

Pompeo's rebuke on China and the ambiguities of Italy

The Italian leg was certainly the most important of the Euro-Mediterranean tour of US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who in these days has touched Greece, Croatia, the Vatican and Italy in rapid succession. Our country is caught in the center of the competition for hegemony over the Old Continent and the Mediterranean region between the two world heavyweights. If Beijing has identified Italy as the soft underbelly to undermine the European Union and NATO, in recent months Washington has launched its counter-offensive to defend US European primacy and preserve the established order. It is simply impossible to forget or underestimate the sense of the dramatic descent in Italy of president-emperor Xi Jinping in March 2019, with the signing of the MoU on the Silk Road by the Conte I Cabinet and its Asian counterpart. A real political tribute to Chinese power, much more than the simple trade agreement that was told to the Italian public. It had never happened before that a founding member of the European project and of the Atlantic Alliance let itself be seduced to such an extent by the Chinese sirens as Italy did, a fact naturally aggravated by a certain inability to think the world in strategic terms and by the inclination to seek solutions to its many problems only abroad, as well as by the habitude to read the events of our time only through the broken lenses of economism. Essentially, the head of US diplomacy has called his recalcitrant Italian ally to order, warning Rome against the Role of the companies of the People's Republic in the construction of the new generation network and in the man-

agement of the many seaports of the peninsula. Plans absolutely not accidental, but part of an attempt to legitimize a new geopolitical order and a counter-globalization with Chinese characteristics. If the diffusion of Beijing's 5G technology is pointed out as a Trojan horse capable of stealing sensitive data and affecting national security, the interest of the Dragon for Italian ports is explained by the urgent need to find outlets for its commercial surplus and to reach the heart of the European continent, which remains the most prosperous and coveted market on the planet. The adoption by Rome of a rigorous legislation dedicated to Golden Power and the failure of attempts to purchase or invest in strategic infrastructures in the ports of Genoa and Trieste mean that for now the superpower has managed to trim down the Chinese initiatives on ports and TLC in Italy. The domestic political debate, on the other hand, is more nuanced, thanks to a certain difficulty in relations between the M5S ruling class and the White House that has been going on since the beginning of the current legislature and the difficulties of Premier Conte and Foreign Affairs Minister Di Maio in combining US requests with the primary instinct of the ruling M5S to consider China as a credible point of reference in the global arena. This is a contradiction that, net of the many reassurances to the ally, has not yet been resolved and which, as it seems, will never be resolved completely. On the issue the position of the Democratic Party is also striking; the PD is the most pro-Europe party of the entire Italian political spectrum but struggles to develop a complete vision of Italy-China relations.