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## THE EU IS TURNING A BLIND EYE TO MELONI'S EXTREMIST DOMESTIC AGENDA

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In this month's European Parliament elections, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni was one of the few incumbents to emerge with an enhanced mandate, as voters punished most sitting governments across the bloc. Benefiting from the far-right surge currently sweeping Europe, Meloni's Brothers of Italy party more than doubled its representation in the EU's legislative body, cementing her position as both the undisputed leader of the European far right and the acceptable face of the movement in Brussels.

Involved in Italy's far-right politics from a young age and having served as a minister in then-Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's government from 2008 to 2011, Meloni is both a seasoned politician and something of an overnight success. The Brothers of Italy, founded by Meloni in 2012, was overshadowed for many years by Matteo Salvini's far-right League party, which in the previous European Parliament elections in 2019 won 35 percent of the vote, compared to 6 percent for the Brothers of Italy. However, Salvini's failed bid to capitalize on that momentum by provoking snap elections later that same year saw many far-right voters abandon the League for the Brothers of Italy. And Meloni's fateful decision to stay out of former Prime Minister Mario Draghi's short-lived unity government in February 2021 paved the way for her rise to power at the head of a far-right coalition—in which Salvini's League is a junior partner—in October 2022.

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