



Pekka Kallioniemi @P_Kallioniemi

Mar 15 · 17 tweets · [P_Kallioniemi/status/1635953481268830210](https://twitter.com/P_Kallioniemi/status/1635953481268830210)

In today's [#vatniksoup](#) we'll do our first trip to Italy as I introduce an Italian politician and Deputy Prime Minister of Italy, Matteo Salvini ([@matteosalvinimi](#)). He's best-known for his Russia-related funding scandals, and for his Euroskeptic and pro-Putin views.

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Matteo joined a right-wing populist party, Lega Nord in 1990. He was active member of the party, and in 1997 he started writing for their official newspaper, La Padania. He's been registered as a journalist on the list of Italian professional journalists since 2003.

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The image shows a screenshot of the website 'la Padania'. At the top, there is a green navigation bar with the text 'LEGA NORD per l'indipendenza della Padania' and links for 'the Padania Valley', 'the Network', 'the TV', 'the Radio', and 'the A'. Below this is a blue header with the logo 'la Padania' and the tagline 'lavocedelnord'. A navigation menu includes 'Home', 'Foreground', 'Politics', 'Interviews', 'Inquiries', 'News', 'Economy', 'Cultures', and 'Editori'. A prominent advertisement for 'Free Englischsprachtest' is visible, featuring the URL 'www.wallstreetenglish.de' and the text 'Ob Alltagsenglisch oder Business Englisch - Testen Sie Ihr Wissen!'. Below the ad, there is a 'News' section with a headline: «Indispensable counter-information tool». The article text reads: 'Salvini: "Here I took my first steps, I would be a journalist again tomorrow. An impressive gag is returning to the League: for this reason we must offer more than ever a useful and different reading of the facts"'. A photograph of Matteo Salvini is shown below the text, with a wall of various posters and documents in the background.

Some have described Salvini as one of the main leaders of the populist wave in Europe during the 2010s, after Putin's "economic war" took a hold of many European countries, and his anti-immigration views gained a lot of popularity and traction.

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The image shows a screenshot of a news article from EURACTIV. The header features the EURACTIV logo and navigation links for 'The Capitals', 'The Brief', and 'Ukraine'. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with categories like 'Agrifood', 'Economy', 'Energy & Environment', 'Global Europe', 'Health', and 'Politics'. The main headline reads 'Salvini fumes at EU court ruling on refugee returns' by Gerardo Fortuna, dated May 17, 2019. A photograph shows Matteo Salvini, an Italian politician, speaking at a rally. Below the photo is a caption: 'Italy's Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Matteo Salvini during a rally for the EU elections. [PROIETT/EPA-EFE]'. At the bottom of the article snippet, there are social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, along with a 'Print' button and a language selector set to 'Français'.

In Dec, 2013, Salvini beat Umberto Bossi for Lega's leadership, and the party adopted a strong critical view of the EU. In 2014 Salvini started cooperating with Marine le Pen, the leader of the French party National Front, and with Geert Wilders, leader of the Dutch Party...

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...for Freedom. He showed his support for Donald Trump during the 2016 US presidential election, and the two met in Apr, 2016, in Philadelphia. He also supported the "Stop the Steal" conspiracy theory which suggested that Trump's presidency was stolen by voter fraud in 2020.

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Salvini has also shown his support for Trump's former chief strategist Steve Bannon's European populist group The Movement. Matteo has also allied in Italian politics with Putin's long-time friend, Silvio Berlusconi.

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Mattini is a textbook example of a politician who fell under Putin's so-called "soft power" (the ability to co-opt rather than coerce). In 2017, Putin's ruling party signed a cooperation deal with Salvini's Lega Nord.

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DAILY BEAST

ALL CHEATSHEET OBSESSED POLITICS CRIME ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA INNOVATION OPINION WORLD U.S. NEWS SCOUTED

Putin's Party Signs Cooperation Deal with Italy's Far-Right Lega Nord

ALLIANCE

Andrew Desiderio
Updated Apr. 11, 2017 4:01PM ET / Published Mar. 06, 2017 12:27PM ET

f t e g

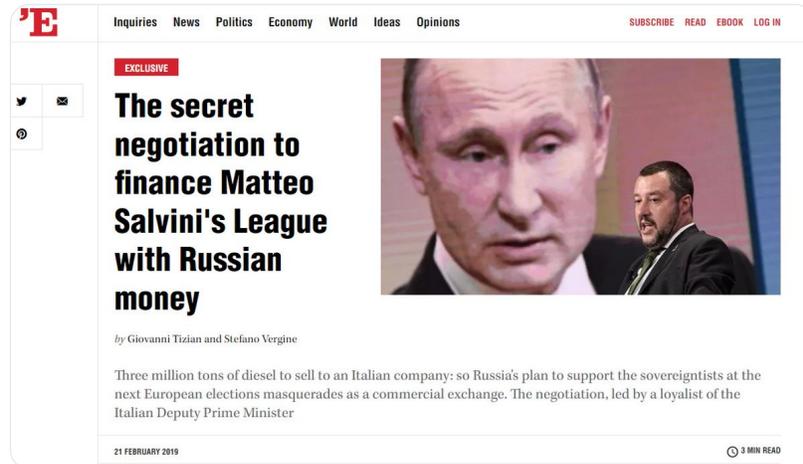


Tony Gentile/Reuters

Russian President Vladimir Putin's political party has signed a cooperation agreement with Italy's far-right Lega Nord (Northern League), in a move that signals a continuation of Russian efforts to expand ties with Europe's populists. Putin's party, United Russia, has already signed a similar agreement with a far-right party in Austria, and has actively sought to work closely with like-minded populists in France and Austria. Putin's increased coziness with Europe's far-right has already triggered fears that Russia is readying cyberattacks targeting French and German elections, similar to Russia's meddling in the U.S. election to allegedly help Donald Trump win the presidency.

These parties shared not only an appreciation for "traditional and conservative values", but also financial interests: in 2019, the Italian magazine L'Espresso published an investigation which revealed a Kremlin-linked, 3 million euro funding scheme.

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The screenshot shows the L'Espresso website interface. At the top, there are navigation links for 'Inquiries', 'News', 'Politics', 'Economy', 'World', 'Ideas', and 'Opinions', along with 'SUBSCRIBE', 'READ', 'EBOOK', and 'LOG IN'. The article title is 'The secret negotiation to finance Matteo Salvini's League with Russian money', marked as 'EXCLUSIVE'. The author is 'Giovanni Tizian and Stefano Vergine'. The date is '21 FEBRUARY 2019' and it is a '3 MIN READ'. The article text begins: 'Three million tons of diesel to sell to an Italian company: so Russia's plan to support the sovereigntists at the next European elections masquerades as a commercial exchange. The negotiation, led by a loyalist of the Italian Deputy Prime Minister'. An image of Vladimir Putin and Matteo Salvini is visible on the right side of the article.

In this scheme, a Russian-owned Rosneft "sold" diesel to an Italian company, but the money was supposed to be funneled into Lega's European election campaign. Italian authorities are still investigating the case.

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The screenshot shows an article from 'Italy' news. The title is 'Italian prosecutors investigate League over alleged Russian oil deal claims'. The subtitle is 'Inquiry to examine corruption claims over alleged plan to channel Russian oil funds to Salvini party'. The author is 'Lorenzo Tondo in Palermo' with a Twitter handle '@lorenzo_tondo' and a timestamp 'Thu 11 Jul 2019 16:57 BST'. The article text states: 'Italian prosecutors have begun an investigation after claims saying Matteo Salvini's far-right party, the League, sought funds via a Russian oil deal. Prosecutors in Milan have opened an inquiry into possible charges of international corruption in the case. The inquiry follows an investigation by L'Espresso magazine (reported by the Guardian in February) which alleged there was an arrangement by Russian representatives, close to Vladimir Putin's government, to sell 3m tons of diesel fuel to an Italian oil company. The inquiry was launched by magistrates in February but its existence was announced only on Thursday.' An image of Matteo Salvini speaking at a podium with the 'LEGA' logo and '4 MARZO VOTA LEGA' is included.

Later BuzzFeed published voice recordings and full transcripts from a meeting between Salvini's PR officer, Gianluca Savoini and Russian agents close to Putin. The agenda of this meeting was to discuss over illegal funding of 65 million USD from the Russian state to Lega Nord.10/16

RUSSIA

Revealed: The Explosive Secret Recording That Shows How Russia Tried To Funnel Millions To The "European Trump"

A close aide to Italy's deputy prime minister Matteo Salvini held covert talks to pump Russian oil money to his far-right party. BuzzFeed News has the tape.



Alberto Nardelli
BuzzFeed News Europe Editor

Posted on July 10, 2019 at 1:00 pm



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Six men sat down for a business meeting on the morning of October 18 last year, amid the hubbub and marble-columned opulence of Moscow's iconic Metropol Hotel, to discuss plans for a "great alliance."

In another funding scandal, unrelated to the previously mentioned, Italy's highest court sentenced Lega Nord to return 55 million USD of illegally acquired taxpayer money.

Salvini was a stark opponent of the EU sanctions on Russia after the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

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WORLD NEWS AUGUST 7, 2019 / 12:40 PM / UPDATED 4 YEARS AGO

Italy's top court upholds seizure of League funds over corruption

By Reuters Staff 2 MIN READ [f](#) [t](#)

ROME (Reuters) - Italy's top appeals court has confirmed the confiscation of some 49 million euros (\$54.83 million) from the right-wing ruling League party over a decade-old corruption scandal, keeping it under financial pressure.



He's called Putin as "the best politician and statesman in the world", and he even took a picture of himself wearing a T-shirt with Putin's face on it in Moscow.

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After the full-scale invasion of Feb, 2022, he was confronted about this by Wojciech Bakun, the mayor of a Polish town Przemyśl, where Salvini was visiting a refugee center.

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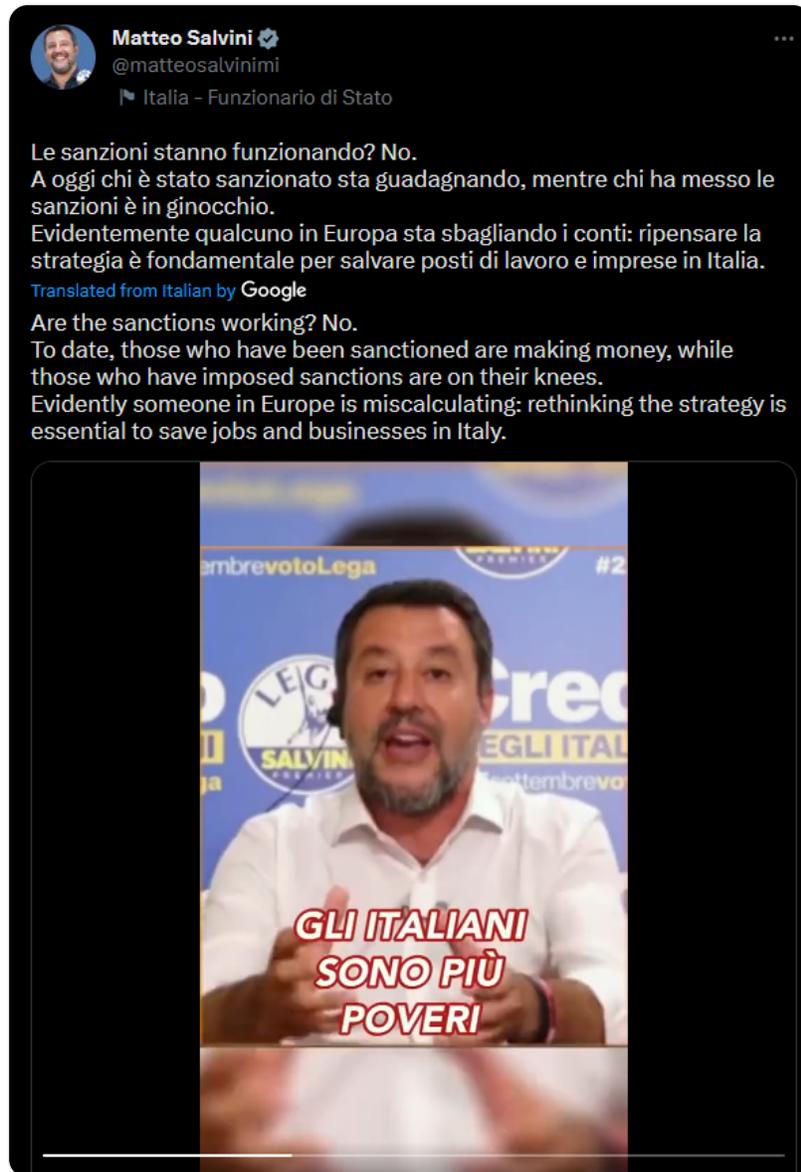
As so many others after 2007, Salvini was lured under Putin's influence with Russian money. Even though he has condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it is not known if he's still under Russian influence.



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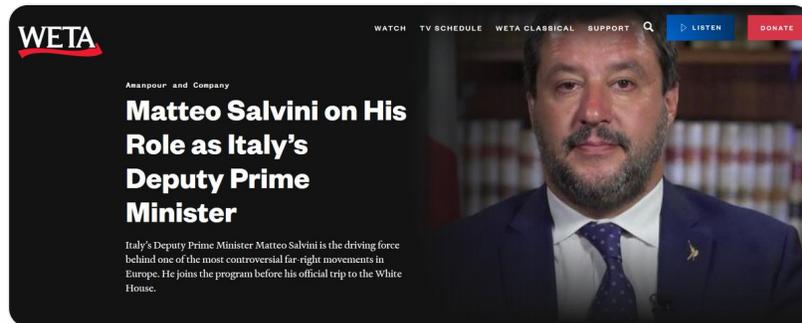
In Sep, 2022, Salvini criticized the sanctions against Russia, suggesting that they're not working and actually harm Italy. Indeed, many Italian companies are still doing business in Russia, and this narrative has been heard before, usually coming from Russian state media.

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These scandals haven't really hurt his political career in Italy, and he's currently acting as the Deputy Prime Minister in Giorgia Meloni's right-wing government. This government also includes ex-PM Silvio Berlusconi's center-right party.

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Pekka Kallioniemi

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In today's #vatnik soup I'll discuss how Russia and Putin influenced politics and attitudes in European countries since (at least) 2007 by investing into the energy, financing and the real estate sectors.

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7:45 AM · Jan 16, 2023

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