

**SECOND TAORMINA/ MESSINA CONFERENCE  
(ORGANIZED BY TAOBUK FESTIVAL AND VISION)**

**LA METAMORFOSI DI EUROPA<sup>1</sup>**



**EUROPE IN A POST PANDEMIC WORLD – ONE YEAR ONWARDS  
LOOKING FOR THE IDEAS TO CONTINUE THE DEBATE ON THE  
FUTURE OF EUROPE IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

**18<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021**

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<sup>1</sup> Europa is the mythological Phoenician princess whose seduction from JOVIS gave birth to the kingdom of CRETE and to the idea of the WEST as civilization.

## **BACK TO AFRICA: THE NEIGHBORHOOD AS EUROPE'S NEXT FRONTIER**

It is certainly true that the Union is, by far, the largest donor to Africa and also a big provider of technical assistance to African states; yet, politically, it is not as relevant as it should be in a continent which is vital to its own future. In a sense the problem goes beyond the European Commission possibilities and it has got a psychological dimension: a growingly inward-looking society is limiting its leadership role in an ever-changing world and the vacuum that the continent left is being filled by rising aggressive competitors<sup>2</sup>.

Europe wrote some of the worst pages of history (colonialism) in Africa, but it has now left its neighbours to their own fate, and to the aggressive leadership of other global players with limited (if any) commitments towards strong shared values such as human rights and civil liberties. Libya, Tunisia, Egypt and Algeria are all living a long “Arab winter”.

A renewed Europe must recover a global role and the African continent holds great economic opportunities that the Chinese are exploiting with the same methods that raised out of poverty 700 million of their own people. In China's eyes, Africa is a great market opportunity and an area in which to foster political leadership. China is, in fact, exporting not only development: currently, it is conducting ‘vaccine diplomacy’ but also exporting surveillance technology helping authoritarian governments to crack down on political opposition groups. Turkey and Russia are also competing on the military ground for the access to vital resources and market opportunities. So there is a big strategic question: which economic and societal model will Africa choose? One based on state-

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<sup>2</sup> The background to AFRICA session reflects the 2019 VISION paper accessible to <https://www.thinktank.vision/en/magazine/the-future-of-europe/a-platform-for-a-21st-century-europe>

led economic development and authoritarian practices or one built around political freedoms and the SDGs?

Europe should grow and re-think its Africa strategy, taking seriously its rhetoric of seeing Africa as its 'sister continent'. Trade agreements that lift excessive duties on African agricultural exports to Europe should be established. In turn, African countries need to be able to establish policies for domestically produced goods and services, such as accessing quality and affordable European technology. An economic rebalancing ought to ease migratory flows, which could also be further regulated by establishing, through transparent and democratic oversight criteria and processes, a wider area of free movement. New technologies will be key to this undertaking, and they will also serve to the effective maintenance of peace. Europe should favour intelligence gathering and support to African peace-making efforts to tackle instability and foster democratic practices worldwide. We need to get real with the 'African solutions to African problems' rhetoric. This will require Europe to update its mental map of Africa to see and seize the new opportunities of a modern partnership.

Above all a strong investment into human capital has been made much more urgent by the COVID-19 Pandemic which emptied schools in Africa more than elsewhere. Education, students and teachers mobility may be the best opportunity for making Europe an influential soft power in Africa.