

# Contemporary Corsica From Assimilation to Autonomy?

**André Fazi, Ph.D.**

Professor, Political Science

Université of Corsica

# Historical Roots

- **XVIIIth Century**

- Revolution against Genoese Republic (1729) / Adoption of a first constitutional text (1735)

- State-building process, with a Constitution based on people's right to self-government (1755-1768)

- French military annexation (1768-1769)

- Secession then creation of a Anglo-Corsican Kingdom (1793-1796)

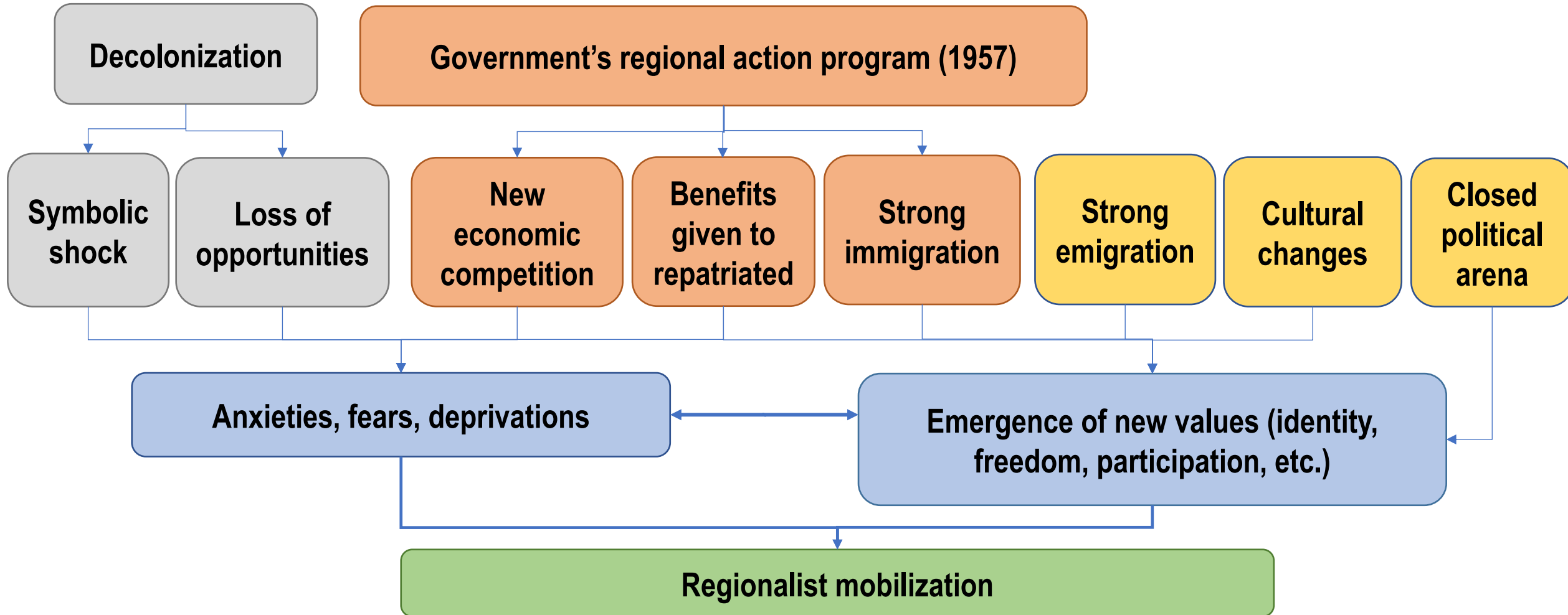
- **XIXth Century**

- Disappearance of nationalist mobilizations et intellectual productions

- **Between World wars I and II**

- Elitist and autonomist mobilisation

# A product of Modernization



# Nationalist radicalization(s)

**1973**

Identification change: from regionalism to autonomism and nationalism

Development of clandestine violent action

**1975**

Failure of the first governmental accommodation attempt

Armed occupation of a cellar owned by a repatriate and violent state repression

**1976**

Creation of the *Front de Libération Nationale de la Corse* (FLNC), which unites the pre-existing violent clandestine groups and promotes independence

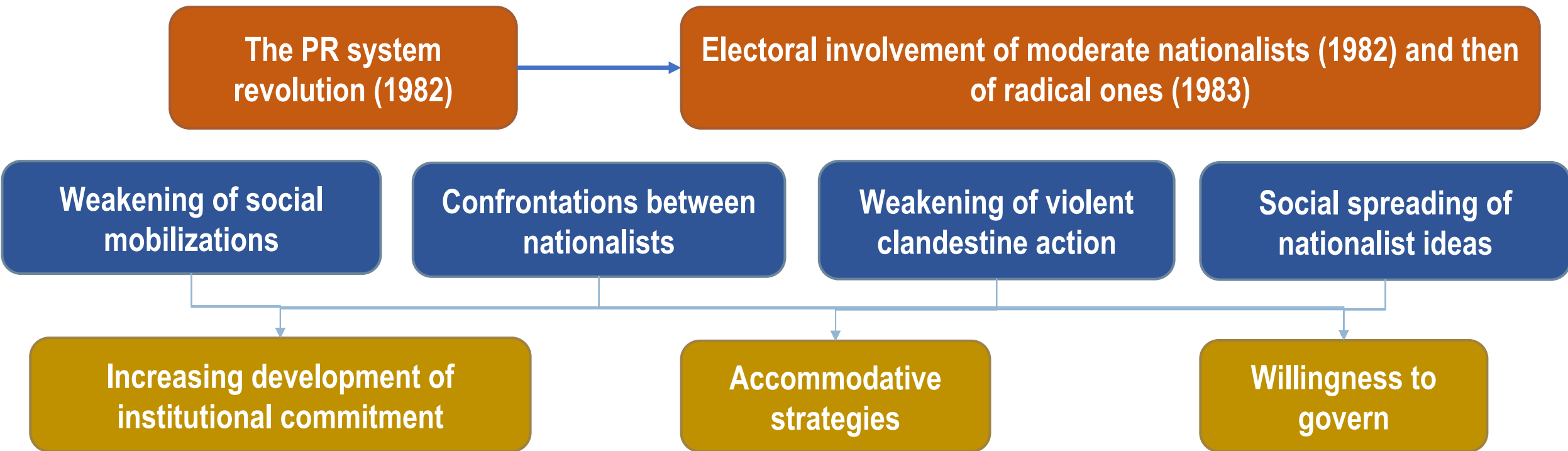
# The decrease of clandestine violent action

Number of bombings against public assets in Corsica. 1996-2013

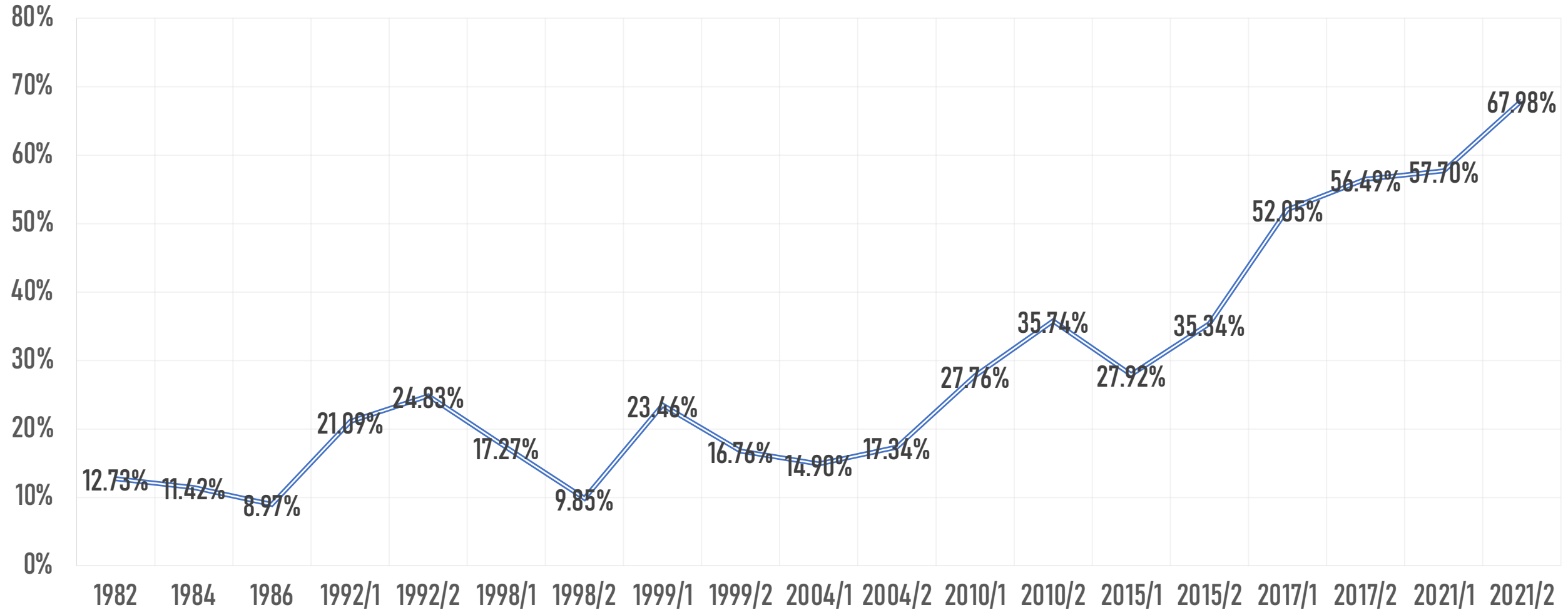


# The institutionalization process

- A few disappointing electoral attempts (1967-1973)
- Refusal to run for office (1973-1982)



# Corsican nationalists in regional elections



# Gradual institutional change

1982	<p>Law on the special status of the region of Corsica</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Special attributions (junior high schools, identity, planning, etc.)</li><li>- Association with state public agencies (agriculture, transport, etc.)</li><li>- Special electoral system with a regional constituency (in 1982 and 1984)</li></ul>
1991	<p>Law on the status of the territorial collectivity of Corsica</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Recognition of a “Corsican people, as a component of the French people” (censured by the Constitutional Council)</li><li>- Special organization with the creation of a regional executive council (unique in mainland France)</li><li>- New attributions (national roads, teaching of Corsican language, etc.); Return to the regional constituency</li><li>- Territorialization of many public agencies (hydraulic equipment, transport, agriculture, etc.)</li></ul>
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- New attributions (environment, higher education, planning, etc.)</li><li>- Power of legislative experimentation (censured by the Constitutional Council)</li></ul>
2017	<p>Law on the status of the collectivity of Corsica</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Merger of the territorial collectivity of Corsica and the two departmental councils</li><li>- Maintaining the two departments and prefectures at the level of the State administration</li></ul>



# Main nationalist demands

- Amnesty for jailed and researched activists
- Co-official status for the Corsican language
- « Resident status » (only those who have resided on the island on a permanent basis for a number of years can acquire land or property)
- Legislative autonomy

# The government's counterproposal

- Constitutionalizing Corsican singularity
- Allowing specific legislative rules, as long as they are justified by the specific features of the island (*it is already the case*)
- The Parliament can allow the Corsican assembly to adopt these specific rules itself (*this kind of mechanism has been in place since 2007 in the overseas departments and regions and has not been effective at all*)

# Too many veto players?

National players	Corsican players
Government	Corsican executive
Senate majority	Opposition nationalist parties
Opposition parties in the National Assembly	Social or clandestine nationalist groups

# The risks of stalemate

- Fostering radical protest, and possibly a return to clandestine violence
- Increasing the feelings of disbelief and mistrust towards France, even a “silent secession”
- Converting a lot of autonomists to independentism