



## DIALOGUE

# ONLY AFRICA WILL SAVE US

While Italy and the rest of Europe are aging and seem to be losing the future orientation of their history in the 20th century, Africa is alive with energy and resources that will define future global scenarios. Despite its many problems, Africa is now a key player with which to forge new relationships.

TEXT BY / GAVINO MACIOCCO / DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF FLORENCE

Disgust and indignation, but not surprise, in the reaction to the suggestion from the German party AfD (*Alternative für Deutschland*) to deport all immigrants from Germany both undocumented ones and documented residents, and even those who have German citizenship. It was not a surprise because AfD is a hard-right neo-Nazi party with well-known racist, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, xenophobic, and Identitarian leanings. AfD took 10% at the federal elections in 2021 and 83 deputies, and in some East German Lenders, it even reached over 20%. At the 2019 European elections, AfD won 11 seats and joined the parliamentary group “Identity and Democracy,” of which Italian party the League is also a part.

Another distasteful idea was Boris Johnson’s decision to make an agreement with Rwanda to deport the “illegals” there. The first flight was scheduled to depart in June 2022 but was canceled after the European Court of Human Rights intervened. The latest ruling by the Supreme Court – the UK’s highest court – established that the deportation plan (which has already cost £140m) is illegal. No asylum seekers have been sent to Rwanda.

Italy has also recently chosen the path of deporting “illegals” to Albania. For that matter, two of the parties in the incumbent government have also espoused racist and xenophobic ideas similar to those of the AfD. Once they came into power, they tried to assume a patina of respectability (e.g., Mattei Plan). However, Italy’s immigration policies continue to be closed and labyrinthine, made even harsher after the Cutro Decree. There is no reception or integration, longer periods of detention in the infamous detention centers, and – finally, the cherry on the cake – deportation to Albania (costing €673 million over ten years).

This Albania project is futile and costly – if it is even lawful at all – because asylum recognition procedures and periods of detention of migrants are shifted to the other side of the Adriatic, and then they all return to Italy to be either received or returned to their country of origin (a rare event, less than 1% of “illegals” per year). But with an eye on European elections, the project has to be shouted about. Meanwhile, a piece of information is regularly ignored that demographers and economists have been tirelessly pointing out for decades: Italy is heading towards a relentless demographic decline with catastrophic consequences on the economy and welfare levels. By 2050, Italy will have lost a total of 4.5 million people. This is what the 57th CENSIS report shows. The demographic decline will result from a decrease of 9.1 million people under 65 at the same time as an increase of 4.6 million people over 65. Thirty-four point five percent of the population will be elderly and alone.

As we said, the government tried to give the impression of decency by proposing an aid plan for Africa for the future (while right now Africans are killed at sea and tortured on land), with the not-even-hidden ulterior motive of stopping migration from Africa to Europe through aid. The historian Andrea Graziosi writes, “Of course, Europe, and Italy have something to give Africa and it is right that they do so, in a relationship without a sense of superiority and echoes of past arrogance.<sup>1</sup> But in Africa today there is that kind of life and energy that was found in Italy and Western Europe at the time of the “economic miracle.” (...) Now it is less us who help them grow, benefiting from it, but they who, by growing, can help us, gaining benefits from it, as we used to –do. (We could add that, not only is Africa the youngest continent on the planet, with an average age of 20 years, but it has 30% of the world’s mineral resources and 60% of the planet’s unused arable land). It is hard to accept it and realize that we need “an old age cane.” This inability to accept reality is at the root of the “let’s help them at home so they don’t come here” rhetoric that has been reiterated with the Mattei Plan. This is wrong not only because it is completely unrealistic terms of basic facts but especially because, as things stand now, we are the ones in need the help from others.”

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Graziosi A, *Così s’è ribaltato il rapporto con l’Africa: oggi siamo noi che abbiamo bisogno di lei*. Il Foglio, January 30, 2024.