

INTERVIEW FROM BEIJING



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On EU-China Relations, EU's Economy

Q. Prime Minister Meloni's government decided to withdraw from the BRI, citing a lack of economic effect and stating that the agreement had not benefited Italy in any way. This is contrary to data published by the Atlantic Council; in 2019, Italy exported \$13 billion to China, while in 2022, Italy exported \$16.4 billion. Could you share your thoughts on this matter?

And you are right. The official data that show an Italian export to China growing contradicts the view of the Italian government that instead claims that the MOU on the Belt and Road has brought no benefit to the Italian economy. That's not true, that's false. The memorandum, even during those 3 years of covid Ukrainian crisis has managed to achieve. Exactly one of the key objectives. That was the increase in trade between China and Italy, and that has

happened. and I give you the most recent figures. Italy export in 2023 were 33% higher than those when we signed the memorandum back in 2019.

So it is very strange that the Meloni Government ignores the reality of data, let alone opinion just they ignore data and say that has brought no benefit, while, indeed, there are hundreds of thousands of Italian companies that have benefited from this increase in exports. So what they say is not true.

The other thing I would like to say is that the joining the Belt and Road bears no obligation on Italian companies to do business with an Chinese Company with other Asian or other African companies, part of the Belt and Road. It's a free option.

and of course the cobalt extracted from Congo is goes through China first before arriving to Europe, so we cannot do without it. We have no natural resources. To a large extent. We have no raw materials, we have no rare earth in the quantity that we need for our economy. We cannot do green transition. We cannot do digital without those materials, so it is impossible to do without China.

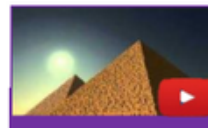
Q. Governments worldwide, including those in Europe, have prioritized principles that mostly support the interests of large corporations. However, the high inflation of food, and rent is significantly impacting ordinary citizens, who also pay taxes. What solution would you suggest for the same?

So this problem is a very serious and very deep, because in a political circles in Europe and in Italy, where, of course, I'm involved. As I'm as you know, I'm head of Foreign Affairs at the the Independence Party in Italy. We do want to clarify. The the political fight is not between a right wing and left wing. This is something of the past. The real fight today is exactly what you said is between the elite some of the multinational and the middle class and the working class. So it's a vertical fight between those who have and those who don't. Now in the United States. We do know, of course, that it is a large corporation that do donation to political parties, and so, of course, the relationship is very tight in in Italy this cannot be done. It's illegal but still, the policies of a European government. Italian government and European Union do tend to favor large, elite.

multinational, and do bring troubles and economic problems to the population. I gave you the example of the sanctions. What does it happen? It happens that the food energy prices go up. So the average household, especially poor people, retired people who really don't have a lot of extra cash. They need to spend the winter in cold. This is in a developed G 7 country. This is what happens to millions of people. We have inflation for food prices go up so the lower class, the middle class do suffer. They don't have enough money to make ends meet at the end of the day. I tell you, in Italy we have about 10% of the population below poverty line 10% in a G 7 country, an economy of 2 trillion dollars with a Gdp per capita in the order of \$25-\$30,000, which has 10% of the population below poverty line. So this is the big challenge, the conflict between the elite and the middle class and the working class. And the solution is that the middle class needs to understand.

They they do not need to make alliance with the elite, and this is only an illusion. They need to make an alliance with the lower class, and together they have a strong, like critical mass to win this fight.

**Interview by Veera Sennu Krisna
International Correspondent**



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So the Government, when I was in government. We opened the door for company to make their own decisions. We didn't force them, of course. And so this kind of agreement, there are basically a free option with no obligation, even if had not brought benefit, which is not true. But even if they hadn't, you just stay on the agreement because there is a value in optionality in the future that you don't exit to something that cost you nothing and gives you some potential advantages. So the Meloni Government and the minister foreign Affairs Tajani, who also agrees with her, of course, with Meloni. They are wrong both on the concept that you do not exit agreements. They have no obligation that really impair the opportunity for a company to do business with China and they are wrong on the actual data that they say there brought no benefit to, while, indeed, a little bit and not didn't solve the problem of the Italian economy. But even in those years of crisis. It did show that this memorandum has some value.

Q. EU participation in the Ukraine war has reduced exports, resulted in lower profits due to high energy prices, and caused difficulty in obtaining loans because of banks' risk avoidance. According to a poll by the European Council on Foreign Relations, 40% of Italians believe that the EU has played a 'negative role' in the conflict, compared to only 21% who think it has performed well. Is the EU's participation in the Ukraine war be perceived as contrary to the interests of the Italian people?

I tell you the EU, and sanctions placed on Russia, on for which the Italian Government, the Meloni Government agreed and gave support are completely, damaging for our own economies, and are completely useless at stopping the war. So, at the beginning

the European Union has told the citizen that yes, they were accepting it. The sanctions would bring some economic damage to our economy, but that was a sacrifice that for ethical reasons, one should bear in exchange for peace.

Even our Prime Minister Draghi, before Meloni was claiming that if we turn the air conditioning down by 2 degrees. We would bring peace to Ukraine. It is very strange that the people of such standing, the former governor of the European Central Bank, with a Ph. D at MIT could say such.

You know things that have no connection with the reality, and we did some analysis. I, personally did some analysis with some of the political party in Italy to warn them that these sanctions would not bring any peace whatsoever. In fact, they would even help Russia economy

and the the data proved it because Russia trade surplus in 2022 was at the record, high, historic, high, 283 billion, and in 2023, another 100 billion. So not only sanctions that did not help bring peace did not damage the Russian economy, but in some way they even helped it, the Russian economy and damaged our own economy. So basically, they were. Opposite sign, then, to what the European Union and the Draghi and Meloni Government believe. And this is very dangerous, because it shows that the in Europe.

Political decisions are made, not based on the analysis, but based on their wishes. So governments confused what they would like to happen with the reality, and of course

The result was, the war is still on, and our economy German economy, Italian economy and the European economy are suffering.

Q. You have been supporting the cause of bridging the gap between the West and the East by promoting the creation of a multipolar world. What would you

From the Editor's Pen

Hello! Election Commission of India

"The world's largest democracy is approaching parliamentary elections in the coming months. To ensure fairness, several rules are in place, such as banning party flags, covering leaders' statues, and removing propaganda posters. Additionally, politicians' cars and helicopters are thoroughly checked for transparency and honesty. These measures aim to prevent voters from being influenced by any particular party's imagery.

In this democratic nation, 543 members of parliament will be elected. The party with the most seats will choose the Prime Minister. Despite the upcoming elections, some media outlets are already declaring that Narendra Modi will be the next Prime Minister, comparing the process to the US Presidential election. This premature speculation could potentially influence the outcome.

The media is also publishing opinion polls that predict Modi's victory, which may contribute to misinformation and affect the election results. The election commission should intervene to address these issues and prevent any undue influence on the democratic process. The election results will be announced on June 4, and the commission should ensure a fair and unbiased election."

suggest to the current EU leadership to achieve this objective?

The EU leadership need to understand that China is not a option. It is a reality of the world. And with China all the emerging markets. The BRICS country like India, not just China, Brazil, African countries, central Asian countries, all the what we call it bricks, Belt and Road and Global South is a reality, it is not a choice, and so it is impossible to prosper. It is impossible for our European economies to prosper without engaging productively with these other 151 countries around the world. So the way that you're right I'm promoting, and I am pushing for European leaders to do business to understand what happens in those markets. I'm against the de coupling, because the de coupling will only hurt us. And again, not them. And in fact, we why would we want to hurt other countries? That's not even ethical. And we do need the the interaction. We need the raw materials. We need the energy. We need the technologies, and it is a really a win win. So I am in favor of a closer cooperation in this new multipolar world. That is changing from the US. Hegemonic dominance to a multipolar situation. We need to recognize it. It's something that we cannot stop. And so my advice is to study what those

151 countries do, have what they need, and start to engage with them in a more productive way. And I say this, especially with the 2 biggest economies, India and China, that really represent the bulk, of course, of the world population and the bulk of the economic growth. So it is very silly for European leadership not to even consider this reality and try to raise the tone. Write a white paper against the and the economies of emerging markets, declaring China systemic rival. You just don't do these things. You do business. You don't raise tensions, especially these days.

Q. The EU relies on China for over 80% of its critical minerals, as China holds a monopoly on these resources. How practical is it for the EU to reduce its reliance on China through "derisking"?

It is impossible, like you, said the china holds the monopoly of many resources. Some some are held directly in China, some are held, for example, in Congo via, cobalt mines that China has ownership of. And so, we Because we need this raw material. The answer is very easy. It is impossible for the EU to reduce the reliance on China. China holds directly raw material. Many metals and some others are held through China ownership of foreign assets. For example, mines of Cobalt in Congo, in Africa the China has a big shareholding of,