation of the word, they misunderstand and detest real freedom and always tend towards authority over liberty. Usually what they mean when they talk about freedom is that they support the freedom to think and act just like they do, which is obviously no kind of freedom at all. The centrality of sexual and religious politics in American right-wing ideology is enough to illustrate their primacy of authority over freedom. Some theorists maintain that there is a natural authoritarianism and oppression of the lower orders in conservatism in general; [Corey Robin](#) in *The Reactionary Mind* says that "Though it is often claimed that the left stands for equality while the right stands for freedom, this notion misstates the actual disagreement between right and left. Historically, the conservative has favored liberty for the higher orders and constraint for the lower orders. What the conservative sees and dislikes in equality, in other words, is not a threat to freedom but its extension. For in that extension, he sees a loss of his own freedom." Authority is the main hallmark of not only authoritarian (obviously) and totalitarian systems, but also conservatism writ large. Jeffrey Herf in his book *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*, argues that the Nazis mixed enthusiasm for technology with a total rejection of Enlightenment values as a radical alternative to liberal and

socialist visions of modernity. Umberto Eco's tour de force essay "[Ur-Fascism](#)" gives 14 characteristics of Wittgensteinian "family resemblance" that can be found in all forms of fascism. Nowhere in this exhaustive list can you find anything remotely "leftist." Basically, the Nazi regime was reptilian, terroristic, totalitarian, and extremely right-wing.

For those who shout "What about Stalin?!", the answer is that the Soviet Union, especially under Stalin, was also a right-wing terroristic totalitarian regime, despite the supposed "leftism" of Communist ideology that could be traced back to said Enlightenment values. The Soviet Union was never really Communist in anything but name, but from the beginning governed as just another kleptocratic oligarchy much more authoritarian than any Tsar ever dreamed of. Vladimir Nabokov, in his memoirs, calls the Bolsheviks (who assassinated his father, by the way) "fascists." So the answer is that the Nazis weren't "leftist," but that the Soviet Union was actually "rightist." You might ask if I'm being serious here or just engaging in my own propagandistic sophistry, a la the author of that hideous article. Reader, do your own research and make up your own mind. Don't believe anything you read on the internet. Especially on websites like The Federalist. Read history.

Homage to Veneto

There is no status quo in politics. Things really do fall apart, to quote the overly quoted Yeats. For those of us born after WWII, the seven decades of Pax Europa and subsequent founding of the European Union seemed like a permanent state and a symbol of progress and hope for human solidarity. History, it turns out, really is a cyclical story, where

collective human action occasionally succeeds but is often defeated by the other deeper and stronger human impulses: tribalism and greed.

The United States has not been so disunited since 1865. The United Kingdom will not remain united for long (nor, possibly, a kingdom). The European Union, after many expansive years of plenty, is now receding and fighting a losing battle against internal enemies of unity. Despite barbarians outside the gates, the fall of any empire always comes from internal pressure within its borders. In Europe these days, that pressure takes the form of nationalist political parties.

In Spain, the autonomous region of Catalonia held an illegal referendum on independence on 1 October, 2017. In Italy, the regions of Lombardy and Veneto are holding a legal referendum on autonomy on 22 October, 2017. It seems that the first step to independence is greater autonomy, and that is what Lega Nord, the dominant political party in the north of Italy, has been agitating for ever since it was founded in 1991. Though I am not Italian, I have lived in the Veneto region for over 10 years, and this is where I will now focus.

Lega Veneta (that strange L is supposed to represent elision in the local dialect, though I've never heard this elided L at the beginning of a word) is a political party allied with the Lega Nord, both of which ultimately want to secede from the Republic of Italy to form a new nation called Padania. Why would they want to do this? Obviously it's all about the money. The north of Italy is much wealthier than the south, and supporters of the Lega Nord want to keep all that money for themselves. The central policy platform of the Lega Nord is greater fiscal autonomy and eventual secession. It is a populist right-wing party, strongly opposed to immigration and the EU, allied with like-minded parties in other countries such as the French FN and the Dutch PVV. Just as with these other parties, the Lega Nord are not as popular as they like to appear, and they have never been able to translate their

separatist sound and fury into electoral success.

In the 2013 federal elections, they took about 4% of the national popular vote. In the 2014 European Parliament elections, they took about 6%. Even in their regional strongholds of Lombardy and Veneto, they only took 12% and 10% respectively. They have had a bit more success in the regional elections, winning the governorship for both regions, including a record-high 40% in Veneto in 2015. Despite this, the Lega Nord has never won a majority of votes even in its own territory. Part of that is due to the fractious nature of Italian politics and the huge number of political parties appearing on the ballot (I counted over 100 different party “lists” at one point). Maybe a larger part of it is that northern secession is just not as popular as the Lega Nord wants it to be.



Sign advertising the referendum next to my town’s elementary school. It shows the Italian flag torn in half with the intact Venetian flag flying away, an [illegal](#) image according to Italian law.

I am writing this one week before the referendum on autonomy, so the results are still in doubt. It seems very probable that the "Yes" vote will win in a landslide, though I'm less sure if there will be a quorum. This is not an election between many different political parties and platforms, but merely a single-issue emotional appeal to the citizens of Lombardy and Veneto to "take control of their history and their future". A few days ago, I noticed an elderly Italian man stuffing papers in my mailbox, going from house to house on foot doing the same throughout my small town. I thought it was probably a fundraiser for a church event or advertising for the town's upcoming chestnut festival. Almost everyday mailboxes are stuffed with brochures for supermarkets or other local businesses, but 100% of the time these are distributed by African or Asian immigrants (who probably do this work 12 hours a day for a pittance, all so that those reams of wasted paper can go straight to the bin), not by retirees. When I opened the box, I found a well-made, colorful, 25-page pamphlet supporting the "Yes" vote, full of statistics and other propaganda.

LO SAPEVI CHE?

- La civiltà Veneta è più antica di quella romana, i primi insediamenti risalgono al XIII° a.C.; combatterono al fianco dei Troiani contro i Greci, all'epoca "Roma" e gli "Etruschi" non esistevano.
- Il simbolo "@" fu inventato nel XIII° sec. dai mercanti veneziani per motivi commerciali.
- Il vicentino Federico Faggin ha inventato il primo microprocessore al mondo.
- La costituzione e la giustizia statunitensi sono state ispirate dalle leggi della Serenissima - Benjamin Franklin si intrattenne a Venezia per quasi un anno.
- La Repubblica Veneta è durata 1100 anni.
- Nell'ottobre del 1866 i veneti diventarono italiani con l'imbroglio del referendum truffa e che successivamente furono costretti dalla fame ad emigrare in ogni parte del globo - diaspora veneta.
- Il primo stato al mondo ad abolire la schiavitù, fu la Serenissima nel XVI° sec.
- La veneziana Elena Cornaro fu la prima donna laureata al mondo.
- Le campane suonano a mezzogiorno per la vittoria dei Veneti contro i Turchi nella battaglia di Lepanto del 7 ottobre 1571, dove si fermò l'avanzata islamica verso l'Europa cristiana.
- Quella veneta è l'unica bandiera al mondo a recare la parola "PAX" Pace.
- Il Veneto è la regione con il più alto tasso di volontariato.

**Quello Veneto è un Popolo che discende dalla più
longeva civiltà democratica della storia,
dobbiamo esserne consapevoli ed orgogliosi.**

**Recarsi a votare significa difendere i valori del nostro
passato e dimostrare con determinazione la volontà di
riprenderci il nostro futuro!!!**

Consulta Identità Veneta della provincia di Vicenza

**VOTA DESO
O TAZI PAR SENPRE!**

history” and finishes with the slogan, in Venetian dialect, “Vote Now, or Shut Up Forever.” Catchy. I’m doubtful that the individual tax burden will relent if Veneto becomes autonomous. In fact, the whole referendum seems like a victory for propaganda rather than actual change to the status quo. Unlike the illegal Catalonia independence vote, the Lombardy and Veneto referendum for autonomy is based around a weakly worded question, and even the results would have to be voted on for approval by the full Italian Parliament afterwards. The question appearing on the ballot is: “Do you want the Veneto Region to be given other particular forms and conditions of Autonomy?” Not very specific, to say the least.

Here are the highlights from the pamphlet, all resembling mytho-historical propaganda rather than facts, and none of which seem remotely relevant to the current political or economic situation in Italy:

- the Veneto civilization is older than the Romans, with foundations in the 13th century B.C., fighting with the Trojans against the Greeks (shouldn’t need much commentary, but my Master’s Degree in Ancient Greek and Roman History gives me reason to be skeptical of this one)
- the @ symbol was invented by Venetian merchants for commerical reasons (impressive!)
- Federico Faggin, a scientist from Vicenza, invented the world’s first microprocessor (Faggin was actually my neighbor in one of the apartments I used to rent in Vicenza overlooking the magnificent Basilica Palladiana; I’m doubtful that he supports the referendum despite being named—he has lived mostly in America for the last 50 years, has American citizenship, and received a medal from President Obama in 2009)
- the American Constitution was inspired by the laws of the Venetian Republic, and Benjamin Franklin entertained himself in Venice for almost a year (almost as

impressive as the @ symbol!)

- the Venetian Republic lasted 1100 years (I'll concede historical accuracy here, even if "Republic", just like the earlier Roman variety, meant something more like "oligarchy", and by the time Napoleon put an end to it the "Serenissima" had been in decline for two centuries)
- in October 1866 the Veneto became Italian because of a fraudulent referendum, which then caused widespread hunger and forced the people to emigrate to all parts of the world (tendentious and overly simplified; after the Austro-Prussian war, Veneto was passed from Austria to France, who passed it directly to the new Kingdom of Italy according to prior agreements; Italy was unified by force and fortune, not by popular votes)
- the first state to abolish slavery was the Venetian Republic in the 16th century (difficult to confirm; cherry-picking from a long and complex history)
- Elena Cornaro, a 17th-century philosopher, was the first woman in the world to receive an academic degree (no qualms with this one; too bad most Venetians or humans today are not more like the highly intelligent philosopher herself)
- the bells ring at noon to celebrate the Venetian victory over the Turks at the 1571 Battle of Lepanto, which stopped the Muslim advance into Christian Europe (the Venetians single-handedly won the victory with only a bit of help from the Kingdom of Spain, Naples, Sicily, Papal States, Genoa, Tuscany, and a few other friends like England and the Holy Roman Empire; also, this plays into the current Islamophobic narrative of European right-wing parties such as the Lega Nord)



- the Venetian flag is the only flag in the world with the word “peace” (the actual Latin translation says “Peace to you Mark, my evangelist”; seems similar to when Muslims say “peace be upon him” when they name Muhammed; we could also add that this flag is the only one in the world with a flying lion—impressive!)
- Veneto has the highest number of volunteers in Italy (can’t find any source data on this; even if accurate it probably counts food-selling volunteers at the ubiquitous town feasts more than anything else)

Yes, that was fun to deconstruct, but propaganda and manipulative emotional appeal for political gain is something that I am always happy to fight against (even if I will probably always be on the losing side). The rest of the pamphlet is a series of tables and cherry-picked statistics basically stating the same thing over and over: that Veneto contributes more money to the federal government than it receives in public services. What a terrible tragedy! A relatively rich region subsidizes other poorer regions in a modern nation-state. It would appear that there is no poverty whatsoever in Veneto, and all its problems comes from the federal government (or immigrants!). This is a widespread opinion among well-off citizens in every developed country; it is the mentality of self-interest over altruism; tribalism over human solidarity.

The last part of the pamphlet takes much time and care to compare Veneto with the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, also known as Alto-Adige or Südtirol, the German-speaking, formerly Austrian region ceded to Italy after World War One. One table

shows how Alto-Adige keeps 50% of tax revenue for local administration while Veneto keeps only 24%. One point of emphasis is also that education is completely managed locally in Alto-Adige while in Veneto the federal government manages 70% of the budget. There is no reason given for why this is good for Alto-Adige or bad for Veneto. One obvious point is that Alto-Adige is 100% German-speaking and has always been awarded special autonomous status because of its history and culture (along with four other Italian regions with similar situations: Sicily, Sardinia, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and Val d'Aosta). I have spent a lot of time in schools across Veneto and I can tell you that a huge number of teachers come from the south of Italy (Veneto has a relatively low educational level and the Southern regions are relatively high, probably because there is no work in the South so more people attend university and get advanced degrees). Many residents of Veneto in general also have roots in other parts of Italy or other countries, especially Romania, Morocco, Moldova, and Albania, since there is more work to be found in here.

One of the main platforms of the Lega Nord and Liga Veneta is xenophobic anti-immigration, but given the history of Italian emigration (including huge numbers of Venetians, who mostly fled to Brazil, Argentina, and Australia) it seems myopic and hypocritical to use immigration as a rallying cry. There are plenty of racists in Italy, just like every other country in the world, and the presence of more dark-skinned people on their streets and in their schools and companies has scared the natives. This is unfortunately a universal trait in humans that can only be expunged with education, travel, empathy, and an open mind, many of which are sorely lacking in Italy, Europe, America, and the World.

My main question regarding autonomy, secession, and independence is this: why is a smaller political unit necessarily better than a larger one? It seems like flawed logic to me that any given region with mostly arbitrary

borders would automatically and by definition be better at governance than a nation-state with mostly arbitrary borders. Why not autonomy or independence for every province, every city, town, village, and house? On the other hand, why isn't every world region divided into European Union-like entities that together would make up a single world government? The contingencies and accidents of history have determined our present political circumstances. If Princip's pistol had misfired, if Marshal Ney had taken Quatre Bras earlier, if Ali Pasha hadn't missed his coffee before Lepanto, if Hektor hadn't killed Patroklos outside the gates of Troy, history might have turned out differently and there might have been no Veneto, no Italy, and no EU.



Superstrada Pedemontana Veneta

The point is that history and culture are not the same thing as governance. Appealing to history and culture in the name of more fiscal autonomy is incoherent. I see no evidence that an autonomous or independent Veneto government would be any more efficient or less corrupt than the obviously inefficient and corrupt Italian government. On the other hand, I need only to mention Veneto President Luca Zaia's project of a new highway called the Superstrada Pedemontana Veneta to make the opposite argument. It is an unnecessary highway, that no one asked for, being built across the previously beautiful foothills south of Monte Grappa and the Asiago plateau. It has created a hellscape of endless trucks, dust, and cement where once all

you could see were cherry orchards and castles. It is so enormously behind schedule and over budget that it may never be completed. If so, it will be financed by increased taxes on local residents, followed by the additional slap in the face of making it a toll road for the same residents. A recent collapsed tunnel under the hills near my town is the latest construction setback for this environmental and economic disaster. This, along with policies favorable to corrupt, Mafia-driven cementification, enormous [banking scandals](#) involving the Popular Bank of Vicenza and Veneto Bank, and the super expensive and useless [MOSE](#) flood prevention project surrounding Venice, proves that regional government is no more efficient, capable, or trustworthy than federal government.

Absent oppression or persecution, I see no justification for nationalistic separatist movements. That is why the propagandists of these campaigns, including the Brexiteers, rely on disinformation as well as natural human greed and tribalistic tendencies. There is a difference between Kurdish or South Sudanese independence, and that of Catalonia, Scotland, Lombardy, or Veneto. There is nothing wrong with being a proud patriot or even being appreciative of one's history and culture; there is something wrong with being a nationalist who bends and misuses that history to suit exclusivistic political aims. The best thing to do is to help one's country and everyone in it to succeed, rather than retreating into a fantasy world of mythical history and no taxes. What's needed in Italy, Europe, and the whole world is not more division and greed, but more openness, activism, and human solidarity.