POLIDEMOS



DAMIANO PALANO
(edited by)

# HYBRID ITALY

## *A Democracy amid Global Disorder*

EDUCatt

DOI: 10.69117/POLIDEMOS.21.26.004

# The Meloni Government and "External Constraints": International Institutions as Facilitators of Radical-Right Governance

VALERIO ALFONSO BRUNO[1] AND ENRICO FASSI[2]

**Abstract**. Much of existing scholarship treats organisations such as the European Union (EU) and NATO as "external constraints" that moderate populist radical-right parties (PRRPs), even as recent contributions have begun to question this assumption. We argue that this expectation rests on increasingly fragile assumptions about the coherence of supranational institutions and the persistence of a shared liberal-democratic consensus. This chapter examines when and how international institutions cease to constrain and begin to facilitate radical-right governance, specifically when the normative coherence of supranational institutions erodes and when radical-right actors command sufficient credibility to engage institutionally rather than contest from outside. Empirically, we develop a theory-building case study of Italy under Giorgia Meloni's government (2022 onwards). We show how a strategy of pragmatic ambivalence, combining international conformity with domestic radicalism, enables the use of EU frameworks to consolidate and diffuse illiberal policies. Migration policy, and in particular the "Albania model" and its endorsement at the European level, provides the clearest empirical illustration, while parallel developments within the EU and NATO indicate that this transformation extends beyond the Italian case.

[1] Valerio Alfonso Bruno, Department of Political Sciences, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, valerioalfonso.bruno@unicatt.it

[2] Enrico Fassi, Department of Political Sciences, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, enrico.fassi@unicatt.it.

**Keywords:** Italy; Populist Radical Right; external constraint; external facilitator; reverse Europeanisation; migration externalisation; illiberalism; Meloni government; NATO; democratic backsliding; pragmatic ambivalence.

## 1. *Introduction*

Governments pursuing radical political agendas are rarely unconstrained. A large body of scholarship has demonstrated how, especially in democratic countries, domestic institutions such as courts, constitutional frameworks, and checks and balances can limit the scope of illiberal governance. External constraints, particularly those exercised by supranational organisations such as the European Union (EU) and the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), have been widely understood as reinforcing these dynamics by disciplining governments and incentivising compliance with liberal-democratic norms (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004). Within this perspective, these external constraints ("*vincolo esterno*" in the specific connotation of the Italian case) have been interpreted as a stabilising force capable of moderating the behaviour of populist radical-right parties once in office (Diodato, 2014; Diodato and Marchetti, 2023).

This article argues that this assumption no longer holds. Recent developments across Europe reveal a pattern that existing theories struggle to account for. Populist radical-right parties in government increasingly comply with the formal requirements of EU and NATO membership while simultaneously pursuing domestically illiberal agendas (Mudde, 2017; Pirro, 2023). At the same time, policy innovations initially advanced by these actors, particularly in the field of migration, are not merely tolerated but progressively legitimised and diffused at the European level

(Meunier and Vachudova, 2018; Rivera Escartin, 2020). External constraints do not simply fail to moderate. Under specific conditions, namely the erosion of normative consensus within supranational institutions and the adoption of formal compliance strategies by radical-right governments, they actively enable.

This article explains when and how this shift occurs, and under what conditions it can be reversed. We argue that the moderating effect traditionally attributed to supranational institutions depends on a set of background conditions, including the coherence of their normative architecture and the persistence of a shared liberal-democratic consensus among member states (Meunier and Vachudova, 2018). As these conditions erode, external constraints are transformed. Rather than disciplining governments through conditionality and socialisation, they become resources that can be strategically instrumentalised by radical-right actors to consolidate domestic power and project their preferences beyond the national level.

To theorise this transformation, we introduce the concept of the "external facilitator". We conceptualise a three-stage process through which international institutions evolve from external constraint to contested constraint and ultimately to external facilitator. This transformation is driven by three mechanisms, namely i) pragmatic adaptation, ii) legitimation, and iii) policy projection. Together, these mechanisms underpin a process that we define as reverse Europeanisation, through which domestic radical-right preferences are uploaded onto the supranational arena, reshaping both policy outputs and normative boundaries.

We develop this argument through an in-depth case study of Italy under Giorgia Meloni's government from 2022 onwards. Italy represents a most likely case for the operation of

the vincolo esterno, and by the same logic a least likely case for the argument advanced here, given its long-standing reliance on external constraints as a disciplining device (Diodato and Marchetti, 2023). A successful demonstration of external facilitation in this least likely case constitutes particularly strong inferential leverage for the argument. We show how the Meloni government combines international conformity with domestic radicalism, a governing formula that can be defined as pragmatic ambivalence, and how this strategy enables the systematic instrumentalisation of EU frameworks, particularly in migration policy. We further illustrate how these dynamics extend beyond the national level, contributing to shifts within EU institutions and interacting with the changing role of NATO in a context marked by the erosion of its liberal-democratic anchoring function (Lucarelli, 2020; Parsi, 2021).

This chapter makes three contributions. First, it analyses Giorgia's Meloni's government providing a theoretically grounded account of contemporary radical-right governance that highlights the strategic interaction between domestic and international arenas. Second, it advances the literature on Europeanisation by identifying a reverse dynamic through which domestic (radical) preferences are projected onto the EU level. Third, it reconceptualises the role of international institutions in processes of democratic backsliding, showing that they may operate not only as constraints but also as enablers of illiberal governance.

## 2. *Methodology and Theoretical Framework*

The chapter develops a theory-building, single-case study designed to explain the conditions under which external constraints cease to moderate and begin to facilitate radical-

right governance. The empirical analysis focuses on Italy under Giorgia Meloni's government from 2022 onwards. As argued in the Introduction, Italy is best understood as a least likely case for the argument advanced here: precisely because external constraints are expected to be strongest there (Diodato and Marchetti, 2023), demonstrating their transformation in this context provides strong inferential leverage. Moreover, Fratelli d'Italia, by far the largest party within the governing coalition and the one holding the premiership, derives from a post-fascist radical right tradition and represents the first party of this kind to exercise stable leadership in a "major" EU member state, thereby providing a useful case for assessing potential analogous developments in countries such as France or Germany.

Conceptually, the article engages with the literature on the Populist Radical Right while situating it within the broader category of the Far Right (Mudde, 2017; Pirro, 2023). The Populist Radical Right is defined by nativism, authoritarianism, and illiberalism, whereas the Far Right captures a wider spectrum of actors characterised by nationalism and the rejection of liberal democratic norms, including more extreme and anti-democratic variants (Jupskås and Leidig, 2020; Mudde, 2004; Mudde, 2021; Palano, 2022a; Weyland, 2017). This distinction allows us to account for both ideological continuity and internal differentiation within the political space under examination. Fratelli d'Italia occupies a position at the boundary between the two categories: its organisational lineage in post-fascism (Broder, 2023; Bruno and Downes, 2023; Vampa, 2023) places it at the harder end of the radical-right spectrum, while its governing behaviour since 2022 reflects the strategic moderation associated with PRRPs more broadly (Baldini, 2024). For the purposes of this article, the "external facilitator" argument applies specifically to actors that combine ideological radicalism with institutional engagement, a configuration

characteristic of PRRPs rather than of the extreme or anti-system right.

The analysis builds on the literature on democratic backsliding and Europeanisation, which has highlighted the growing contestation of liberal norms within the EU and the increasing role of illiberal actors in shaping supranational outcomes (Campati, 2022a; Campati, 2024; Meunier and Vachudova, 2018; Rivera Escartin, 2020). While this literature has identified important dynamics of norm erosion and informal Europeanisation, it continues to treat international institutions primarily as constraints. This article departs from that assumption by theorising the conditions under which these institutions may instead enable illiberal governance (Kelemen, 2021).

We conceptualise a three-stage transformation of international institutions. In the first stage, external constraint, supranational institutions operate through conditionality and socialisation, incentivising compliance with liberal-democratic norms (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004). In the second stage, contested constraint, formal rules remain in place but their enforcement becomes selective, allowing for a decoupling between formal compliance and domestic practice (Meunier and Vachudova, 2018). In the third stage, external facilitator, supranational frameworks are no longer primarily constraining but become resources that can be strategically instrumentalised by radical-right actors. As mentioned, this transformation is driven by three mechanisms. First, pragmatic adaptation refers to the strategic alignment of governments with supranational expectations at the formal level, without corresponding norm internalisation. Second, legitimation captures the process through which supranational endorsement or tolerance validates domestic illiberal policies. Third, policy projection describes the upward transfer of domestic policy preferences to

the supranational level, contributing to the redefinition of common policy frameworks. Together, these mechanisms constitute a process that we define as reverse Europeanisation. While the term "reverse Europeanisation" has been used in the broader Europeanisation literature to describe the bottom-up uploading of domestic preferences to the EU level, we employ it here in a more specific sense: to capture the illiberal content of the preferences uploaded, the radical-right identity of the actors driving them, and the structural erosion of normative consensus that makes the upload possible. This usage is therefore analytically distinct from standard accounts of preference uploading associated with conventional Europeanisation processes in liberal or technocratic contexts (Moravcsik, 1993). The transition to "external facilitator" is conditioned on three structural prerequisites: (i) declining normative coherence within the supranational institution; (ii) the presence of radical-right actors in government who adopt strategies of formal compliance rather than open contestation; and (iii) the availability of institutional frameworks amenable to reinterpretation. Where these conditions are absent, for instance where normative consensus remains strong or where radical-right actors choose confrontation over accommodation, the constraint function is expected to persist. The Orbán case, examined in Section 5, illustrates the latter.

The Italian case allows us to trace these mechanisms empirically across key policy domains, particularly migration, and to observe their interaction with broader shifts within the EU and NATO. While the analysis focuses on a single case, the framework is generalisable to other contexts in which radical-right actors operate within, rather than against, supranational institutional structures.

## 3. *The Meloni Government: Pragmatic Ambivalence in Practice*

Many populist radical-right parties in Western Europe have exhibited at least partial moderation once in government, though the degree and durability of such moderation vary considerably across cases (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2015; Capaul and Ewert, 2021; Wondreys and Mudde, 2022). The Italian case appears, at first glance, to conform to this pattern. Before the 2022 elections, the steady rise of Fratelli d'Italia in opinion polls foreshadowed the possible formation of the most right-wing governing coalition in the history of the Italian Republic, and thus raised concerns about Italy's domestic policies and its international positioning, especially in relation to the EU and NATO.

Following the elections, Fratelli d'Italia adopted a more pragmatic stance towards the EU, both to strengthen its influence within European institutions and to ensure the effective management of NextGenerationEU funds (Albertazzi and Zulianello, 2022; Baldini, 2024, p. 408). The governing coalition reflects this logic. It brings together two populist radical-right parties, Fratelli d'Italia and Matteo Salvini's Lega, alongside the more moderate Forza Italia, affiliated with the European People's Party. While often described as centre-right, we characterise the coalition as radical right, given the electoral and ideological dominance of Fratelli d'Italia within it and the party's programmatic priorities since entering government (Albertazzi, Bonansinga and Zulianello, 2021; Bruno, 2022; Bruno and Morini, 2026; Baldini, 2024; Vampa, 2023; Vassallo and Vignati, 2022; Verbeek and Zaslove, 2015).

At the international level, the government's behaviour is consistent with the moderation thesis. The transition from the Draghi to the Meloni government took place without mayor shifts in Italy's foreign policy, or significant changes in Italy's

formal commitments within the EU and NATO. Notably, Italy's position on the war in Ukraine remained broadly aligned with that of its allies, notwithstanding internal tensions within the coalition (Cozzolino and Giannone, 2021; Giannone and Cozzolino, 2023). More generally, the government has maintained a strategy of alignment with European and transatlantic partners, reflected in improved relations with the European Commission and in the promotion of initiatives framed as compatible with European priorities (Bruno and Fazio, 2023; Coticchia and Catanzaro, 2022).

This pattern illustrates what we define as pragmatic adaptation. The government aligns with international/supranational expectations at the formal level, thereby preserving credibility and access to institutional resources, without necessarily internalising the underlying liberal-democratic norms. Moderation, in this sense, is not an outcome but a strategy. We distinguish the two empirically by examining the divergence between external and domestic policy trajectories: genuine moderation would produce convergence across both arenas, whereas strategic moderation produces alignment externally and radicalisation domestically, which is precisely the pattern observed in the Italian case.

At the domestic level, a series of measures adopted since 2022 point indeed towards a more radical and illiberal agenda. These include restrictions on the Reddito di Cittadinanza welfare scheme (Decree-Law 48/2023), limitations on NGO rescue operations at sea (Decree-Law 1/2023, the so-called "Decreto ONG"), the constitutional reform separating the careers of judges and prosecutors (approved by Parliament in 2024, but rejected by a referendum in March 2026) – unfolding in a context of escalating tensions with the judiciary, and new security legislation expanding state authority in the management of protests and public order (Law 104/2023, the

so-called "Decreto Sicurezza"). Additional initiatives further indicate a broader attempt to reshape institutional balances. The proposed constitutional reform introducing the direct election of the Prime Minister ("premierato") was advanced but stalled in parliamentary committee, while the Differentiated Autonomy Law (Legge Calderoli, Law 86/2024) was substantially curtailed by the Constitutional Court (ruling no. 192/2024), a reminder that domestic institutional resistance remains a real countervailing force (Albertazzi and Vampa, 2024; Bull and Polverari, 2025; Campati, 2022b). In addition, the Meloni government exhibits features associated with the radical right particularly in the cultural and security domains. It promotes traditional family values and adopts restrictive positions on civil rights (e.g. limits on the recognition of children of same-sex couples, restrictions on surrogacy), especially regarding LGBTQ+ issues. These policies are reinforced by nationalist and identity-based rhetoric (e.g. references to "ethnic replacement," initiatives defending the Italian language), framing politics around the defense of the nation, cultural homogeneity, and opposition to globalization and immigration.

This divergence between international alignment and domestic radicalisation is not contradictory. It reflects a coherent governing strategy that we define as pragmatic ambivalence. International moderation and domestic radicalism operate as complementary dimensions of the same political logic. External constraints are not resisted but accommodated at the formal level, allowing governments to secure legitimacy, resources, and room for manoeuvre, while pursuing more contentious agendas domestically.

Crucially, this configuration creates the conditions for the transformation of external constraints into facilitators. Formal compliance with EU and NATO frameworks, as well as foreign

policy alignment with the main partners enhances the credibility of the government, reduces the likelihood of external sanction, and provides a source of legitimation for domestic policies in line with the logic of "two levels game" (Putnam, 1988). At the same time, it enables the strategic use of supranational frameworks as instruments of policy justification and projection. Italy thus provides a clear empirical illustration of the transition from external constraint to contested constraint. The "vincolo esterno" continues to operate, but its effects are increasingly limited to the international dimension, while domestic trajectories diverge. This decoupling between formal (external) alignment and substantive (domestic) practice is precisely what makes possible the subsequent shift towards external facilitation, which we examine in the following sections.

## 4. *Migration Policy as a Platform: The Albania Model and Reverse Europeanisation in Practice*

Migration policy provides the most analytically revealing empirical case for the argument developed in this article. It is in this domain that the three mechanisms of reverse Europeanisation, namely pragmatic adaptation, legitimation, and policy projection, can be most clearly observed, and where the transformation of the EU from external constraint to external facilitator is most advanced. The Italian case shows not only that supranational institutions fail to constrain radical-right governance, but that they can actively enable and diffuse it.

## Pragmatic adaptation and selective accommodation

The starting point of this process lies in the domestic consolidation of a restrictive migration agenda combined with continued formal alignment with EU frameworks. Upon entering office in October 2022, the Meloni government faced a sharp increase in irregular arrivals, with sea arrivals reaching 157,651 in 2023 (Geddes and Hadj-Abdou, 2023); arrivals subsequently declined to approximately 65,600 in 2024, a trend that underscores the contingent, rather than structural, nature of migration pressure. The government responded through a series of decree-laws that restricted legal pathways, curtailed NGO rescue operations, and expanded the use of accelerated border procedures.

These measures generated significant legal and political contestation at the domestic level, including repeated rulings by Italian courts that questioned their compatibility with both constitutional provisions and EU asylum law (Antoniazzi, 2024; Amnesty International, 2024). However, this contestation was not matched at the supranational level. European Union institutions did not intervene as effective constraints. Instead, they tolerated and accommodated these measures, thereby allowing a decoupling between formal compliance and domestic practice. This configuration illustrates the mechanism of pragmatic adaptation. The Italian government maintained formal alignment with European Union norms while pursuing policies that stretched or reinterpreted their substantive content. In doing so, it preserved its position within the European framework while expanding its room for manoeuvre domestically.

## Legitimation and the Albania model

The second mechanism, legitimation, becomes visible with the Italy–Albania Protocol of November 2023. The agreement established Italian-managed facilities on Albanian territory for the processing of asylum claims under Italian jurisdiction (De Leo and Celoria, 2024). Rather than presenting the initiative as a departure from EU law, or as an open challenge to the European approach, echoing the rhetoric of Fratelli d'Italia during its time as a small opposition party, the Italian government framed it as an extension of European legal frameworks beyond the Union's borders. This shift was accompanied by a corresponding shift in communication, with greater visibility given to joint initiatives involving Meloni and von der Leyen, such as the "Team Europe" missions to Tunisia (June 2023), the EU–Tunisia Memorandum of Understanding (July 2023), and their coordinated response to the Lampedusa migration crisis (joint visit in September 2023) (Echeverria, Finotelli 2024, 241-242).

This framing was reinforced by the reaction of EU institutions. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen publicly endorsed the initiative, and the European Commission formally concluded that the Protocol fell outside, rather than in violation of, European Union law, on the grounds that it operates under Italian rather than EU jurisdiction (CEPS, 2023). This distinction, while formally narrow, had significant political implications. It signalled that the initiative was compatible with the broader direction of European policy. This is a clear instance of legitimation. European Union endorsement provided political validation for a policy that had originated at the national level and that significantly expanded the logic of externalisation. The effect was not merely to tolerate

the Italian approach, but to normalise it within the European policy space.

## Policy projection and diffusion at the European level

The third mechanism, policy projection, is observable in the subsequent diffusion of the Italian model. Following the Albania agreement, other member states began exploring similar arrangements, and externalisation became a central component of migration debates in countries such as Germany. More broadly, Italian policy preferences were progressively incorporated into the EU's external migration agenda. This dynamic is particularly evident in the interaction between the Italian approach and the New Pact on Migration and Asylum adopted in 2024. The Pact expanded the use of safe third country concepts and strengthened the external dimension of migration policy, promoting cooperation with third countries on returns and border control. Rather than constraining national initiatives such as the Albania model, it generalised their underlying logic (Migration Policy Group, 2024; Arnoux Bellavitsa and Ripoll Servent, 2025). Italy's role in this process was active rather than passive: the Meloni government consistently advanced externalisation proposals in the European Council: Prime Minister Meloni co-signed joint letters to the Commission in favour of external processing in June and September 2023, organized ad hoc informal meetings with EU leaders to talk about 'innovative solutions', and Italian officials participated centrally in the final negotiating rounds of the Pact (Morucci, 2024).

A similar pattern can be observed in the Italy–Africa strategy known as the Piano Mattei. Launched in 2024 and subsequently embedded within the EU's Global Gateway framework, the plan links development cooperation and

migration control, reinforcing the externalisation approach. The incorporation of this strategy into European Union funding instruments further illustrates how national policy preferences are projected onto the supranational level.

## Contestation, limits, and adaptive responses

The trajectory of the Albania model also highlights the limits and contestation of this process. In practice, the facilities established in Albania have been used only minimally, with Italian courts repeatedly ordering the return of transferred migrants to Italy (ECFR, 2025). The Court of Justice of the EU further constrained the legal basis of the model in its 2025 ruling on safe country designations. However, these constraints do not invalidate the argument. Rather, they demonstrate that the transformation from constraint to facilitator is neither linear nor uncontested. What matters is not the operational success of the policy, but its political and normative effects. The Albania model contributed to redefining what is considered acceptable within European migration policy and positioned Italy as an agenda-setter at the European level: at least six EU member states, including Germany, the Netherlands, and Denmark, announced or explored comparable externalisation arrangements in 2024, and the Commission's 2025 proposal to amend the Asylum Procedures Regulation explicitly cited the need to accommodate approaches akin to the Albania model (ECFR, 2025). Importantly, the response to legal constraints has not been retrenchment but adaptation. Italian authorities have adjusted the use of the Albanian facilities, while European Union institutions have explored regulatory changes to accommodate similar approaches, including proposals to revise the application of safe country concepts (EU Law Analysis, 2026; Arnoux Bellavitsa and Ripoll Servent, 2025). This iterative

process further reinforces the dynamic of reverse Europeanisation.

### From "constraint" to "facilitator"

Taken together, these developments illustrate the full sequence of mechanisms identified in the theoretical framework. Pragmatic adaptation enables governments to remain within the European institutional framework while pursuing radicaldomestic policies. Legitimation by supranational actors validates these policies and reduces their political costs. Policy projection then allows these preferences to be uploaded to the European level, reshaping common policy frameworks. In this sense, migration policy provides a clear empirical demonstration of the transition from external constraint to external facilitator. The EU does not simply fail to constrain radical-right governance. It becomes part of the process through which such governance is normalised, diffused, and, ultimately, institutionalised.

## 5. *The European Union: Shifting Equilibria?*

The transformation of external constraints into facilitators is not only observable at the level of national policy, but is also rooted in broader changes within the EU's political and institutional equilibrium. The 2024 European Parliament elections provide a critical juncture for understanding these dynamics.

While pre-election expectations pointed to a potential breakthrough of far-right forces, the results were more nuanced. The three mainstream pro-European groups, the European People's Party, the Socialists and Democrats, and

Renew Europe, retained a combined majority. At the same time, however, the radical and far right reached an unprecedented level of representation, with 187 Members of the European Parliament, corresponding to approximately 26 per cent of the assembly (Mudde, 2024). This expansion did not translate into full cohesion, as far-right actors remained fragmented across multiple groups, including the European Conservatives and Reformists, Patriots for Europe, and the Europe of Sovereign Nations. The significance of these developments lies less in immediate institutional control than in their structural and normative effects.

The growing presence of radical-right actors within European institutions contributes to redefining the boundaries of what is considered legitimate within the European policy space. This shift operates not through overt institutional rupture, but through gradual normalisation and accommodation (Leidig, 2020; Mondon and Winter, 2020a; Mondon and Winter, 2020b). Within the EP specifically, this dynamic is visible in voting patterns on migration, rule of law, and fundamental rights, where the expanded far-right presence has altered coalition arithmetic for the centre-right majority (Mudde, 2024; Hadfield and Demir, 2024). At the level of Council dynamics and interstate bargaining, the perspective of liberal intergovernmentalism illustrates how European integration reflects the aggregation of member state preferences shaped by domestic political process (Moravcsik, 1993). As Meunier and Vachudova (2018) argue, the rise of illiberal actors across member states alters these preferences, shifting contestation from policy choices to the underlying normative foundations of the European project. The result is an increasingly fragmented normative environment in which liberal-democratic consensus can no longer be taken for granted (Palano, 2020).

This erosion of consensus has two key implications for the argument advanced in this article. First, it weakens the capacity of the EU to act as a coherent source of external constraint. Conditionality becomes more difficult to enforce in a context where member states themselves diverge on core normative commitments. Second, it creates opportunities for radical-right actors to exercise influence from within institutions, rather than merely contesting them from the outside. These dynamics are particularly visible in the field of migration policy. As discussed in the previous section, the Italian approach to migration has received not only tolerance but active political support from EU institutions. This support reflects a broader convergence among member states around more restrictive and externalised approaches to migration governance. In this context, the preferences of radical-right actors are no longer marginal but increasingly central to policy formation.

Beyond vertical dynamics between member states and institutions, horizontal interactions between governments also play a crucial role. As highlighted by Rivera Escartin (2020), processes of informal and illiberal Europeanisation enable governments to project their preferences onto the European level through networks of like-minded actors. Rather than withdrawing from the EU, these governments seek to reshape it from within, aligning supranational outcomes with their domestic agendas. This combination of vertical and horizontal dynamics contributes to the transition from contested constraint to external facilitator. The EU does not cease to function as an institutional framework, nor does it abandon its formal commitment to liberal-democratic norms. However, the internal balance of power shifts in ways that make it increasingly receptive to illiberal preferences. In this context, radical-right actors can operate as legitimate agenda-setters,

influencing both the content and direction of European policies.

The result is a structural transformation of the European Union's role. Instead of acting primarily as a constraint on national governments, it becomes a site through which domestic political dynamics are aggregated, normalised, and projected. This transformation is central to the process of reverse Europeanisation identified in this article, and provides the broader institutional context within which national cases such as Italy can be understood.

Table 1 – European Parliament elections, figures at constitutive session. 2019: 748 MEPs (pre-Brexit, UK included). 2024: 720 MEPs. Far-right groups in italics. Source: European Parliament official results

| *Group* | *Orientation* | *2019* | *2024* | *Change* | *Share 2024* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EPP** European People's Party | Centre-right | 182 | 188 | +6 | 26.1% |
| **S&D** Socialists and Democrats | Centre-left | 154 | 136 | –18 | 18.9% |
| **Renew Europe** Liberal / centrist | Liberal centre | 108 | 77 | –31 | 10.7% |
| ***PfE*** *Patriots for Europe* | *Far right* | *73 (as ID)* | *84* | *+11* | *11.7%* |

| *Group* | *Orientation* | *2019* | *2024* | *Change* | *Share 2024* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *(successor to ID)* | | | | | |
| ***ECR*** *European Conservatives & Reformists* | *Radical right* | *62* | *78* | *+16* | *10.8%* |
| **Greens / EFA** Greens / European Free Alliance | Green / regionalist | 74 | 53 | –21 | 7.4% |
| **The Left (GUE/NGL)** United European Left | Left | 41 | 46 | +5 | 6.4% |
| ***ESN*** *Europe of Sovereign Nations (new 2024)* | *Far right / nationalist* | *,* | *25* | *new* | *3.5%* |
| **NI** Non-attached members | Mixed / unaffiliated | 54 | 33 | –21 | 4.6% |

| *Group* | *Orientation* | *2019* | *2024* | *Change* | *Share 2024* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total seats | | 748 (incl. UK) | 720 | , | |
| *Far right total (PfE + ECR + ESN)* | | *135 (ID+ECR)* | *187* | +52 | 26% |

The Italian governing coalition provides a salient case study of these broader dynamics. As Table 1 illustrates, the 2024 European Parliament elections confirmed a significant rightward shift, with the three far-right groups, Patriots for Europe, the European Conservatives and Reformists, and the Europe of Sovereign Nations, securing a combined 187 seats, approximately 26 per cent of the Parliament, a historic high. At the same time, this expansion has been accompanied by persistent fragmentation. Rather than consolidating into a unified bloc, the far right remains divided across competing groupings that differ in their ideological profiles, their strategic orientations towards European institutions, and their relationships with the mainstream centre-right, particularly the European People's Party.

This combination of expansion and fragmentation is analytically significant. The increasing presence of radical-right actors within European institutions contributes to the normalisation of their policy preferences, while fragmentation prevents direct institutional capture. The result is a configuration in which influence is exercised not through dominance, but through selective alignment with mainstream actors. In particular, the consolidation of the European People's Party as the largest group, combined with the

electoral decline of liberal and green forces, creates incentives for strategic interaction between the centre-right and segments of the radical right.

Within this context, two distinct models of far-right influence can be identified, associated respectively with Giorgia Meloni and Viktor Orbán (Bruno and Morini, 2026). The Orbán model is characterised by open contestation of supranational institutions, an explicit commitment to illiberal democracy, and a strategy of confrontation that positions the EU as an external constraint to be resisted. By contrast, the Meloni model is based on engagement from within. It combines ideological continuity with strategic moderation at the international level, allowing radical-right actors to operate as credible partners within European institutional settings

This distinction is central to the argument advanced in this article. The transformation of external constraints into facilitators does not occur under conditions of open confrontation, but through processes of accommodation and alignment. The Meloni model illustrates how radical-right actors can leverage supranational frameworks to enhance their legitimacy and expand their influence, while avoiding the costs associated with direct institutional conflict. In a fragmented far-right landscape, this strategy may prove more effective than confrontational sovereignism, as it enables agenda-setting and policy projection within, rather than against, the EU. Preliminary evidence of the model's replicability emerges from comparable strategic pivots by other PRRPs: Marine Le Pen's Rassemblement National has progressively abandoned Frexit rhetoric in favour of EU reform from within, while in the Netherlands the PVV-led coalition under Wilders has engaged with EU institutions rather than pursuing confrontation. Whether these cases constitute genuine instances of the

Meloni model or merely tactical repositioning remains a question for future comparative research.

## 6. *A Trump's Effect? NATO, the United States and the Radical Right*

The transformation of external "constraints" into "facilitators" is not limited to the EU. It also extends to the transatlantic dimension, where changes in the role of the United States and the internal dynamics of NATO have altered the Alliance's capacity to function as a liberal-democratic anchor. Historically, NATO has been interpreted not only as a military alliance but also as a political community grounded in shared liberal-democratic norms (Lucarelli, 2020; Parsi, 2021). During and after the Cold War, membership and enlargement were formally linked to democratic standards, contributing to the consolidation of the broader Liberal International Order (Ikenberry, 2018). Although this role has always been uneven (Poast and Chinchilla, 2020; Rubinson, 2021), it has nonetheless underpinned the expectation that NATO could act as an external constraint on illiberal political trajectories among its members.

This expectation has become increasingly difficult to sustain. The election of Donald Trump in 2016 and, more decisively, the developments associated with his second term have contributed to a weakening of NATO's normative foundations. While the first Trump administration did not fundamentally alter the Alliance's institutional functioning (Carati and Locatelli, 2023; Locatelli and Carati, 2023), it introduced a significant shift in its normative environment. The public legitimation of authoritarian leaders and the erosion of democratic norms within the United States itself reduced the credibility of NATO as a community of liberal

democracies (Carothers, 2017; Fassi, 2021; Fassi and Zotti, 2018; Ikenberry, 2018).

These trends have intensified in the context of Trump's second presidency. The domestic trajectory of the United States, characterised by increasing pressure on institutional checks and balances and a more confrontational approach to liberal-democratic norms, has projected a powerful signal at the international level. At the same time, shifts in foreign policy, particularly with regard to Russia and the war in Ukraine, have further undermined the perception of NATO as a cohesive and normatively anchored alliance. The implications for NATO's role as an external constraint are significant. As the normative coherence of the Alliance weakens, its capacity to exert pressure on member states in defence of liberal-democratic standards diminishes. In parallel, the growing emphasis on burden-sharing and defence spending, exemplified by the adoption of a new 5 per cent GDP target at the 2025 Hague Summit, reflects a shift towards a more transactional and security-driven conception of the Alliance. While this shift may reinforce NATO's military dimension, it further sidelines its normative function.

This transformation creates a structural environment that is more permissive for radical-right actors. For Italy specifically, the shift in NATO's normative environment has had measurable implications. The Meloni government increased defence spending towards the 2% GDP target, signalling transatlantic credibility, while simultaneously maintaining ambivalent positions on Ukraine aid, reflecting internal coalition pressures from Lega's historically pro-Russian sympathies (Fasola and Lucarelli, 2024; Isernia, Martini and Cozzi-Fucile, 2024). This combination illustrates the same logic of pragmatic ambivalence identified in the EU context: formal compliance with Alliance commitments without full normative

alignment. Without a strong and credible transatlantic anchor, the external constraints traditionally associated with NATO become less effective in shaping domestic political trajectories. Rather than operating as a source of moderation, the Alliance increasingly reflects the preferences and priorities of its member states, including those shaped by illiberal political dynamics.

In this sense, NATO mirrors the broader pattern identified in this article. It does not cease to exist as an institutional framework, nor does it formally abandon its commitment to democratic values. However, the erosion of its normative coherence reduces its constraining capacity and contributes to widening the political space available to radical-right governments. The external constraint is not simply weakened. It is transformed into a more permissive and, under certain conditions, enabling environment.

## *Conclusion*

This chapter has analysed the first three years of the Meloni government, focusing on the role of international institutions in shaping the behaviour of populist radical-right parties. It has argued that the conventional view of supranational organisations such as the EU and NATO as external constraints on radical and illiberal governance is no longer sufficient. Rather than functioning as stable and exogenous sources of moderation for its members, these institutions are themselves subject to transformation. Their constraining capacity depends on political and normative conditions that can erode over time.

The analysis has shown that this transformation follows a specific trajectory. External constraints do not simply weaken. Under the conditions identified in the theoretical framework,

they are reconfigured into external facilitators. This shift is driven by three mechanisms: pragmatic adaptation, through which governments maintain formal compliance without norm internalisation; legitimation, through which supranational endorsement normalises domestic illiberal policies; and policy projection, through which national preferences are uploaded to the international/supranational level. Together, these mechanisms underpin a process of reverse Europeanisation that reshapes both policy outcomes and normative boundaries.

The Italian case illustrates how this transformation operates in practice. The Meloni government combines international alignment and moderation with domestic radicalism in a strategy that can be defined as pragmatic ambivalence. This configuration does not represent a deviation from the logic of external constraint, but rather its evolution under changed structural conditions. Formal compliance with European Union and NATO frameworks secures legitimacy and access to resources, while simultaneously enabling the pursuit and projection of illiberal agendas. Migration policy, in particular, demonstrates how radical ideas and initiatives advanced at the national level can be legitimised, diffused, and ultimately incorporated into the European policy framework.

Beyond the Italian case, the article has shown that these dynamics are embedded in broader structural changes. Within the EU, the growing presence and normalisation of radical-right actors, combined with the erosion of liberal consensus, has altered the balance of power and the direction of policy development. Within NATO, the weakening of its normative foundations and the shift towards a more transactional logic, amplified by the second Trump administration, have reduced its capacity to act as a liberal-democratic anchor. Taken together, these developments indicate that the transformation of external

constraints is not confined to this specific case, but reflects a wider reconfiguration of the international environment.

These findings carry important implications for the study of democratic backsliding. If international institutions can function not only as constraints but also as enablers, then analyses that treat them as inherently stabilising risk overlooking a central dimension of contemporary political change. Understanding democratic erosion in Europe requires attention not only to domestic factors, but also to the ways in which supranational frameworks are instrumentalised, adapted, and, in some cases, repurposed (Youngs et al., 2025). At the same time, this transformation is neither linear nor irreversible. The interaction between domestic and international dynamics remains contingent and open-ended. The fragmentation of the far right, the persistence of institutional veto points, and the possibility of renewed liberal convergence, for example in the form of a partnership of the like-minded" middle powers advocated by Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney in his 20206 Davos address (New York Times, 2026), all represent countervailing forces that may limit or reshape these trends.

## *Bibliographical References*

Albertazzi, D. and McDonnell, D. (2015) *Populists in Power*. London: Routledge.

Albertazzi, D. and Vampa, D. (2024) 'Playing Both Sides at Once: Giorgia Meloni in Government', *Agenda Pública / El País*. Available at: https://agendapublica.elpais.com/noticia/19071/playing-both-sides-once-giorgia-meloni-government (Accessed: 15th July 2026).

Albertazzi, D. and Zulianello, M. (2022) 'Italy's Election Is a Case Study in a New Phase for the Radical Right', *The Conversation*.

Available at: https://theconversation.com/italys-election-is-a-case-study-in-a-new-phase-for-the-radical-right-92198 (Accessed: 15th July 2026).

Albertazzi, D., Bonansinga, D. and Zulianello, M. (2021) 'The Rightwing Alliance at the Time of the Covid-19 Pandemic: All Change?', *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 13(2), pp. 181-195.

Amnesty International (2024) *Italy: Authorities Must Stop Using Albania Detention Centres*. London: Amnesty International.

Antoniazzi, L. (2024) 'Italy's Migration Policy in 2023: Respect for or Empty References to International Law?', *Italian Yearbook of International Law*, XXXIII, pp. 507-511.

Arnoux Bellavitsa, M. and Ripoll Servent, A. (2025) 'The New Pact on Migration and Asylum in a Shifting Political Context', *Journal of European Public Policy*. https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2025.2498846

Baldini, G. (2024) 'From "Anomaly" to "Laboratory"? Fratelli d'Italia, Illiberalism and the Study of Right-Wing Parties in Western Europe', *Political Studies Review*, 22(2), pp. 402-411.

Broder, D. (2023) *Mussolini's Grandchildren: Fascism in Contemporary Italy*. London: Pluto Press.

Bruno, V.A. (2022) 'Centre Right? What Centre Right? Italy's Right-Wing Coalition: Forza Italia's Political "Heritage" and the Mainstreaming of the Far Right', in Bruno, V.A. (ed.) *Populism and Far-Right: Trends in Europe*. Milano: EDUCatt Polidemos, pp. 163-195.

Bruno, V.A. and Downes, J.F. (2023) 'The Radicalization of the Mainstream: Populist Radical Right Parties and Extreme Right-Wing Movements in Italy (2012-2021)', in Kondor, K. and Littler, M. (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Far-Right Extremism in Europe*. London: Routledge, pp. 129-144.

Bruno, V.A. and Fazio, F. (2023) 'Italian Governments and Political Parties vis-à-vis the War in Ukraine', in Mihr, A. and Pierobon, C.

(eds) *Polarization, Shifting Borders and Liquid Governance: Studies on Transformation and Development in the OSCE Region*. Vienna/Berlin: OSCE Academy and Springer, pp. 265-283.

Bruno, V.A. and Morini, M. (2026) *The Rise of the Brothers of Italy: Organisation, Leadership and Ideology*. Cham: Springer.

Bull, M. and Polverari, L. (2025) 'The Meloni Government: Consolidation and a Return to Politics', *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 17(2), pp. 130-144. https://doi.org/10.1080/23248823.2025.2492523

Campati, A. (2022a) *La distanza democratica: Corpi intermedi e rappresentanza politica*. Milano: Vita e Pensiero.

Campati, A. (2022b) 'Vision and Trust after Covid-19: The Role of Italian Political Elites', in Palano, D. (ed.) *State of Emergency: Italian Democracy in Times of Pandemic*. Milano: EDUCatt Polidemos, pp. 181-199.

Campati, A. (ed.) (2024) *Illiberal Trends: Democracies under Pressure*. Milano: EDUCatt.

Capaul, R. and Ewert, C. (2021) 'Moderation of Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western European Governments: A Comparative Analysis', *Swiss Political Science Review*, 27(4), pp. 778-798.

Carati, A. and Locatelli, A. (2023) 'All the President's Men: Leadership Style, Advisory System and Donald Trump's Mixed Record in Foreign Policy', *Global Policy*, 14(1), pp. 95-106.

Carothers, T. (2017) 'The Autocratic Relief Syndrome', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 20 January. Available at: https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/01/20/autocratic-relief-syndrome-pub-67791 (Accessed: 15th July 2026).

CEPS (2023) *The 2023 Italy-Albania Protocol on Extraterritorial Migration Management*. Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies.

Coticchia, F. and Catanzaro, A. (2022) 'The Fog of Words: Assessing the Problematic Relationship between Strategic Narratives, (Master) Frames and Ideology', *Media, War and Conflict*, 15(4), pp. 421-438.

Cozzolino, A. and Giannone, D. (2021) 'Technocrats in (the Crises of) the State: Political Change and State Transformations in Italy', *Interdisciplinary Political Studies*, 7(1), pp. 5-34.

De Leo, A. and Celoria, E. (2024) 'The Italy-Albania Protocol: A New Model of Border-Shifting within the EU and Its Compatibility with Union Law', *Maastricht Journal of European and Comparative Law*, 31(1).

Diodato, E. (2014) *Il vincolo esterno: Le ragioni della debolezza italiana*. Milano: Mimesis.

Diodato, E. and Marchetti, R. (2023) *Manuale di Politica Estera Italiana*. Milano: EGEA.

ECFR (2025) *Why the EU Should Pay Attention to Italy's and Albania's Migration Gamble*. London: European Council on Foreign Relations, January.

Echeverría, G. and Finotelli, C. (2024) 'Much Ado about Nothing? Giorgia Meloni's Government and Immigration', *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 16(2), pp. 233-247. https://doi.org/10.1080/23248823.2024.2330805

EU Law Analysis (2026) 'Commission Proposal to Amend the Asylum Procedures Regulation: Safe Third Country and Safe Country of Origin', *EU Law Analysis Blog*, February. Available at: [URL to be confirmed] (Accessed: 15th July 2026).

Fasola, N. and Lucarelli, S. (2024) 'The "Pragmatic" Foreign Policy of the Meloni Government: Between "Euro-nationalism", Atlanticism and Mediterranean Activism', *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 16(2), pp. 198-213. https://doi.org/10.1080/23248823.2024.2335847

Fassi, E. (2021) 'Exceptionalism, Pluralism and Transatlantic Democracy Promotion: Wilson's Ideas One Century On', in Fassi, E.

and Parsi, V.E. (eds) *The Liberal World Order and Beyond*. Milano: Vita e Pensiero, pp. 91-117.

Fassi, E. and Zotti, A. (2018) '*Simul stabunt, simul cadent*: The US, the EU and the Liberal International Order in the Trump Era', *Interdisciplinary Political Studies*, 4(1), pp. 75-113.

Geddes, A. and Hadj-Abdou, L. (2023) 'Migration and the Politics of Belonging in Italy', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 49(14), pp. 3533-3550.

Giannone, D. and Cozzolino, A. (2023) *La democrazia dei tecnocrati: Discorsi e politiche dei tecnici al governo in Italia*. Milano: Meltemi.

Hadfield, A. and Demir, M. (2024) 'The Challenge of the Populist Right in Democratic Europe in the 2024 European Parliamentary Elections', *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, 48(2), pp. 93-110.

Ikenberry, G.J. (2018) 'The End of Liberal International Order?', *International Affairs*, 94(1), pp. 7-23.

Isernia, P., Martini, S. and Cozzi-Fucile, C. (2024) 'Between Prudence and Selfishness: Pooling the Polls on What Italians Think of the Ukraine War', *Contemporary Italian Politics*, pp. 1-13.

Jupskås, A.R. and Leidig, E. (eds) (2020) *Knowing What's (Far) Right: A Compendium*. Oslo: Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX), University of Oslo. Available at: https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/topics/online-resources/what-is-far-right/ (Accessed: 15th July 2026).

Kelemen, R.D. (2021) 'The European Union's Authoritarian Equilibrium', in Bressanelli, E. and Koop, C. (eds) *The EU Between Politicisation and Depoliticisation: Strategic Responses to Domestic Contestation*. London: Routledge, pp. 153-171.

Leidig, E. (ed.) (2020) *Mainstreaming the Global Radical Right*. Stuttgart: Ibidem Press.

Locatelli, A. and Carati, A. (2023) 'Trump's Legacy and the Liberal International Order: Why Trump Failed to Institutionalise an Anti-Global Agenda', *The International Spectator*, 58(1), pp. 92-108.

Lucarelli, S. (2020) *Cala il sipario sull'ordine liberale? Crisi di un sistema che ha cambiato il mondo*. Milano: Vita e Pensiero.

Meunier, S. and Vachudova, M.A. (2018) 'Liberal Intergovernmentalism, Illiberalism and the Potential Superpower of the European Union', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 56(7), pp. 1631-1647.

Migration Policy Group (2024) *Reflection Paper on the New EU Pact on Migration and Asylum*. Brussels: Migration Policy Group.

Mondon, A. and Winter, A. (2020a) *Reactionary Democracy: How Racism and the Populist Far Right Became Mainstream*. London: Verso Books.

Mondon, A. and Winter, A. (2020b) 'From Demonization to Normalization: Reflecting on Far Right Research', in Ashe, S.D., Busher, J., Macklin, G. and Winter, A. (eds) *Researching the Far Right: Theory, Method and Practice*. London: Routledge, pp. 370-382.

Moravcsik, A. (1993) 'Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 31(4), pp. 473-524.

Morucci, N. (2024) 'Migration, Meloni Promotes New Informal Meeting with Like-Minded EU Leaders to Talk about "Innovative Solutions"', *Eunews*, 19 December. Available at: https://www.eunews.it/en/2024/12/19/migration-meloni-promotes-new-informal-meeting-with-like-minded-eu-leaders-to-talk-about-innovative-solutions/ (Accessed: 15th July 2026).

Mudde, C. (2004) 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *Government and Opposition*, 39(4), pp. 541-563.

Mudde, C. (2017) 'Populism: An Ideational Approach', in Rovira Kaltwasser, C., Taggart, P., Ochoa Espejo, P. and Ostiguy, P. (eds) *The*

*Oxford Handbook of Populism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 27-47.

Mudde, C. (2021) 'Populism in Europe: An Illiberal Democratic Response to Undemocratic Liberalism', *Government and Opposition*, 56(4), pp. 677-697.

Mudde, C. (2024) 'The 2024 EU Elections: The Far Right at the Polls', *Journal of Democracy*, 35(4), pp. 121-134.

Palano, D. (2020) *Bubble Democracy: La fine del pubblico e la nuova polarizzazione*. Brescia: Morcelliana.

Palano, D. (2022) 'Inventing "Populism": Notes for the Genealogy of a Paranoid Concept', *Genealogy*, 6(1), pp. 1-14.

Parsi, V.E. (2021) *The Wrecking of the Liberal World Order*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pirro, A.L. (2023) 'Far Right: The Significance of an Umbrella Concept', *Nations and Nationalism*, 29(1), pp. 101-112.

Poast, P. and Chinchilla, A. (2020) 'Good for Democracy? Evidence from the 2004 NATO Expansion', *International Politics*, 57, pp. 471-490.

Putnam, R.D. (1988) 'Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two Level Games', *International Organization*, 42(3), pp. 427-460.

Rivera Escartin, A. (2020) 'Challenging EU Foreign Policy from Within: Illiberal Europeanisation and the EU's Normative Power', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 33(6), pp. 1191-1212.

Rubinson, E. (2021) 'Flexible Democratic Conditionality? The Role of Democracy and Human Rights Adherence in NATO Enlargement Decisions', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 24(3), pp. 696-725.

Schimmelfennig, F. and Sedelmeier, U. (2004) 'Governance by Conditionality: EU Rule Transfer to the Candidate Countries of Central and Eastern Europe', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 11(4), pp. 661-679.

*The New York Times* (2026) 'Transcript: Prime Minister Mark Carney of Canada Address, Davos, 20 January 2026', *The New York Times*, 20 January. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/01/20/world/carney-transcript-davos.html (Accessed: 15th July 2026).

Vampa, D. (2023) *Brothers of Italy: A New Populist Wave in an Unstable Party System*. Cham: Springer Nature.

Vassallo, S. and Vignati, R. (2022) *Fratelli di Giorgia: Il partito della destra nazional-conservatrice*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Verbeek, B. and Zaslove, A. (2015) 'Italy: A Case of Mutating Populism?', *Democratization*, 23(2), pp. 271-288.

Weyland, K. (2017) 'A Political-Strategic Approach', in Rovira Kaltwasser, C., Taggart, P.A., Ochoa Espejo, P. and Ostiguy, P. (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 48-73.

Wondreys, J. and Mudde, C. (2022) 'Victims of the Pandemic? European Far-Right Parties and COVID-19', *Nationalities Papers*, 50(1), pp. 86-103.

Youngs, R. et al. (2025) *European Democracy Support Annual Review 2024*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January. Available at: https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2025/01/european-democracy-support-annual-review-2024 (Accessed: 15th July 2026).

"If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change." Tancredi's celebrated maxim in *The Leopard* has long served as the master key to Italian politics: a country where every rupture seems to dissolve into continuity, every revolution into restoration. But does the formula still hold?

Since October 2022, Italy has been governed by the first executive in the history of the Republic led by a party with roots in the post-fascist tradition — an experiment watched with alarm, curiosity and hope across Europe and beyond. Three years on, the balance sheet confounds both the catastrophists and the reassured. The most stable government in decades has completed none of the institutional reforms it promised; yet Italian democracy has quietly shifted — in the governance of dissent, the control of public media, the externalisation of migration, the symbolic politics of culture and memory.

Drawing on original survey research and in-depth analyses of foreign policy, environmental commitments, protest and cultural institutions, this volume charts the transformation of Italian democracy within a world in disorder: multiplying wars, a deepening global democratic recession, a transatlantic alliance in turmoil. Its thesis is captured in a single formula: hybrid Italy — a democracy in which institutional continuity and illiberal drift coexist, and in which Tancredi's maxim now runs in reverse. Everything stays the same, precisely so that things can change.

A book for anyone seeking to understand not only where Italy is going, but what its 'laboratory' reveals about the future of democracy in Europe.

---

Damiano Palano is Full Professor of Political Philosophy at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. He is Director of ASERI (Graduate School of Economics and International Relations) and Polidemos (Centre for the Study of Democracy and Political Change). For ASERI, he is also Director of the Master in Advanced Global Studies and Director for the Master in Advanced Public and Cultural Diplomacy for International Relations. His research focuses on democratic theory, populism and the transformations of contemporary political orders.

HYBRID ITALY
*A Democracy amid Global Disorder*

---

Damiano Palano (edited by)

EDUCatt - Ente per il Diritto allo Studio Universitario
dell'Università Cattolica
Largo Gemelli 1, 20123 Milano - tel. 02.7234.22.35 - fax 02.80.53.215
e-mail: editoriale.dsu@educatt.it (produzione);
librario.dsu@educatt.it (distribuzione)
web: libri.educatt.online
ISBN: 979-12-5535-607-3




euro 14,00