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Italy

# Post Fascist Leader Giorgia Meloni Wins in Italy

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**The results early on Monday 26 September show the right wing coalition on 43.9 per cent. Given the mix of first past the post and proportional voting, it takes longer to work out the exact seat allocation. However, all the projections give solid working majorities to the right wing coalition, but not the two-thirds needed to change the constitution to a presidential system.**

Giorgia Meloni, the leader of the post-fascist Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy), will be the first female prime minister of Italy. Her party did even better than the final public polls a week or so ago. She is the politician who shouted the traditional fascist slogan, *Dio, Patria e Famiglia* (God, Fatherland, and Family) at the neo-fascist Vox rally a year ago in the Spanish state. Meloni says she is not a fascist but wants a similar approach to Orban, the extreme right wing leader of Hungary. She says Mussolini made some bad mistakes, like the racial laws, but he did good things too. Marine Le Pen, the French far-right leader, has already expressed her delight at Meloni's success. The Italian leader led a campaign where she attacked gay and trans rights, rejected the positive welfare reform, the Citizens Income, argued for stopping any migrant boats landing in Italy, and stressed the idea of Italians first, which includes confronting the European Community.

Fratelli d'Italia increased their vote six-fold compared to 2018. According to the analysis on the transfer of votes between elections made by Conzorzio Opinio for the RAI, the state broadcaster, 40% of her voters came from former Lega supporters. Meloni's political choice to stay outside the Draghi government of national unity has paid off. Salvini was part of the government and the Lega appeared to be vacillating and unclear on its policies, particularly in relation to the COVID pandemic. Another 13% came from Berlusconi's Forza Italia and 9% from the Five Star Movement. Ten per cent of its votes formerly abstained – it looks like the hard right did a better job of gaining from the huge pool of abstentionists than the Democratic Party, who had prioritised this tactic.

The absence rate rose to 37%, ten points worse than in 2018. Ordinary people see a circus in parliament. There have been 3 completely different governments since then – the Lega/M5S coalition of the populists, then the PD/M5S and finally the Draghi government of nearly all the main parties since 2018. This means that confidence and trust in politics is at an all-time low. People are experiencing increasing inequality and a cost of living crisis, and they see that their votes do not count for much.

Another worrying fact from these results is that Meloni is the first party throughout Italy except in the South, where she is six points behind the M5S score of 26%. Fratelli d'Italia has completely changed the hierarchy within the right wing coalition. Its score is bigger than the combined results of the Lega and Forza Italia. If the results had been more even, then we might have seen manoeuvring to prevent Meloni becoming prime minister. The results are so bad for Salvini that his leadership is now under threat. Currents that want to narrow the objectives of the Lega to its original regional autonomy/independence mission are already on the warpath.

Meloni also campaigned effectively and immediately moved to quash any exhibitions of fascist gestures, dumping a candidate who made the Roman salute. She consistently put forward a pro-Western view on the Ukraine war, unlike Berlusconi, who even argued that Putin just wanted to replace Zelensky with some better people! Salvini was also tarnished by his former closeness to Putin—there is a photo of him wearing a Putin t-shirt and his party had all sorts of dubious financial deals with Moscow. Meloni also benefited from being the new (a refurbished brand) and not involved in any of the politics of the last four years, as well as the fact that she was running to be the first woman prime minister.

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Her economic policies are firmly anchored in the neo-liberal approach of previous Italian governments, and she has toned down her virulent attacks on the EU. Meloni wants to present herself as a prime minister similar to the other parties. However, she will try and move Italy towards an Orban type society—in terms of a vicious anti-migrant policy, a war on all things she defines as 'woke', and a dismantling of the citizens' income welfare payment. She wants to replace the latter with a system based on supporting businesses that hire the unemployed. A presidential system like in France is also one of her campaign promises, but she needs a massive majority to do that simply in parliament. A presidential system lends itself better to an Orban-style government. Her success will be an encouragement to all the more extreme fascist groups such as Forza Nuova and others, who will see her as a friend within the institutions. Any new mobilisations by working people will face an iron hand.

Enrico Letta and the PD more or less maintained their support, but his ambition was to become the biggest single party and to stop Meloni's right wing coalition. He has failed miserably on both fronts, and his leadership is likely to come under severe pressure in the upcoming congress. He failed to form a coalition with the moderate neo-liberals like Calenda and Renzi. He ended up with the PD's left 'satellites', Sinistra Italia/Greens. The whole manoeuvre looked clumsy. Indeed, Calenda/Renzi, although falling short of their target of 10%, did get around 8% and 37% of their voters came from the PD. The Sinistra Italia/Greens also managed to cross the 3% threshold to get MPs, so the PD lost a little to its left also.

Italian politics has some similarities with the recent British situation where the capitalist class, faced with Brexit and the economic, health, and ecological crises, struggles to construct a stable political hegemony. The Italian paradox is that the ex-Communist party, the PD, is the only stable party. All the other main ones go up and down spectacularly from one election to the next. At the same time, in many ways, it is also the party most trusted by the establishment. It was the most enthusiastic supporter of Draghi. However, Letta's failure will also open up a debate within the party about re-forging a coalition with the M5S, who took a bit of a left turn in this election.

One surprise of the campaign and the results has been the revival in M5S fortunes. Its parliamentary representation had halved over the course of four years through splits and defections. Conte led the campaign without the historic leaders, and Beppe Grillo (comedian and founder) kept quiet. Di Maio, the foreign secretary and leader of the latest split, was defeated in the Naples region by an M5S candidate, and his group, Impegno Civico (Civic Engagement), did not pass the 3% threshold. Conte's main campaign focus was on defending the party's signature policy, the Reddito di Cittadinanza, or Citizens Income. This was popular, particularly in the South, which is poorer and where more people benefited from it. He even took up other progressive ideas, like a shorter working week. Of course, this party has been in government since 2018 and has nodded through many neo-liberal policies. But politically, it is difficult at the moment to say there are many differences with the policies of the PD.

Di Magistris and the radical left alternative, Union Popolare (People's Unity), failed to make the 3% threshold despite the exemplary mobilisation of activists to get them on the ballot. It received more or less the same number of votes as equivalent groups in 2018. A number of people I know who were critical of the PD's moderate line opted for Conte, and the relative success of Sinistra Italia/Greens must have made it difficult for the Union Popolare to really take off. Its results reflect the defeats and the low level of activity of the workers' movement. Protests and militant action by workers to defend their jobs, like at Whirlpool or GKN, do take place, but the national unions fail to generalise these struggles as they are integrated into discussions about the Plan for National Recovery and Resilience, which has an EU financed budget of 200 billion. It seems there are no electoral shortcuts to the patient rebuilding of the resistance and struggles.

These election results are a defeat for working people. Migrants, gays and trans people are particularly in the firing line. We need to not be overly alarmist. Post-fascists have been in government here before. A fascist state will not be imposed in the next few months, but we see all the features of creeping fascism in play. It is possible that differences between parties of the right wing coalition could lead to a political crisis, although the weakness of the Lega and Forza Italia makes this less likely. Given the state of political opposition in parliament, it looks like only mobilisation

on the streets, in the communities and in the workplaces will turn things around.

26 September 2022

Source [Anti\\*Capitalist Resistance](#).

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