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THE LONG DURÉE OF ITALIAN PARLIAMENTARISM (1848-1938). TRANSPARENCY, REPRODUCIBILITY, AND THE ETHICAL CHALLENGE

COMPUTATIONAL METHODOLOGIES FOR THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES

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The long durée of Italian parliamentarism (1848-1938). Transparency, Reproducibility, and the Ethical Challenge: Computational Methodologies for the Digital Humanities

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Abstract This article analyses Italian parliamentarism between 1848 and 1938, from the Kingdom of Sardinia to the Kingdom of Italy, by examining the relationship between the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate in a *longue durée* perspective. It asks how parliamentary activity, recorded speech, and political vocabulary were distributed between the two chambers during the transition from restricted liberal parliamentarism to mass politics and Fascism. The study adopts a Digital History methodology based on transparency, reproducibility, and the sharing of code and derived datasets, using Python to analyse digitised official parliamentary records and to compare yearly sittings, word counts and selected political keywords. The findings show that the elected Chamber occupied a more central position in parliamentary life, meeting more often, producing more speech, and registering the vocabulary of mass politics, especially democracy, socialism and suffrage, more intensely than the appointed Senate. Over time, this divergence widened the gap between the two chambers and contributed to an institutional impasse, as the Chamber became increasingly exposed to mass politics while the Senate remained anchored in older forms of elite continuity. Fascism then compressed parliamentary contestation, closing the cycle that had begun in 1848.

Keywords: Digital History, digital humanities, ethics, representation, parliamentarism.

Resumo Este artigo analisa o parlamentarismo italiano entre 1848 e 1938, do Reino da Sardenha ao Reino de Itália, examinando a relação entre a Câmara dos Deputados e o Senado numa perspetiva de *longue durée*. A questão central é a forma como a actividade parlamentar, o discurso registado e o vocabulário político se distribuíram de modo assimétrico entre as duas câmaras, à medida que o sistema transitava do sufrágio restrito para a política de massas. Recorrendo a uma metodologia de História Digital, o estudo compara sessões anuais, contagens de palavras e palavras-chave políticas seleccionadas, privilegiando a transparência e a reprodutibilidade. Os resultados mostram que a Câmara eleita ocupou uma posição central na vida parlamentar: reuniu-se mais, produziu mais discurso e registou com maior intensidade o vocabulário da política de massas — democracia, socialismo, sufrágio. Esta assimetria aprofundou-se à medida que a Câmara absorvia as pressões de uma política crescentemente inclusiva, enquanto o Senado nomeado permanecia ancorado em formas mais antigas de continuidade das elites. O fascismo encerrou este ciclo, comprimindo a contestação parlamentar e pondo fim ao arco iniciado em 1848.

Palavras-chave: História Digital, humanidades digitais, ética, representação, parlamentarismo.

HISTORY AND COMPUTING: A LONG TRADITION

The relationship between computing and history, evolving from early mechanical tabulation to contemporary artificial intelligence, marks a continuous methodological and intellectual transformation within the humanities, challenging foundational assumptions about evidence, objectivity, and the nature of historical inquiry. Historically, the integration of computational methods emerged not as a sudden novelty but as a renewal of scholarly practices established well before the term "Digital Humanities" was coined in the international arena. The earliest formal connections between computing and history largely centered on managing and analyzing data that defied manual processing. By the 1960s, a growing number of scholars began engaging in quantitative approaches, seen in the United States as a continuation of earlier traditions emphasizing empirical social analysis (Dollar, et al., 1971: 5). This momentum was particularly strong in demographics and economic research, fields that necessitated processing mass data. Figures like Ernest Labrousse championed this statistical shift, famously asserting the disciplinary necessity: "to be a historian, you need to know how to count" (Burke, 2015: 61).

The rise of computing fundamentally aligned with influential historiographical movements seeking to move beyond traditional event-oriented narratives focused solely on "captains and kings" (Burke, 2015: 32). The French Annales School pioneered the integration of deep, long-term perspectives (longue durée) with quantifiable, serial analysis (histoire sérielle), arguing that structures and cyclical movements (conjonctures) dictated the course of history more profoundly than singular

events (Braudel, 1969: 97). This methodological direction demanded rigorous systems for handling evidence, leading researchers to explore how computation could enable the creation of comprehensible analytical models out of extensive archives (Le Roy, 1973: 25). The capacity to compile large biographical databases (prosopography) and model complex relationships revealed the "lógica interna de determinados processos históricos" (Alves, 2016: 102). This quantitative turn prompted deep methodological debates, reflecting an inherent tension in the historian's craft. While computing offered precision and efficiency in mastering large data sets, traditionalists warned against sacrificing the qualitative, hermeneutic core of history. R. G. Collingwood argued that statistical methods served as a "good servant but a bad master" (Collingwood, 1946: 228), emphasizing that the historian's unique function lies in the re-enactment of past thought, rather than merely charting quantifiable externals. The aim, for thinkers in the Annales tradition, remained to seek comprehension and "self-understanding" through immersion in the past, even as empirical data provided the necessary evidentiary foundation (Hunt, et al., 1995: 93).

Digital History Beyond Computation

Digital History (DH) is not a separate discipline seeking to supplant traditional historical practice, nor is it merely a subset of Computational Social Science (CSS) (Grimmer, 2022: 33). The ambition of digital history is precisely to leverage computational tools to perform the core tasks of historical scholarship-heuristics, source criticism, and interpretation-more effectively, especially when faced with an "increasing abundance of historical data" (Armaselu, and Fickers, 2023: 19). Instead, DH represents a hybrid practice — a methodological continuation and profound augmentation of historical inquiry necessary for addressing the unprecedented scale of primary sources available in the modern digital ecosystem (Zaagsma, 2013: 3-6). Fundamentally, Digital History's goal is not just to compute; it is the contrary, insisting that algorithmic outputs remain subordinate to the

humanistic imperatives of context, critique, and interpretation (Drucker, 2021: 1-18).

The intellectual trajectory of Digital History is guided by humanistic tradition, which holds that knowledge is inherently "observer-dependent" (Drucker, 2021). This contrasts with the empirical ideal, often sought by social sciences, that knowledge should be observer-independent (Drucker, 2021). In DH, the core purpose of computation is to provide critical understanding and discovery, ensuring that fundamental ambiguity and complexity remain central to the scholarly work (Drucker, 2021; Fickers, and Tatarinov, 2022). Computation acts as a tool to "amplify — rather than replace — the human efforts of the scholars using them" (Grimmer, et al., 2022: 32). In contrast, Computational Social Science typically pursues causal and predictive inference (Engel, et al., 2022: 2). When social scientists pursue prediction, they strive to develop and test rigorous theories. Digital History, however, often focuses on "inferences about the particular text that is being studied" rather than treating texts merely as data indicators of some "larger process" (Grimmer, et al., 2022: 30). This distinction is reinforced by how DH scholars perceive their source materials. Digital History treats cultural artifacts and records not as objective data ("given"), but as capta ("taken" or constructed) (Robertson, 2024: 340). The process of extracting information from artifacts and transforming it into quantitative values is explicitly acknowledged as an "act of historical interpretation" (Robertson, 2024; 340). DH thus requires historians to recognize and critique the biases embedded within the data and algorithms, rejecting the illusion of positivist objectivity that might tempt uncritical analysts (Fickers, and Tatarinov, 2022; Drucker, 2021).

Heuristics, the historian's traditional task of "identifying, selecting and gathering material relevant to a specific epistemic interest" (Wachter, 2024: 44), has been exponentially accelerated by digitization. Since the available corpus now "exceeds the capacity of human cognition to access, read, and analyze these materials using close-reading methods" (Henriot, 2025: 3), digital search techniques become essential (Andersen, 2022).

Defining the Inquiry: Before computation, the historian must apply intellectual rigor, formulating the research with conceptual clarity. This involves translating complex historical questions into precise research categories, helping refine inclusion and exclusion criteria for evidence (Henriot, 2025). Digital tools demand an updated, expanded form of source criticism, or "digital hermeneutics", which critically reflects upon how digital infrastructures, data, and algorithms alter scholarly understanding (Fickers, and Tatarinov, 2022). Because computational programs often operate as "black boxes", obscuring the processes used to generate output, the historian must extend their critical focus to the methodological means themselves (Durlacher, 2022). This essential self-reflection includes tool criticism and algorithm criticism, ensuring that the underlying assumptions and biases of software platforms are understood before their output is accepted.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The final historical argument must articulate a new level of "methodological transparency" (Gibbs, and Owens, in Dougherty, 2013: 260). Historians are "ultimately responsible for the interpretive validity of their arguments — even when those arguments draw on AI — processed material" (Henriot, 2025: 9). Transparency requires documenting the workflow, acknowledging the role of AI tools, and being explicit about the interpretive choices made during data preparation and analysis (Henriot, 2025; Robertson, 2024). This ensures that computing supports historical understanding without imposing the "look of certainty" of non-humanistic data visualization (Drucker, 2021). Furthermore, the integration of Large Language Models (LLMs) into historical praxis introduces a significant paradigm shift, enabling "cognitive delegation to the machine" (Clavert, and Muller, 2024). LLMs accelerate research across the entire workflow, from data extraction to analytical support (Henriot, 2025). However, this augmentation raises important epistemological and ethical challenges. Since

LLM outputs are statistically generated, they can produce accurate and useful results, but their reliability cannot be assumed in advance. Their outputs require human verification, contextual assessment, and, where relevant, comparison with the underlying sources (Clavert, and Muller, 2024). It is therefore necessary to distinguish between the opacity of the LLM itself and the transparency of the computational artefacts produced within the research workflow. While the internal operations of the LLM remain largely black-boxed, the Python scripts used in this study constitute inspectable and auditable objects. Even when initially generated with LLM assistance, they were preserved, manually checked, adapted, executed, and made available as the reproducible record of the procedure. The conversational process through which some Python scripts were initially generated cannot itself be treated as a stable or fully reproducible object, since it depended on contingent interactions with the LLM, subsequent corrections, and manual decisions made during the research. For this reason, the reproducible artefact is not the generative dialogue with the model, but the final scripts actually used, together with the documented computational environment and the derived datasets. Their inherent capacity for generating hallucinated facts and invented references demands rigorous human oversight and continuous validation (Henriot, 2025). Critically, the use of generative AI compels a fundamental reconsideration of authorship (*auctorialité*) in scholarly communication (Clavert, Muller, 2024). Transparency is a scholarly obligation (Henriot, 2025): LLMs must be clearly documented as indispensable research infrastructure, affirming the historian's sole interpretive responsibility and mitigating the risks associated with the fluidity of digital knowledge creation (Clavert, and Muller, 2024).

CONTEXTUALISATION (1848-1938)

The temporal structure adopted in this study provides the framework for reading a century of parliamentary life in the *longue durée*, from the granting of the Statuto Albertino in March 1848 to 1938, when the establishment

of the Chamber of Fasces and Corporations brought plenary parliamentary sittings to an end. Because our evidence is continuous — yearly measures drawn from the official records of the Chamber and the Senate — the key task is to separate slow-moving continuity from moments of rupture, acceleration, or reorientation.

The periods listed below therefore work as historically grounded breakpoints: they identify points at which parliamentary rhythms, institutional constraints, and political vocabularies are likely to shift under war, state-building, suffrage reform, mass-party competition, and dictatorship. They also help us keep the bicameral dimension in view, tracing where the two chambers move together and where their trajectories begin to diverge. We start in 1848-49, when parliamentarism is born under pressure: constitutional forms take shape alongside emergency politics and military mobilisation, producing volatility that serves as a baseline for later regularisation.

The second breakpoint, 1859-61, links the Second War of Independence to the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy, a phase in which territorial expansion and institutional consolidation reshape the agenda and the texture of parliamentary work. The 1876 alternation from Destra storica to Sinistra storica marks a change in the political management of liberal parliamentarism, with new styles of coalition-building and consent-making that may alter intensity and procedure, possibly differently in Chamber and Senate. The suffrage reform of 1882 introduces a structural discontinuity: still short of mass democracy, it pushes the system towards broader electoral politics, with an expected asymmetry between an elected Chamber exposed to new pressures and an appointed Senate that may respond more slowly. The crisis cluster 1896-1900 — imperial shock, repression, and the assassination of Umberto I — tests how parliamentary life reacts to a legitimacy crisis: intensified debate and politicisation, or compression through emergency measures and polarisation. The Giolittian era (c. 1900-1914) offers a medium-duration phase of managed inclusion, where conflict is partially mediated within parliamentary institutions; if

parliament becomes a technique of governance, we expect more regular rhythms and expanded deliberative labour, again with possible chamber-specific patterns. The hinge 1911-12 combines the Libyan war with near-universal male suffrage (1912), joining imperial mobilisation to a qualitatively enlarged electorate and setting conditions for a shift in parliamentary dynamics. The First World War (1915-18) brings emergency politics to the centre; here the empirical question is whether parliamentary activity expands, contracts, or changes its semantic centre of gravity. The year 1919 is then a decisive bicameral breakpoint: mass parties dominate the Chamber while the Senate remains structurally "older", turning bicameral tension into an openly political problem. From 1922 (Mussolini's appointment) through 1925-26 (the legal consolidation of dictatorship), we expect a profound discontinuity as contestation is neutralised and parliamentary forms are progressively hollowed out. Finally, 1938 marks the endpoint of this arc: with the establishment of the Chamber of Fasces and Corporations, plenary parliamentary sittings effectively disappear, bringing to a close the parliamentary cycle that had begun in 1848.

METHODOLOGY

The study relies on primary sources: the official parliamentary records of the Italian Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. These consist of the transcripts of sittings, now digitised and made available through the two institutions' official websites. Read in sequence, they provide a remarkably continuous trace of parliamentary life across decades of debates, procedures, and the shifting vocabulary of representation. For the Chamber we use the verbatim transcripts; for the Senate the equivalent official records. The workflow relies on Python, used here as a research "toolbox" that enables flexible interaction with heterogeneous web archives and supports reproducible procedures from acquisition to analysis. The design of the scraping strategy was shaped by a constraint: we sought to avoid overly intense forms of web scraping that might burden institutional servers or

trigger protective mechanisms. The solution was to adopt controlled, incremental harvesting patterns, structured around chronologically meaningful units, and calibrated to approximate non-massive, human-like interaction with the repositories.

The methodological adoption of Python is central to digitally augmented research, as this general-purpose, high-level programming language emphasizes code readability and concise syntax, making it highly suitable for manipulating large textual datasets (Qamar, and Raza, 2024; Rogel-Salazar, 2025). Python serves as the lingua franca for data science, facilitating scripting, prototyping, and the execution of complex data processing workflows (Rogel-Salazar, 2025). Its strength lies in its extensive ecosystem of open-source libraries, such as pandas and Scikit-learn, which implement functions necessary for statistical modeling, machine learning, and structured data analysis (Rogel-Salazar, 2025). Python supports the crucial steps of tokenization, removing stop words, and statistical analysis of word frequencies in historical texts (Zeng, 2024: 4214). For historians investigating political elites, Python is an indispensable tool because it enables the analysis of unstructured source material at scale and facilitates the extraction of essential structured information (Henriot, 2025).

The methodology employs an AI-augmented workflow (ChatGPT 5.2), positioning Large Language Models (LLMs) strictly as technical assistants for controlled cognitive delegation to the machine. The core interpretive research question was firmly established prior to commencement of the research. The use of LLMs for generating Python code and for correcting the English text was conducted with a conscious recognition that generative outputs are statistically plausible rather than authentically veridical. Therefore, every step was predicated on furnishing extremely precise questions and subjecting the resultant outputs to stringent human oversight. This process involved manually checking computational results, maintaining detailed knowledge of the underlying code, and performing direct intervention to guarantee accuracy. This transparent and documented

procedure ensures the maintenance of the historian's ultimate auctorialité and upholds the central academic imperative of reproducibility in digital historical scholarship.

This study therefore proceeds through a three-step analysis that reflects both the structure of the sources and the historical questions pursued. The first step is the exhaustive and systematic collection of the Chamber of Deputies sittings. The year-based segmentation provided operational stability — bounded queries, easier recovery after interruptions, clearer detection of gaps — and also produced a chronological backbone for subsequent aggregation. The legislature dimension, by contrast, ensured that the extraction respected the institutional framing through which the Chamber itself organises its activity and memory. The result is a corpus designed to be comprehensive for the period under study and structured in a way that preserves the archival logic of the source.

The second step mirrors the first, but is adapted to the specific organisation of the Senate repository. Here, too, the guiding principle is completeness, pursued through incremental harvesting that proceeds year by year. The outcome is a second corpus that is comparable in its chronological ordering and equally anchored in official documentation.

The third step begins only once the two corpora-the Chamber series and the Senate series-have been assembled as complete documentary bases. At this point, the logic shifts from acquisition to comparison. The purpose is explicitly relational: to treat the two parliamentary bodies not as parallel repositories, but as interacting institutional worlds that together shape the production of Italian political order. This comparative level is where the study addresses questions such as the relative "weight" of the two chambers, the changing rhythms of their activity, and the ways in which they respond differently — or converge — under major political transformations. Put differently, the third step turns the corpus into an instrument for historical interpretation: it allows us to observe how parliamentary language, procedural density, and the sheer volume of recorded speech evolve over time, and how these evolutions relate to broader shifts in the

structure of the state, the social composition of elites, and the expansion or contraction of political participation.

The comparative step is also the point at which the study's long-duration ambition becomes most visible. What matters here is not a single debate or a single legislative event, but the cumulative texture of parliamentary life: the regularities and disruptions, the accelerations and silences, the changing balance between deliberation and routine. The archives, read at scale, allow us to examine parliamentary speech as a social fact: produced within constraints, shaped by institutional procedures, and embedded in the transformations of the Italian polity. Once collected, the texts are processed through an initial layer of text-as-data measurement-starting with word counts and other basic indicators — whose role is diagnostic and orienting rather than inferential.

REPRODUCIBILITY AND DATA AVAILABILITY[1]

The computational workflow was organised in a reproducible sequence, moving from the acquisition of the official parliamentary records to the production of derived datasets and figures. The scripts used in the article have been preserved and made available in a dedicated GitHub repository: https://github.com/goffredoadinolfi/Camera_Senate_Working_Paper_15_05_2026.

The repository is organised according to the main stages of the workflow: downloading the parliamentary records, producing word and sitting counts, generating derived yearly datasets, and creating the figures used in the article. The scripts were developed and executed in Spyder 6, using Python 3.11.11 packaged by conda-forge, within an IPython 8.37.0 environment. The main libraries used were requests for HTTP access,

1 To ensure reproducibility, the Python scripts, derived datasets and output figures used in this article have been deposited in a dedicated GitHub repository: https://github.com/goffredoadinolfi/Camera_Senate_Working_Paper_15_05_2026. The full PDF corpus is not included because of its size, but the repository contains the scripts used to download the public parliamentary records and reproduce the derived datasets and figures.

pandas and openpyxl for tabular data handling, PyMuPDF/fitz and PyPDF2 for reading and extracting textual content from PDF files, and matplotlib for visualisation. Standard Python libraries such as os, pathlib, time, random, re, unicodedata and typing were used for file management, regular expressions, controlled pauses, and text-processing routines. The first stage consisted in downloading the PDF files of the parliamentary sittings from the official repositories of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. Before running the download scripts, the structure of the two websites was manually inspected in order to identify the URL patterns through which the PDF files could be accessed. The scraping procedure was designed as a controlled and incremental form of harvesting. It proceeded through bounded chronological or institutional units, introduced pauses between requests, and avoided aggressive or massive simultaneous access to the institutional servers. The scripts accessed publicly available PDF files and did not bypass authentication systems, paywalls, or technical restrictions. At the time the scripts were written and executed, no technical restriction prevented this form of access to the public PDF records. The process was nevertheless monitored manually, both to avoid excessive load on the websites and to identify failed, missing, or anomalous downloads. The long-term stability of the scraped sources cannot be assumed. Although the parliamentary records are official public sources and possess strong institutional authority, their technical accessibility depends on website architectures that may change over time. URL structures, file locations, access policies, and server-side restrictions may be modified by the institutions in the future. For this reason, the preserved code should be understood as the reproducible artefact of the workflow actually used for this article, rather than as a guarantee that the same URLs will remain permanently available. Any future reuse of the scripts should therefore verify the current access conditions and terms of use of the parliamentary websites before execution.

The full set of downloaded PDF files has not been uploaded to the repository because of its size. These files are official public records and can be obtained from the institutional websites of the Chamber of Deputies and

the Senate through the download scripts included in the repository, subject to their continued availability and current access conditions. The repository therefore provides the reproducible procedure used to obtain and process the corpus, together with the derived datasets and figures used in the article. These include the yearly Chamber/Senate dataset used to produce the graphs on total words and total sittings, and the keyword-count dataset used to produce the figures on terms such as *guerra, democrazia, socialismo, suffragio, fascismo and assemblea costituente*. After the PDF corpus had been assembled, a second stage produced corpus-level measurements. The counting scripts scanned the Chamber and Senate PDF folders, extracted the year from each filename, read the textual content of each document, counted words through whitespace tokenisation, and aggregated the results by year and parliamentary body. This produced the dataset parole_camera_senato_per_anno.xlsx, which was then used as input for the visualisation scripts generating the total-word and total-sitting graphs. A further script produced yearly counts for selected political keywords in the two corpora. These counts were saved in parole_chiave_camera_senato_per_anno.xlsx and then used to generate the comparative keyword graphs. The resulting measurements are descriptive and diagnostic: they provide indicators of corpus size, parliamentary rhythm, and lexical salience, rather than a substitute for historical interpretation.

COUNTING THE WORD AND SESSIONS

Parliamentarism in the Kingdom of Sardinia assumes a central place from the outset, even though the Statuto Albertino did not, in a strict constitutional sense, assign Parliament a decisive role, for instance, in the formation of government.

In practice, however, it quickly becomes the privileged site where decisions are discussed, justified, contested, and, in a certain measure, domesticated within a shared public language. What changes in 1848 is

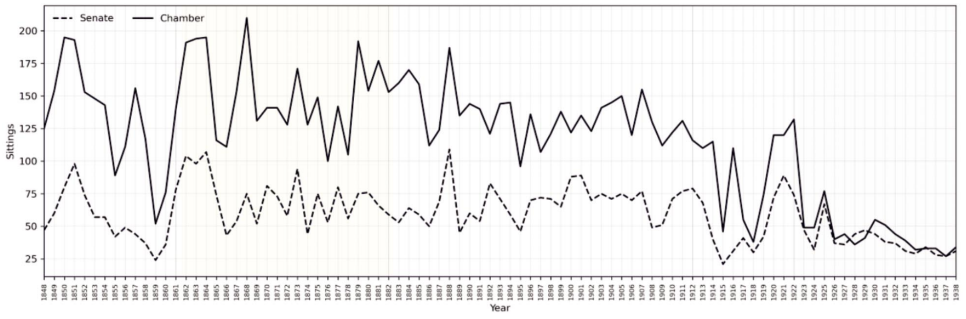


Figure 1 Total sittings, Senate vs Chamer (1848-1938)

therefore not only the institutional frame, but the emergence of a regular parliamentary time: the duty to sit, the obligation to return to the chamber, and the expectation that political conflict, instead of remaining behind closed doors, will pass — at least in part — through an officially recorded space. That is why the simplest indicators-how often the two chambers meet, how much they speak-are not trivial (Figure 1).

They do not tell us the whole story (they cannot reveal irony, persuasion, intimidation, boredom, theatre, or genuine deliberation), but they do register something basic about representation as a practice: whether politics is being processed through parliamentary time, and whether conflict is being converted into parliamentary language. The central argument of the paper is simple. Over the long run, Italian parliamentarism is structured by a set of cleavages that remain surprisingly durable until Fascism, at which point the system is not merely altered but reshaped in its relationship to speech. They can be read from the graphs as patterns of pulse and silence, expansion and contraction, divergence and convergence between Senate and Chamber. They are: (1) a bicameral cleavage in which formal symmetry coexists with a practical hierarchy of speech (Figure 2); (2) an eventful cleavage in which "big questions" interrupt and reconfigure parliamentary time; (3) a foundational cleavage, because high-intensity parliamentary speech is not a late achievement but present from the beginning; and finally (4) the fascist cleavage, a sustained compression of sessions and

words that flattens differences between the two chambers by draining parliament of contestation.

A bicameral regime: "perfect" on paper, asymmetrical in practice

Under the Statuto Albertino, the constitutional design is, in a strict sense, one of *bicameralismo perfetto*: legislation requires the same text to be approved by the Chamber, the Senate, and the Crown. In that formal architecture, the two houses share the legislative function, and the Senate can refuse what comes from the elected chamber. The Chamber, anchored in elections and exposed to shifting coalitions, tends to concentrate initiative, visibility, and the pressures of public contestation. The Senate, appointed and socially more stable, operates with different *tempos* and a different relationship to conflict: often as a brake, sometimes as a revising forum, and at times as a reservoir of continuity.

And yet, when we watch the parliamentary record over decades, the everyday life of the system is organised around a practical hierarchy: the Chamber of Deputies is the central corpus. It sits more; it speaks more; it occupies more of the political calendar. This is already true at the beginning, and it remains broadly true through the liberal decades. In the graphs, the Chamber's line is simply "bigger" most of the time. The reason is not simply institutional. It is social and anthropological: it lies in what each chamber is made of — as a body, as a set of life trajectories, as a social ecology.

The Senate is appointed for life. Its members are drawn overwhelmingly from the upper strata of the kingdom: aristocrats, large landowners, senior state officials, high administrators, and men of established prestige. It is also a chamber of long careers. The crucial difference is this: senators do not need to face a constituency. They are not compelled, year after year, to translate local expectations into national speech or to perform responsiveness under electoral threat. Their legitimacy is status-based and

state-mediated. They can intervene decisively — especially through veto and amendment — without needing the same continuous public performance.

Deputies, by contrast, live under a different clock. The Chamber is an elected arena. Even where electoral politics is narrow or mediated by elite brokerage, election produces a specific compulsion: to be seen, to be heard, to build alliances, to justify, to attack, to defend, to signal. In the Chamber, speech is not merely the expression of opinion; it is a currency of visibility. If the Senate is built to stabilise, the Chamber is built to metabolise conflict. And conflict, in a representative regime, tends to generate words. This explains why the Chamber dominates the parliamentary record without implying that the Senate is weak. In the background, it protects property, prestige, continuity, and the long memory of the state. The Chamber is where representation is performed; the Senate is where representation is contained. The performance is noisier. The containment can be decisive.

The sudden installation of parliamentary time: 1848 as rupture

If we return to the beginning, what stands out in the record is not gradualism but immediacy. Once the Statuto Albertino is granted, parliamentarism does not behave like an experiment that slowly finds its voice. Even under the pressure of the First War of Independence, the parliamentary machine runs. Figure 2 point in a direction: whatever the limitations of representation in the mid-nineteenth century, parliamentarism as a discursive practice is intense early on (Figure 2).

Political elites rapidly accept, or are forced to accept, that politics will be done not only through decrees and courtly negotiation but through repeated public speech in an institutional space that claims to represent the nation. From the perspective of representation, that early intensity is more than rhetoric. It is the creation of a new habitus: the repeated act of sitting, speaking, recording, and responding produces a sense of political normality. It teaches both elites and observers that political legitimacy has a

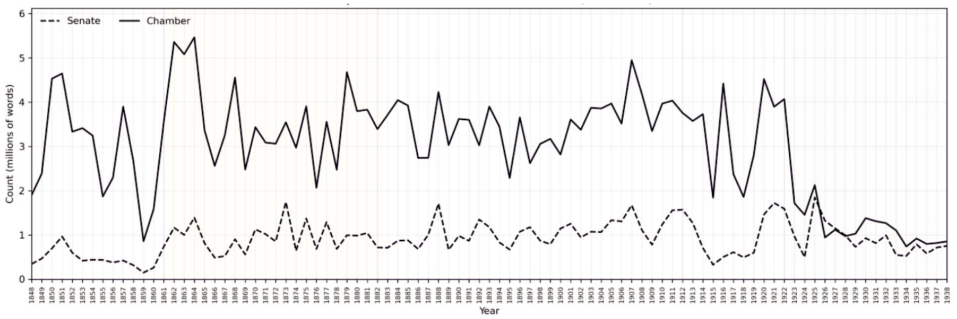


Figure 2 Total words, Senate vs Chamber (1848-1938)

vocal dimension. Even when the electorate is limited, the system behaves as if it must constantly explain itself to an imagined public.

Routine and Interruption in Liberal Parliamentarism (1861-1919)

The second major cleavage is not between chambers but between routine and interruption. Over the long run, Italy's parliamentary record is marked by "eventful" moments when the rhythm changes sharply — when sessions compress, speech contracts, or the relationship between the two chambers is briefly reweighted. These moments matter because they show that parliamentarism is not a self-propelling engine. It depends on the political environment: wars, state-building crises, legitimacy shocks, and regime transitions can all reallocate political energy away from parliament or concentrate it into fewer, heavier moments.

The unification years are a first illustration. The political stakes of creating a new state-integrating territories, harmonising administrations, settling fiscal and legal questions produce a phase in which parliamentary speech becomes a tool of state narration and consolidation. One can read in the graphs a sense of expansion, as if the state is speaking itself into being. Parliament becomes a site where the new Italy is continuously described, debated, justified. It is also a site where the conflicts of integration

are given language rather than being resolved only by coercion. Later, the shift of 1876 (from Destra storica to Sinistra storica) can be read not only as alternation but as a change in political elasticity. Liberal parliamentarism becomes more openly "political" in style: more negotiation, more manoeuvre, more visible coalition-building. In such a context, the Chamber's centrality is unsurprising. It is the natural theatre for political entrepreneurship, because it is the chamber most exposed to the pressures of competition and legitimacy. The suffrage enlargement of 1882 is a different kind of turning point. It is easy to write a deterministic sentence — "broader suffrage increases parliamentary speech" — but the record is not that neat. What is more interesting, and historically more plausible, is that suffrage enlargement changes the stakes of parliamentary talk without necessarily changing its total volume in a simple way. By the time suffrage expands, the Chamber is already a large discursive machine. The system is already talkative. The change lies less in "more speech" and more in who speech is for and what it must accomplish: the parliamentary arena is forced to anticipate a broader political world, even if its internal rhythms do not immediately accelerate. Then comes the cluster of imperial and legitimacy shocks around the end of the century: defeat, coercive backlash, rising tensions between inclusion and order. Here, parliamentary speech often behaves like a barometer. It can swell as legitimacy is argued over, or it can become constrained as the state leans on coercion. The long-run impression, however, is that parliament remains central to the management of conflict in the liberal period: Italy does not abandon parliamentary language easily; it uses it to mediate, to justify, to contain. Even when violence exists outside the chamber, the chamber remains a place where politics claims to be processed. The Giolittian years make this particularly vivid. This is the era of "managed inclusion" — a style of governance that tries to incorporate social forces without ceding control. Parliament here is not an ornament; it is a device. It absorbs pressure and turns it into negotiable forms. The Chamber, above all, functions as an arena where social conflict is translated into political language. And the Senate, insulated from the electorate, functions as a

counterweight: a chamber where the state's upper strata can slow and filter. One could almost describe the system as a two-speed mechanism: a high-energy elected house that speaks the conflict, and a stabilising appointed house that can restrain outcomes. The Libya war and the near-universal male suffrage reforms intensify this tension. Imperial mobilisation enlarges the symbolic nation; mass enfranchisement enlarges the political nation. These are not simply "more people voting"; they are shifts in the relationship between state, society, and legitimacy. Yet again the record encourages a subtle reading: parliamentary life may remain intense, but the meaning of intensity changes. Speech is no longer only the language of elite negotiation; it becomes a language that must anticipate mass politics — its demands, its fears, its promises. The First World War then acts as a brutal interruption. Emergency politics compresses parliamentary time; the state's coercive capacities expand; open contestation is strained. In the figure 1 and 2 the war years stand out as a sharp deformation: fewer sittings, thinner routine. Yet the parliamentary record does not simply vanish. When parliament speaks, it can do so with concentrated weight. This is the paradox of wartime parliamentarism: even when the chamber meets less, it may still function as a site where the state seeks a public language for sacrifice, discipline, and national purpose. The "event" does not eliminate parliamentarism; it distorts it.

From parliamentary crisis to the end of plenary parliamentary life (1919-1938)

Within the interpretative framework adopted here, 1919 functions as the pivotal year. From this point, the divergence between Senate and Chamber can no longer be read primarily as a matter of institutional design, but must be understood as a politically consequential cleavage shaped by the reconfiguration of representation and parliamentary competition. The Chamber is now dominated by parties of mass inclusion — Socialists and Catholics — whose organisational logic, social base, and moral vocabulary differ

markedly from the older liberal parliamentary world. The Chamber becomes, in a strong sense, the institutional entry point of mass politics. The Senate does not undergo the same transformation. It remains appointed, life-tenured, status-weighted. Its members do not need to cultivate constituencies. It is structurally "old" in a moment when the Chamber is becoming structurally "new". This is precisely where the Senate's veto power becomes politically salient. When the Chamber represents mass parties and mass demands, the Senate's capacity to stop bills is no longer merely a constitutional detail; it becomes a potential fault line of legitimacy. One can imagine, even without reading a single speech, the tension that such a system generates: an elected chamber claiming to embody the nation's new political majority, and an appointed chamber capable of obstructing that majority's legislative translation. The bicameral system becomes a site where two principles of representation — electoral inclusion and elite continuity — can collide. Figure 1 and 2, in such a context, should not be forced to "prove" a single narrative about growing parliamentarism. Their value is different: they show whether parliamentary speech remains an arena of struggle or begins to be displaced. They help us see whether the system becomes more talkative because mass politics enters, or whether the system's crisis begins to reallocate power away from parliament. The most historically interesting possibility — one that subsequent lexical indicators can explore — is that the key change after 1919 is not necessarily total volume but discursive distance: the two chambers may draw closer in rhythm while moving further apart in vocabulary, priorities, and moral grammar. With Mussolini's appointment in 1922 the parliamentary crisis becomes the opening of regime change. It is important not to narrate this as an instant disappearance of parliamentary life. Dictatorships often pass through a phase in which they still need institutional language. They must present rupture as continuity, exception as legality, violence as order. Parliamentary forms can be useful in this process, because they provide a stage on which power can clothe itself in procedural normality. But once the fascist "exception" becomes law in 1925-26, the longer pattern emerges:

parliament continues to exist, yet it loses its earlier function as the primary arena of contestation.

The figure 1 and 2 show a sustained decline in sessions and a compression of the parliamentary word-mass, particularly in the Chamber. And perhaps the most revealing feature of all is convergence: over time the Senate and the Chamber begin to resemble each other in rhythm and volume, not because the system has achieved genuine bicameral balance, but because the elected chamber has been drained of the competitive energy that once made it the central corpus. This is the crucial analytical point for a history of representation. Fascism does not merely change who governs; it changes how politics is allowed to appear. In a competitive representative regime, speech is a tool for struggle, persuasion, signalling, and negotiation. In an authoritarian regime, speech is increasingly a tool for affirmation, transmission, and ritual. When contestation is removed, the political need for expansive parliamentary talk diminishes, and the institution's discursive life contracts. The Lateran Pacts of 1929 and the Racial Laws of 1938 belong to a later phase, in which legitimacy is reconstructed and citizenship is radicalised. Yet by then, parliamentary speech is no longer the place where the nation's conflicts can be openly articulated. These moments are likely to be more visible in thematic and lexical changes than in a resurgence of parliamentary vitality. They mark transformations in the regime's moral and legal order, but the parliamentary arena is increasingly a place where such transformations are framed rather than fought over.

WAR, DEMOCRACY, SOCIALISM AND FASCISM

Parliamentary debate is therefore a privileged observatory. It is where political actors translate social pressures into arguments, where institutional conflicts are publicly staged, and where the boundaries of the representable are negotiated. In this perspective, the contrast between the two chambers is analytically central. The Chamber, increasingly rooted in electoral mobilisation, should be more sensitive to the vocabulary of mass inclusion and

political contestation. The Senate, as an appointed body, should — at least in principle — display greater continuity in its social composition, rhetorical register, and thematic priorities. The key question is whether, and when, those institutional differences become visible in lexical indicators. This section uses the vocabulary of parliamentary debate as a proxy for what representation is made to be about, and for how far the two branches of Parliament speak in the same political language. The core assumption is straightforward: if representation is not merely a constitutional architecture but also a lived relationship between institutions and social forces, then that relationship should leave traces in the words legislators choose, the concepts they repeat, and the themes that crowd out others over time. The empirical material consists of annual word-count indicators extracted from the printed proceedings of the Camera dei deputati and the Senato del Regno from 1848 to the late 1930s.

In what follows, the analysis moves from differences of scale to the substance of representation, by tracing how parliamentary speech gathers and rearranges itself around a small cluster of terms that, in different ways, mark the political trajectory from the Statuto Albertino to the end of the regime.

Guerra (Figure 3) is an obvious starting point, not as an abstract theme but as a recurrent pressure on parliamentary life: the wars of independence (1848-49, 1859, 1866), the colonial and imperial episodes that punctuate Liberal Italy (from the 1890s through the Libyan war of 1911-12), the First World War (1915-18), and, later, the Ethiopian campaign (1935-36). Suffragio (Figure 4) is equally revealing, because it follows the slow widening of the political nation — from an initial electorate of roughly two per cent to near-universal male suffrage — and therefore registers, in its own way, the changing social foundations of parliamentary legitimacy.

Democrazia (Figure 4), by contrast, names a more hesitant and contested evolution: the Statute is born liberal and markedly anti-democratic in its social base, and democratic language enters the record only

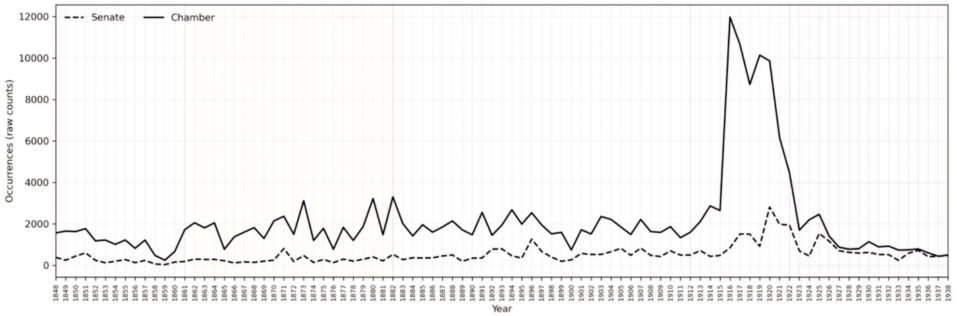


Figure 3 War (guerra), Senate vs Chamber (1848-1938)

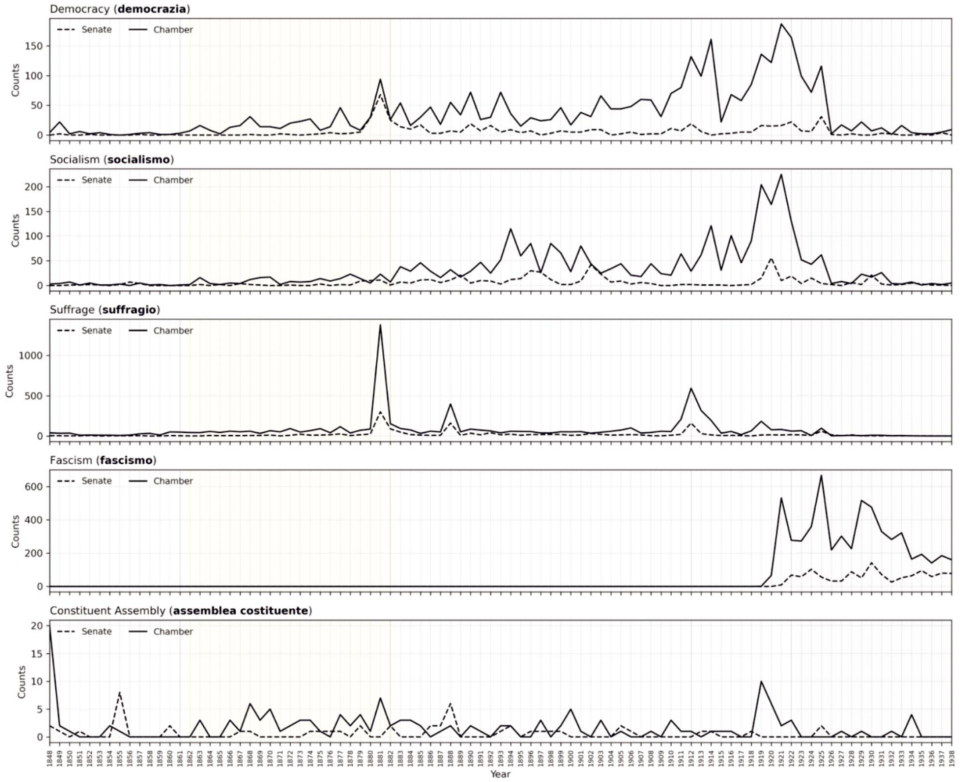


Figure 4 Key terms, Senate (--) vs Chamber (—), 1848-1938

gradually, as electoral inclusion expands and new claims become harder to contain. *Socialismo* (Figure 4) matters because it signals the organised entrance of mass politics into the representative arena — what Cavour, writing in March 1848 in *Il Risorgimento*, described as the "spectre" that haunted Europe — and because its salience helps to locate when social conflict becomes a named, unavoidable presence within parliamentary speech. *Assemblea costituente* (Figure 4) brings into view another horizon of contestation: the recurrent claim that popular sovereignty should reassert itself through a constituent power of its own, and the complex, often tense relationship between the Statute, constitutional change, and the idea of a constitution grounded in the people. Finally, fascismo closes the arc opened in 1848: it is the term through which the post-war crisis is voiced and, increasingly, through which the representative system is redefined, until the conditions of parliamentary contestation are narrowed and, in the end, undone.

What the indicators already suggest

Read against the overall scale of the two corpora, these cumulative counts already sketch a first map of emphasis. The Chamber produces about 3.32 times as many words as the Senate across the whole series; if volume alone were driving the result, one would expect keyword ratios of roughly that magnitude. Instead, the distribution is uneven. *Guerra* is by far the dominant term in both branches (Senate 47,996; Chamber 195,970), and — setting aside *assemblea costituente*, whose very low totals (Senate 49; Chamber 147) make it a weak basis for inference — it is the item with the most "contained" Chamber/Senate ratio (4.08), the one that most nearly brings the two chambers back towards one another. By contrast, the lexicon more directly tied to the transformation of representation is disproportionately Chamber-weighted: *democrazia* (Senate 508; Chamber 3,343; ratio ~6.58), *socialismo* (Senate 549; Chamber 2,958; ~5.39), *suffragio* (Senate 1,641; Chamber 7,036; ~4.29) and, in a different register,

fascismo (Senate 1,165; Chamber 5,695; ~4.89). In this first overview, the Senate thus appears relatively less permeable to the vocabularies of inclusion, mass politics, and regime change, while the language of war — more transversal and state-centred — shows a more even presence across the two branches.

Across the long arc from 1848 to 1938, the cleavage between Chamber and Senate is not captured by a single contrast — appointed versus elected, conservative versus responsive — but by a recurrent difference in tempo and receptivity, which the annual series makes unusually visible. The starting point is structural: the Chamber speaks more, meets more, and therefore leaves a denser textual trace; yet the significance of the cleavage lies less in that predictable imbalance than in the way certain vocabularies gather disproportionately in the elected house whenever the boundaries of representation are being renegotiated. If one follows the record through a small set of terms — *guerra*, *democrazia, socialismo, suffragio* (and *suffragio universale*), *assemblea costituente*, and, later, *fascismo* — a layered chronology emerges. *Guerra* is the most constant pressure on parliamentary speech, because it names not a doctrine but a sequence of state emergencies that repeatedly reorganise attention: the independence wars, the imperial episodes of Liberal Italy, the Libyan war, the First World War, and, later, the Ethiopian campaign; it is therefore also the term that most often draws the two branches into a partially shared horizon, even when the Chamber speaks with far greater intensity (as in the wartime peaks). By contrast, the language of inclusion and mass conflict — *democrazia* and *socialismo* — moves with a slower but unmistakable drift over the decades, initially thin in the early parliamentary regime of a restricted electorate, then becoming more audible as the social base of politics widens and the representative arena is forced to name, rather than merely manage, the question of who belongs. Here the cleavage matters: the Chamber tends to register these pressures earlier and more strongly, while the Senate, though never silent, more often appears to absorb them at a lower volume and with a different

rhythm, as if its institutional position allowed it to lag behind the accelerations of electoral society.

The series also shows how *suffragio* behaves as a vocabulary of conjuncture: it thickens precisely when reform is imminent or being digested — most conspicuously around the first major enlargement (1881-82) and again in the years surrounding the near-universal male suffrage reform (1912-13) — so that the term marks, almost "banally" but very usefully, the moments when the political nation is being explicitly redrawn. *Assemblea costituente* (Figure 4) sits at the opposite extreme: it is episodic, rising in politically charged clusters rather than accumulating steadily. It appears in 1848-49, when constituent demands circulate in the upheaval of war and insurrection; it resurfaces in the early 1880s, on the eve of suffrage reform; and it returns with particular meaning after the First World War, when the language of sovereignty hardens into a question about foundations — about whether the Statute should be superseded, whether a constituent power should be called, and how the relationship between crown, parliament, and nation ought to be recast. In that post-war conjuncture the cleavage between the two branches becomes more than an institutional asymmetry: it begins to look like a divergence between two representational grammars, as the elected Chamber becomes the place where mass politics, democratic vocabulary, and socialist naming intensify together, while the Senate-still nominated, socially and politically older-appears less permeable to the same lexical acceleration.

Finally, fascismo enters the record as a rupture term rather than a gradual trend: largely absent for decades, it rises after 1919, expands rapidly through the crisis years, and then dominates in the period of consolidation, at which point it does not simply add a new theme but alters the conditions under which themes can be contested at all; in that sense, the later years show not only divergence but also a kind of forced convergence by compression, as the representative arena is narrowed and the space for plural conflict is progressively reduced in both chambers.

To quantify the co-movement between *democrazia* and *socialismo*, correlations were computed on yearly totals transformed as log(1 + count), a standard approach that reduces skew and accommodates zeros. Across the full period 1848-1938, *democrazia* and *socialismo* show a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.804$, $n = 91$). When the analysis is restricted to the post-1919 period (1919-1938), the coupling strengthens further in totals ($r = 0.890$, $n = 20$). This pattern is consistent with an interpretation grounded in representational change: as mass politics enters the parliamentary arena, the vocabulary of democracy becomes more active at the same time as the vocabulary of socialism becomes more salient as a named force. Importantly, this remains true even under a simple detrending procedure (correlating residuals after removing a linear time trend), where the post-1919 democracy-socialism correlation remains positive ($r = 0.617$, $n = 20$). In other words, the coupling is not merely a by-product of "everything rising over time"; it reflects a meaningful co-variation within the period in which representation is being contested in mass terms.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are structured on two levels. The first concerns the methodological implications of the Digital History approach adopted in this article, from the construction of the corpus to the computational analysis, visualisation and verification of the results. The second concerns the historical findings that emerged from the study, especially the long-term divergence between the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate and its consequences for Italian parliamentarism.

The methodological choice adopted in this study has proved effective because it combined automation, computational analysis and historical control. The Digital History workflow made it possible to construct the corpus on which the article is based: the digitised official records of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, organised by year and parliamentary

body. Without this stage of automated collection and ordering, the long-term comparison between the two chambers would have remained extremely difficult to sustain. At the same time, the procedure did not consist simply in accumulating files. The corpus had to be checked, structured and interpreted through a constant movement between distant reading and close reading. Python proved particularly useful in this process. It allowed the research to move from the construction of the corpus to the production of measurable indicators: yearly sittings, total word counts and the frequency of selected political terms such as *guerra, democrazia, socialismo, suffragio, assemblea costituente and fascismo*. These indicators were then transformed into tables and graphs, making visible patterns that would have been difficult to perceive through manual reading alone: the different parliamentary rhythms of the two chambers, the greater discursive density of the Chamber, the lexical concentration of mass politics in the elected house, and the later compression of parliamentary speech under Fascism. The value of this methodology lies precisely in this combination of scale and control. Distant reading made it possible to observe long-term structures, asymmetries and discontinuities across almost a century of parliamentary records. Close reading remained necessary to give meaning to those patterns and to avoid treating numerical indicators as self-explanatory evidence. Word counts and keyword frequencies acquired historical significance only when placed within the institutional evolution of Italian parliamentarism: the restricted political nation created by the Statuto Albertino, the expansion of suffrage, the rise of mass parties, the different social composition of the Chamber and the Senate, and the authoritarian transformation of the parliamentary system after 1922. The research also revealed a more fragile aspect of Digital History: the precariousness of code and access. The scripts used in this article are reproducible as computational artefacts, but their future operation cannot be guaranteed in an absolute sense. They depend on website architectures, URL patterns, institutional repositories and access conditions that may change over time. The parliamentary records are official public sources,

but their digital availability remains mediated by technical infrastructures that are not fixed. Links may break, repositories may be reorganised, file paths may change, and access policies may be modified. This means that reproducibility in Digital History does not depend only on sharing code and datasets. It also requires documenting the conditions under which the code worked, the structure of the websites at the time of collection, the choices made during harvesting, and the possible instability of the digital environment. In this sense, the study confirms both the strength and the vulnerability of computational historical research. The strength lies in the capacity to construct and analyse a corpus at a scale that opens new historical questions. The vulnerability lies in the dependence on mutable infrastructures. The code proved extremely effective for collecting, organising, measuring and visualising the parliamentary records, but it also made visible the need to treat digital sources as historically situated objects. Their authority comes from the institutions that produced them; their accessibility depends on technical systems that can change. This is why transparency, reproducibility and the sharing of code and derived datasets are essential, but they must be accompanied by an explicit awareness of the precarious conditions of digital access.

The long-duration analysis of Italian parliamentarism, from the Statuto Albertino to the Chamber of Fasces and Corporations, reveals a system structured by durable cleavages whose political significance only became fully visible in the post-war conjuncture. The evidence is continuous — yearly measures drawn from the official records of the Chamber and the Senate — and the analytical framework is designed to separate slow-moving continuity from moments of rupture, acceleration, or reorientation. Read together, the findings point to four overlapping patterns: a structural bicameral hierarchy concealed beneath formal symmetry; a foundational intensity of parliamentary practice that precedes the gradual consolidation of liberal institutions; an eventful rhythm in which major crises reallocate political energy; and a fascist rupture that, unlike earlier disruptions, does not merely interrupt parliamentarism but progressively drains it of its constitutive function.

The first and most persistent pattern concerns the relationship between the two chambers. The Statuto Albertino established a design of formal symmetry — *bicameralismo perfetto* — in which legislation required approval by the Chamber, the Senate, and the Crown, and the Senate retained the capacity to block what came from the elected house. In practice, however, the system operated through a hierarchy that the quantitative evidence makes legible: the Chamber produced approximately 3.32 times as many words as the Senate across the full series and met nearly twice as often. This imbalance was not the product of constitutional text but of the social ecology of the two institutions. The Chamber lived under the compulsion of electoral performance — the need to speak, to justify, to build alliances, to respond to a constituency, however restricted. The Senate was appointed for life, drawn from the upper strata of the kingdom, and insulated from electoral pressure. Its function was stabilising rather than performative: not to metabolise political conflict but to contain its outputs. The significance of this asymmetry lies not in the volume gap itself, which is predictable, but in the lexical distribution. The vocabularies most directly tied to the transformation of representation — *democrazia* (ratio ∼6.58), *socialismo* (∼5.39), *suffragio* (∼4.29) — accumulate in the elected house well beyond what overall word production would predict. *Guerra*, by contrast, approaches the overall ratio (4.08), reflecting the transversal character of state emergency as a shared institutional language. This pattern is consistent across the full series and does not disappear under detrending: what one observes is a structural, not incidental, difference in the receptivity of the two chambers to the expanding vocabulary of mass politics.

The second pattern concerns the timing and texture of parliamentary intensity. One of the more counterintuitive findings of this study is that parliamentarism does not emerge gradually in Italy; it installs itself from the outset with a density of speech and session frequency that challenges the assumption of slow institutional learning. Even in 1848-49, under the pressure of the First War of Independence, the parliamentary machine runs at intensity. This foundational cleavage matters because it establishes that

the obligation to sit, to speak, and to record was not a late achievement of the liberal state but one of its earliest structural features. The implication is theoretical as well as empirical: representative legitimacy, even within a severely restricted franchise, required continuous public articulation.

The third pattern is the eventful cleavage. Parliamentary rhythms across the liberal decades are not self-propelling; they depend on the political environment. Wars, state-building crises, and legitimacy shocks deform parliamentary time — compressing routine, reallocating political energy, and altering the semantic centre of gravity of debate. The Libya war and the near-universal male suffrage reform of 1912 are a case in point: taken together, they shift the social foundations of political legitimacy without immediately transforming parliamentary rhythms, setting conditions for changes whose consequences only become fully visible after 1919.

The fourth pattern is the fascist cleavage. From 1922 onwards, and especially after the legal consolidation of dictatorship in 1925-26, the parliamentary record shows a sustained decline in sessions and a compression of word production. The most revealing feature, however, is not the absolute decline but the convergence between the two chambers in rhythm and volume — a convergence that does not signal bicameral balance but the exhaustion of the competitive energy that had made the Chamber the central corpus of Italian parliamentary life. In a representative regime, speech is a tool for struggle, persuasion, and negotiation; its distribution reflects the pressures that representation must process. Under Fascism, this function is progressively narrowed: speech becomes less a medium of contestation and more a medium of affirmation, and the Chamber, deprived of its electoral logic, begins to resemble the Senate it had always outpaced.

The year 1919 is the analytical hinge on which these patterns turn. From this point, the divergence between the two chambers is no longer primarily institutional but politically consequential: the Chamber, dominated by mass parties, becomes the entry point of a politics whose organisational logic, social base, and moral vocabulary differ markedly from the older

liberal parliamentary world. The Senate, structurally unchanged — still appointed, still life-tenured, still status-weighted — retains the capacity to obstruct legislation in a context where the elected house is increasingly voicing the claims of a mass political nation. The bicameral veto thus becomes not a constitutional technicality but a fault line of legitimacy. The only path toward a democratic settlement that could have resolved this tension would have required a constituent rupture — an *assemblea costituente* capable of redefining the foundations of sovereignty and fundamentally transforming a second chamber that was constitutionally insulated from democratic pressure. The lexical evidence is consistent with this reading: *assemblea costituente* rises in precisely the conjunctures — 1848-49, the eve of the 1882 reform, and the post-war years — when the question of sovereignty becomes most acute. It is precisely as this constituent horizon takes shape after 1919 that fascismo enters the record, rapidly expands, and ultimately forecloses the institutional route through which the long, uneven movement toward democratic rule might have been completed.

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