



Italy and its relations with the EU in the era of Salvini

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Italy was among the six states that founded the European Economic Community in 1958, and since then it has played an important role in the development of the European project. This support has survived amidst the notoriously turbulent Italian politics, characterised by a quick succession of fragile and unstable cabinets struggling to reform the country.

However, the political events that have been taking place since the outbreak of the 2008 financial crisis have put in danger this support. In its first years, the crisis led to the (definitive?) fall from grace of Il Cavaliere Silvio Berlusconi and the formation of the Monti Cabinet, composed of independent technocrats tasked with the mission of saving Italy from the economic swamp it had fallen into. The Monti Cabinet was succeeded after the 2013 elections by a series of coalition governments led by the centre-leftist Democratic Party (Partito Democratico, PD). During this time, the aftermath of the financial crisis generated major social discontent among Italians, especially directed to the political elites.

Disaffection towards conventional politics favoured mainly two political parties: The Five Star Movement (Movimento 5 Stelle, M5S) and the Northern League, or simply the League (Lega Nord, LN). The M5S was founded in 2009 as a “big tent”, antiestablishment and populist party supporter of anti-globalization and soft Eurosceptic policies. The economic and social hardships taking place in the transalpine country also reinforced the right-wing LN, a well-known player in Italian politics with a long history of anti-globalization and separatist stances.

The outcome of the general election held in 2018 reflected this public support with the victory of the centre-right coalition led by the LN, followed by the M5S. A centre-left coalition led by the PD suffered a heavy defeat, losing most of its seats in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. Even though the political positions of the M5S and the

League were on many subjects far apart from one another, the two parties began negotiations to form a coalition government. These negotiations succeeded and gave birth to a government program that prioritised reducing illegal immigration, the fight against political corruption and conflicts of interests and the simplification of the tax system.

The cabinet was composed of members of both parties and independent ministers. The leader of the Lega Matteo Salvini and the head of the M5S Luigi di Maio were appointed as deputies prime minister and ministers of the interior and Economic Development, Labour and Social Policies, respectively.

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