



ISSUE BRIEF | GLOBAL COALITIONS

AN ITALIAN ALLY IN DEFENSE OF THE WEST

By Kristen Zicarelli

Summary

In August 2025, Director of Global Coalitions and Senior Immigration Analyst Kristen Zicarelli traveled to Rome and met with officials from Italy’s governing right-wing coalition, as well as policymakers and political commentators. The goals of this trip were to evaluate Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni’s policies on immigration, demographics, culture, and foreign affairs, and to understand her leadership in the context of the U.S. and Italy’s missions to defend and strengthen Western Civilization.

Prime Minister Meloni is a strong ally to the America First coalition in Europe on immigration and cultural renewal. However, she remains constrained by the European Union’s leftism and centralized regulatory framework, endemic regionalism and corruption in domestic courts, and heavy economic oversight. Her government has demonstrated a refreshing commitment to advancing cultural renewal and providing some targeted economic incentives to stop the dire demographic crisis. As a leader, she has openly expressed Christian pro-life beliefs, while remaining popular among her electorate—a unique and commendable feat in an aggressively secular country and continent.

The Meloni Opportunity

Italy is governed by a right-wing coalition led by Prime Minister Meloni’s Fratelli d’Italia (Brothers of Italy) party, alongside Forza Italia (Meloni’s former center-right party), and Lega (the far-right party). In a nation infamous for short-lived governments, Meloni has held office since October 2022, maintaining steady popularity. She has kept her coalition strong while the Italian Left remains fractured. Her pragmatism and her political instincts are valuable assets in navigating Italy’s immense challenges and have made her respected in the Trump Administration.

Is Prime Minister Meloni an America First ally?

The short answer is, “Yes.” The longer answer is, “Yes, but an ally constrained by Europe’s unwillingness to adopt a bold and unapologetic Christian worldview.” Meloni’s views on deterring illegal immigration and defending Christian culture and civilization set her



apart from most other Western European leaders. Her government has advanced family- and identity-based policies, and has aligned rhetorically with President Trump's civilizational framing, making her one of Washington's most valuable—and most powerful—partners in Europe.

Prime Minister Meloni's realistic approach to policymaking signals a parallel *Italy First Agenda*, though for the U.S. this may bring future short-term tensions on trade and defense. Overall, though, Italy has shown itself to be a practical and committed partner in stopping mass illegal immigration, and it currently attempts to promote cultural renewal. The latter makes her not only rare on the European right but also serves as a welcome sign to the America First movement in the U.S., which embraces Christian values and freedom of religion. We must also keep in mind that Prime Minister Meloni serves as a strategic bridge to the Vatican and a still-new papacy on issues like emerging technology and artificial intelligence, particularly as it relates to upholding human dignity.

American Interests in Italy

- **Immigration & Security:** Italy is the easiest entry point from Africa into Europe, making migration an existential security issue. Prime Minister Meloni is one of the leading voices against illegal immigration into Europe. She has—to an extent many thought impossible—curtailed NGO facilitation of migrant arrivals, pursued deterrence measures with Tunisia and Libya, and greatly reduced illegal entries. At the same time, her party's mentality, consistent with others on the Italian right, is that legal immigrants are still needed to “do the jobs Italians won't do,” and that having a job is all that is needed to integrate with Italian society and culture.
- **Defense & Trade:** Italy runs a nearly \$40 billion trade surplus with the U.S. (including tourism counted as services), making it a natural target for rebalancing under an America First trade agenda. At the same time, following pressure from the U.S. to increase NATO defense spending, Italy recently committed to spend 5% of its GDP on defense and security, over a ten-year period.
- **Defending Western Civilization:** In recent months, Meloni has demonstrated like-mindedness with the Trump Administration on the need to “make the West great again, together.” Publicly, Meloni has declared a need to address our current challenges with our faith and historic roots in mind. Her defense of our Christian heritage is most welcome, most necessary, and still—by the standards of the regimes that govern Italy's neighbors—most rare.
- **The Vatican & AI:** There is growing momentum from Western leaders to engage the Holy See on artificial intelligence (AI), and a prevailing view that the Vatican can play a crucial role in shaping global rules to safeguard human dignity, contrasting Western Christian principles with purely utilitarian policymaking and development. Pope Leo XIV is very early in his papacy, and early signs indicate the new pontiff will be a thoughtful ally on this topic. Directly preceding the historic “Grace for the World”



event at St. Peter's Square on September 13, 2025, the Vatican held an AI Ethics Summit, gathering scholars, artists and other members of society to brainstorm and discuss emerging technology as it relates to human fraternity and dignity.

Prime Minister Meloni's Reputation and Popularity

Overall, Meloni is seen as a realist rather than an ideologue, perhaps a skilled practitioner of realpolitik. She has earned respect, sometimes grudgingly, across the political spectrum, and despite a very hostile media environment, has retained her popularity among Italian voters, even after more than two years in office. By Italian standards, this is extraordinary. Her coalition with Forza Italia and Lega remains strong, while the Left is fragmented. At the 2025 Rimini Meeting in August (one of the most important annual gatherings of Catholic laypeople in the world), Meloni received a prolonged standing ovation.

Key Takeaways: Immigration and Security

- Thanks to Prime Minister Meloni's aggressive deterrence measures on illegal immigration, irregular arrivals have decreased since she took office, as has the number of migrant deaths at sea. Her government has halted NGO facilitation of illegal migration, has pushed for E.U. naval missions, and has leveraged investments in Tunisia to prevent embarkation. Unusual for a Southern European state, under Meloni, Italy has worked closely with Northern European countries (i.e., The Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark) on implementing a more realistic immigration policy aimed at deterrence rather than facilitation.
- In Italy, legal migration quotas are conditioned on cooperation of the host country—a practical and powerful use of leverage in policymaking. The prevailing sentiment on the right seems to be that that integration happens naturally with work, with no serious and sustained call for mandating or prioritizing cultural assimilation among legal immigrants.
- Despite progress, security concerns in Italy remain acute. Criminal gangs tied to earlier waves of illegal migration operate with near impunity in Italian cities, with left-wing local leaders and corrupt judges failing to adequately respond.

Key Takeaways: Obstacles to Progress

- Italy's regionalism complicates immigration enforcement, as all major cities have left-wing leaders intent on thwarting Meloni's plans to halt (or even slow) immigration. This is similar to other nations like Spain (where levels of illegal immigration differ dramatically due to local leadership) and the United States.
- Even as secularism expands its influence, a Catholic ethos can complicate immigration enforcement. At the same time, Italians do not accept the rejection of



rule of law and criminal activity among migrants. They expect order and look to Meloni's government for effective solutions to crisis and crime brought about by mass migration.

- Italy's justice system remains *deeply corrupt and politicized*. A left-wing (and unaccountable) judiciary has sought to block Meloni's initiatives at every turn, though she refuses to participate in the culture of bribery that dominates Italian courts.

Key Takeaways: Demographics and Family Policy

- Like much of Europe, Italy faces demographic collapse. Meloni's coalition has advanced several policies to provide economic support to families in hopes of reversing declining birth rates. The government has also instituted civic education reforms designed to celebrate national identity.
- Meloni's economic policy responses have included offering housing assistance for young families and tax breaks for families with two or more children. These policies are also meant to avoid a welfare system collapse as fewer Italians contribute. Crucially, the Meloni government acknowledges that financial incentives without cultural transformation will not be sufficient for lasting demographic renewal.
- Meloni's Education Minister Giuseppe Valditara has reintroduced civic education with a strong national and Christian focus. Schools have been encouraged to reintroduce Biblical studies, Latin, Italian history, and a renewed emphasis on the West's cultural roots. He has also encouraged the study of Italian music, poetry, and art history to rebuild national pride.

Key Takeaways: Western Civilization & Values

- In her determination to frame Italy as heir of an explicitly Christian tradition, Meloni is unafraid to be an outlier on the European right. She has stressed that national values rather than abstract ideologies are what strengthen societies. She warns that the EU risks geopolitical irrelevance (and accelerated decline) if it ignores civilizational inheritance.
- Prime Minister Meloni is the rare European leader that is openly pro-life. In her autobiography, she writes that she was born after a late decision by her single mother not to abort. Meloni has not signaled an intent to repeal the 1978 law that legalized abortion in Italy, but she has insisted on its full implementation, particularly the part that mandates mothers be given "all necessary help" to prevent having the procedure. In Italy, doctors are *protected* for "conscientious objection," meaning they can refuse to carry out abortions on ethical grounds. Many doctors, as many as 60-80%, take advantage of this.
- The Italian Parliament is presently considering the legalization of euthanasia, which Christians are resisting across party lines.



- Meloni has criminalized surrogacy for Italians (including going abroad for surrogacy), framing it as a defense of women and children against commodification, echoing the sentiments of the late Pope Francis in arguments.
- Prime Minister Meloni’s public acknowledgement of pro-life values is unique among European leaders; even on the right, politicians routinely embrace secularism. They are warned that to stand up for Christian values is political suicide. Meloni’s exceptionalism in this category is commendable.

Key Takeaways: Trade and Defense

- The most significant complaint about President Trump’s agenda on the Italian right appears to be the tariffs. Should the economy contract in coming months, the Left in Italy will have more ammunition to attack Prime Minister Meloni for her friendliness with Trump, accusing her of betraying the Italian people by not negotiating a more favorable trade deal.
- Across the Italian right, there is respect for President Trump for showing Europe that bilateral leverage works better than surrendering to unaccountable, globalist multilateral systems. Many recognize that America First offers an intriguing, even compelling model for “Italy First,” including a restored and revitalized Europe.

Key Takeaways: The Vatican & Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- AI is a strategic issue for the Vatican. People expect the Holy See to lead on this issue. The Vatican is likely drafting an encyclical on AI, one that may answer the question of whether it constitutes a “public space.” This will have vital implications on regulation.
- We share the view that what made the United States great was policy rooted in Christian values rather than utilitarianism. Our future greatness, as AFPI and the Trump Administration understand, rests both on a return to those values and a commitment to seeing all innovation through a faith-based lens.

Future Cooperation

The United States needs reliable partners in the defense of the West. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has shown herself willing to speak the truth that too many European leaders, even on the right, avoid. When Prime Minister Meloni addressed the Atlantic Council in the Fall of 2024, she [said](#), “*The West is a system of values in which the person is central, men and women are equal and free, and therefore the systems are democratic, life is sacred, the state is secular, and based on the rule of law,*” adding that our civilization was borne out of a “meeting of Greek philosophy, Roman law, and Christian humanism.”



Meloni is an America First ally because she has, thus far, demonstrated that good statecraft—i.e., strong borders, sound policies, and secure institutions—can and should be promoted with a clear moral vision and celebration of culture and identity. She has demonstrated cooperation with President Trump and his agenda, along with a realistic and mature leadership to meet the varied challenges we share.

Ultimately, the best framework capable of meeting today’s civilizational challenge is one that pairs nation-first policies like border security with Christian values: the sanctity of life, the strength of the family, and the dignity of the human person. This is the task before America and its allies: to defend permanent things, so that freedom, faith, and ordered liberty might endure for generations to come.

