

# Everyone *Except* Russia Meddled in Italy's General Election

by Claudio Celani

Sept. 28 (Reprinted by permission from the European *E.I.R. Strategic Alert Weekly Newsletter*)—The good news about the general elections held Sept. 25 in Italy is that voters have unequivocally punished Mario Draghi and his legacy; the bad news is that “Draghism,” while kicked out of the front door, might come back through the window.

The elections were won by the center-right alliance, with 43.79% in the Chamber of Deputies and 44.2% in the Senate. Thanks to the “majority bonus” peculiar to Italy’s parliamentary election system, the coalition ends

fact that under the ruinous reign of the Draghi government which the European Commission had essentially “appointed,” FdI was the only opposition party. Conversely, the Lega lost 50% of its 2018 votes because it had joined the Draghi government.

The center-left suffered a historic debacle, mainly because they were the most enthusiastic supporters of the Draghi government, but also because Democratic Party leader Enrico Letta refused to ally with the Five Star Movement (M5S) and ran in a coalition with minor groups, such as the Greens and the pro-EU party “Più



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*Giorgia Meloni (left), expected to be Italy's next Prime Minister, represents a new political correlation that could get out from under the control of the European Union establishment. On the eve of the election, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (right) issued threats against Italy not to deviate from the EU's "integration" process.*

up with a large majority in both houses (235 seats out of 400 in the Chamber and 112 out of 200 in the Senate). Within the center-right, Giorgia Meloni’s Fratelli d’Italia (FdI, Brothers of Italy) got the most votes as expected, with 25.99%, while its allies Lega scored 8.77%, Forza Italia, 8.11%, and a tiny moderate group 0.95%. In the Senate, FdI got 26.01%; the Lega, 8.85%; Forza Italia, 8.27%; and the “Moderates,” 0.89%.

The big success of FdI, which increased its votes sevenfold from the 2018 elections, is due to the simple

Europa,” plus the splinter group around former M5S leader and Foreign Minister Luigi di Maio. Thus, the center-left only received 26.13% and 80 seats in the Chamber, and 25.99% and 51 seats in the Senate.

The M5S, which ran alone under former Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, got an unexpected 15.43% and 41 seats in the Deputies and an equally unexpected 15.55% and 28 seats in the Senate. That result is much lower than the whopping 32% of 2018, but still better than forecast, given the incompetence shown by its

representatives in the government, and the fact that they, too, had been part of the Draghi government. However, Conte had expressed his disagreement with Draghi on the Ukraine war, and ultimately promised to maintain his “baby,” the so-called *reddito di cittadinanza*, or “citizens’ income,” which all other parties want to either cancel or reduce.

A fourth group, born out of the merger of former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi’s Italia Viva party and former Minister Carlo Calenda’s new party called Azione, failed to reach its goal of over 10%, which would have allowed it to play the kingmaker between the two blocs, receiving 7.79% in the Deputies and 7.73% in the Senate. This is worth reporting, as Renzi-Calenda had enjoyed out-of-proportion media coverage and campaigned on a plan to bring back Mario Draghi as Prime Minister.

The real winner of the elections, however, are the non-voters. Abstentionism was at the record-high level of 36%, with peaks of 50% in some Southern Italian regions.

### **The European Commission Threatened**

Italy experienced the most ferocious foreign meddling in elections ever, with the possible exception of 1948, when her place in the Western camp was at stake, threatened by a possible victory of the Popular Front. Giorgia Meloni, leader of the Fratelli d’Italia party and most probably the new Prime Minister, had outdone herself in swearing allegiance to NATO, to the United States and to Brussels. And yet, the mainstream media, think tanks and trans-Atlantic political figures warned and warned of the danger of a center-right victory and the installation of Mrs. Meloni in Rome’s Palazzo Chigi.

On the Ukraine conflict, Meloni claimed that she was more hawkish than Mario Draghi, he himself being among the most hawkish in the EU. She sent her emissary, Adolfo Urso, to Kiev to manifest her support for the Zelensky regime. And on Election Eve, in an interview with the Taiwan news agency CNA, she promised that, if elected, she would not renew the 2019 Memorandum of Understanding between Italy and China, or Italy’s membership in the Belt and Road Initiative. On economic policy, another of her emissaries, Guido Crosetto, stated that her government would not deviate from EU-dictated rigor, but she would call on Draghi to help draft the next budget plan.

Apparently, this was not enough for the trans-Atlantic elites. Exemplary is an analysis published

Sept. 22 by the Atlantic Council, one of the leading Anglo-American think-tanks, which concluded:

There seems to be little concern about whether Italy will remain a solid trans-Atlantic partner, but the big question mark looms over relations with Europe. Will Italy fight at any cost for a Europe whole and free, or will it simply squabble with other European countries? As the Italians say, *non si sa*—no one knows.

Indeed, Meloni has been a close ally of Hungary’s Viktor Orbán, with whom she and her party share the view that national law should have pre-eminence over European law. The perspective that Italy, the third-largest EU member state, should join forces with tiny Hungary and maybe Poland in blocking the EU’s so-called “integration” process is a nightmare for Brussels, Paris, and Berlin—so much so that European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen literally issued threats on the eve of the vote, in the event of a center-right victory. Speaking in Princeton, she said: “We’ll see. If things go in a difficult direction—and I’ve spoken about Hungary and Poland—we have the tools.”

And a senior White House official had told reporters three days before, that President Biden would “take measure of” the new Prime Minister and “make a determination about what it’s going to mean.” Even German Chancellor Olaf Scholz broke protocol one week before the vote, urging Italians not to vote for “Meloni’s post-fascists who would lead the country in a wrong direction.”

In the end, the only one who did not interfere in the Italian elections was Vladimir Putin! All this is unprecedented, showing the hysterical fear that Giorgia Meloni might, despite her assurances, be pushed by events and by her allies to get out of control.

Indeed, both Matteo Salvini (Lega) and Silvio Berlusconi (Forza Italia), have campaigned for a review of the sanctions on Russia, which have boomeranged on Europe and Italy, a major consumer of Russian gas. A few days before the vote, Berlusconi stated in a television spot that he is convinced that Putin’s original intention with the military operation was “to replace Zelensky with decent people.” With their low election results, Salvini and Berlusconi’s weight in the coalition is not what they expected, but they know that the majority of Italians are against the sanctions according to several polls, which is something the future Meloni government cannot simply ignore.