



## Italy's Meloni Becoming Force to Be Reckoned With in European Politics

Giorgia Meloni, the right-wing prime minister of Italy, could be set to shake up European politics in a big way.

When Meloni and her Brothers of Italy party took power in October 2022, Europe's political establishment went on high alert at the prospect of a major country being led by a party that openly opposes abortion, the LGBT movement, and illegal migration.

Since then, Meloni has managed a delicate balancing act in which she has ceded ground on certain international issues, such as the Ukraine conflict, while growing her clout in European politics — and leveraging this influence to move the establishment to the right.



AP Images  
Giorgia Meloni

As [Politico](#) notes, pressure exerted by Meloni, alongside other right-wing leaders, influenced Brussels to abandon proposed restrictions on pesticide use and reduce the scope of its climate plan. Additionally, Meloni's influence played a significant role in shifting Europe's approach to migration away from asylum and intra-EU redistribution, toward providing financial incentives to third countries to manage migrants outside of the bloc's borders.

Moreover, Meloni maintains a subtle yet potent sway over prominent EU figures such as European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

In a show of the Italian leader's rising authority within the European Union power structure, Meloni will travel to Egypt to accompany von der Leyen as she finalizes a migration agreement. Under this deal, the EU will provide financial support to Cairo — with estimates ranging from €4.6-€5.5 billion (\$5 to \$6 billion) — to bolster government finances and mitigate migration. This comes after Meloni made a comparable visit to Tunisia last year.

Right-wing parties have been gaining ground in various European countries, and political analysts predict that such parties will make significant gains in the European Parliament in the upcoming June elections. This could make Meloni the de facto leader of Europe's right-wing faction, allowing her to push the EU's agenda rightward on issues from migration to the climate proposals that have increasingly become a target of attacks from the Right.

Meloni's Italian critics balk at her ascendance on the European stage, arguing that her government is using a campaign to discreetly attack the LGBT community. And skeptics of her growing role in European politics argue that Italy is held back from playing a more prominent role within the EU due to a relatively weak economy compared to Germany's and France's. Currently, Paris and Berlin are considered the two main drivers of European politics, with Poland under Donald Tusk becoming a growing player.



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on March 16, 2024

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“She is by far in Italy the closest politician to [Donald] Trump,” Italian political analyst Marco Damilano said. “And on the European level, her government would be best positioned” to build a close relationship with a Trump White House.

Those close to Meloni say she would prefer a Trump win in November; nevertheless, she has cultivated friendly relations with Joe Biden.

*Politico* reports:

Asked to describe his preferred outcome for the U.S. presidential election, Nicola Procaccini, who co-leads Meloni’s faction in the European Parliament, said: “We hope that Trump will win,” though he was quick to follow that statement with a qualifier: “But obviously Giorgia is also the leader of the Italian government and she has a very good relationship with the president of the United States, Joe Biden.”

Meloni’s camp is trying to have it both ways. On one hand, she’s doing a lot to ensure her pro-Ukraine, pro-NATO credentials are in good order, including traveling to Kyiv on the second anniversary of Russia’s invasion in February and hosting a special, Ukraine-focused gathering of G7 countries that same month.

On the other, she’s doing her best to court anti-Ukraine MAGA Republicans by building ties with Trump’s camp thanks to Florida-based members of her far right Brothers of Italy party.

Brothers of Italy lawmakers say that Meloni, who received an enthusiastic reception when she attended 2020 CPAC in Florida, would be Trump’s go-to liaison for European politics. The Italian prime minister’s closeness to Trump has led to suspicion that she would backpedal on her support for Ukraine if Trump were to win the 2024 U.S. presidential election. In fact, she was caught complaining about “Ukraine fatigue” during a call to a supposed African leader who turned out to be a prank caller.

In another example of her tightrope act, Meloni helped convince Hungary’s Viktor Orban to give his approval to a €50 billion aid deal for Ukraine after months of Budapest’s dragging its feet on the matter. Orban actually invited Meloni to be the guest star of his meeting of conservative leaders in his country last September — a further sign of Meloni’s ability to maintain close ties to the Right while working within the establishment.

As a part of the largest coalition in the European Parliament, the European People’s Party (EPP), von der Leyen can expect automatic backing from 12 or 13 conservative leaders. However, to reach the required 15-country majority for approval, she will need the endorsement of at least two additional non-EPP leaders.

The primary support that von der Leyen is expected to seek in order to secure approval will likely come from Petr Fiala, the prime minister of Czechia, and Meloni.

Thus, von der Leyen cannot afford to cast aside Giorgia Meloni and the Right. The question is whether Meloni can be trusted to legitimately use her growing leverage to fight for the Right without selling out, as so many have done before.



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