

La Cina non abbocca

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Se anziché i consiglieri della Casa Bianca, Obama ascoltasse George Soros, a Pechino avrebbe fatto un discorso molto diverso: 'the system is broken and needs to be reinvented. [...] A new Bretton Woods conference, like the one that established the post-WWII international financial architecture, is needed to establish new international rules, including treatment of financial institutions that are too big to fail and the role of capital controls. It would also have to reconstitute the International Monetary Fund to reflect better the prevailing pecking order among states and to revise its methods of operation. [...] Reorganizing the world order will need to extend beyond the financial system and involve the United Nations, especially membership of the Security Council.' Basta dunque con i club riservati - G2, G8, G20, ecc; si rivaluti invece il ruolo delle organizzazioni multilaterali, fondamento dell'ordine internazionale. L'argomento allegato da Soros è il seguente: 'the world is facing another stark choice between two fundamentally different forms of organization: international capitalism and state capitalism. The former, represented by the United States, has broken down, and the latter, represented by China, is on the rise. Following the path of least resistance will lead to the gradual disintegration of the international financial system. A new multilateral system based on sounder principles must be invented. [...] the US has more to lose by not being in the forefront of reforming it. The US is still in a position to lead the world, but, without far-sighted leadership, its relative position is likely to continue to erode.' L'alternativa, spiega ancora Soros, 'is frightening, because a declining superpower losing both political and economic dominance but still preserving military supremacy is a dangerous mix. [...] In fact, democracy is in deep trouble in America.' Anche la reazione cinese sarebbe stata diversa, perché la linea proposta da Soros era già nelle parole pronunciate da Zhou Xiaochuan, il governatore della banca centrale, il 23 marzo scorso: 'The crisis again calls for creative reform of the existing international monetary system towards an international reserve currency with a stable value, rule-based issuance and manageable supply, so as to achieve the objective of safeguarding global economic and financial stability. [...] Back in the 1940s, Keynes had already proposed to introduce an international currency unit named "Bancor", based on the value of 30 representative commodities. Unfortunately, the proposal was not accepted. [...] The creation of an international currency unit, based on the Keynesian proposal, is a bold initiative that requires extraordinary political vision and courage. In the short run, [...] with its universal membership, its unique mandate of maintaining monetary and financial stability, and as an international "supervisor" on the macroeconomic policies of its member countries, the IMF, equipped with its expertise, is endowed with a natural advantage to act as the manager of its member countries' reserves.' Per inciso, la proposta di assegnare al Fondo Monetario Internazionale il compito di gestire almeno in parte le riserve dei paesi aderenti è condivisa da Dominique Strauss-Kahn, il direttore del Fondo (Contropagina dell'8 ottobre). Obama ha invece optato per una partita a due -un G2, appunto- la cui regola dovrebbe essere la "strategic reassurance". Di cosa si tratti lo spiega un sottosegretario agli Esteri al New York Times: ' "Strategic reassurance rests on a core, if tacit, bargain," Mr. Steinberg said. "Just as we and our allies must make clear that we are prepared to welcome China's arrival," he argued, the Chinese "must reassure the rest of the world that its development and growing global role will not come at the expense of security and well-being of others." Si tratta insomma di uno scambio, i cui termini sono i seguenti: gli americani rassicurano la Cina che non intendono contenerla, ossia accerchiarla politicamente e militarmente, o ostacolarla economicamente; per parte loro, i cinesi si impegnano a facilitare il riequilibrio delle bilance dei pagamenti, e a coadiuvare gli Stati Uniti nella gestione delle crisi mondiali. Questa linea emerge con chiarezza dalle dichiarazioni del presidente americano - innanzitutto nell'intervista rilasciata alla Reuters prima della partenza per l'Asia: 'I see China as a vital partner, as well as a competitor. [...] If both countries recognize their interest in a more sustainable growth model, then I think we will both benefit and the world in general will see greater stability. [...] And that means us selling more exports into China; it means us being more responsible in terms of our savings rate; it means China building on the growing consumer demand in their country. [...] The key is for us to make sure that that competition is [...] within the bounds of well-defined international rules, [...] but also that together we are encouraging responsible behavior around the world. And on critical issues, whether climate change, economic recovery, nuclear non-proliferation, it's very hard to see how we succeed or China succeeds in our respective goals without working together. And that is, I think, the purpose of the strategic partnership and that's why this trip to China is going to be so important.' Poi in un discorso a Tokyo: 'we welcome China's effort to play a greater role on the world stage -- a role in which their growing economy is joined by growing responsibility. [...] the United States does not seek to contain China, nor does a deeper relationship with China mean a weakening of our bilateral alliances. On the contrary, the rise of a strong, prosperous China can be a source of strength for the community of nations. [...] Now that we are on the brink of economic recovery, we must also ensure that it can be sustained. [...] We can't follow the same policies that led to such imbalanced growth.' Infine, rivolgendosi agli studenti di Shanghai, Obama ha accompagnato la solita esortazione (l'aveva fatto, con meno discrezione, a Mosca e al Cairo) a perseguire il sogno americano del successo -'I see China's future in you, young people whose talent and dedication and dreams will do so much to help shape the 21st century'- con la celebrazione della storia comune sino-americana; una storia che, secondo Simon Schama, è andata però a corrente alternata. La posizione del presidente americano può essere definita di centro; la sinistra è rappresentata da Paul Krugman che chiede più durezza e determinazione nel confronto sul cambio, a difesa dei posti di lavoro - 'The administration's statements on Chinese currency policy seem pro forma, lacking any sense of urgency. That needs to change. I don't begrudge [non rimprovero a] Mr. Obama the banquets and the photo ops; they're part of his job. But behind the scenes he better be warning the Chinese that they're playing a dangerous game.' La diagnosi di Krugman -il miglioramento della bilancia commerciale è temporaneo, il problema è il cambio dello yuan- è condivisa a destra da Niall Ferguson, il quale ritiene che il G2, Chimerica (un nome che sembra uscito dalla penna di

Rampini), sia il passato, non il futuro - 'Chimerica consisted largely of the combination of Chinese development, led by exports, and American overconsumption.' Ma a differenza di Krugman egli si sbilancia, nel senso dell'ottimismo, sull'esito di un braccio di ferro sul cambio: alla fine la Cina rivaluterà e imparerà 'that exporters can live with substantial exchange rate revaluations so long as they are achieving major gains in productivity, as China still is.' Il Wall Street Journal che giustamente ritiene americana, più che cinese, l'origine degli squilibri finanziari e della crisi, vede proprio nella conclusione di Ferguson un motivo di preoccupazione: 'The larger mistake is to believe that any nation can devalue its way to prosperity. As other currencies rise in value and force productivity gains, the U.S. economy will become relatively less efficient. American living standards will decline, as those in Asia rise.' Oltre alla destra populista di Ferguson, e a quella ortodossa del WSJ, c'è quella militarista di Robert Kagan - 'Unfortunately, the only result [della "strategic reassurance"] will be to make American allies nervous.' In realtà, gli alleati - i giapponesi, nel caso particolare - sono nervosi perché, come spiegano Douglas Lummis e Gavan McCormack, gli americani non se ne vogliono andare da Okinawa - sebbene dichiarino che il contenimento della Cina non è un obiettivo, si potrebbe aggiungere. Senza destare sorpresa, la risposta di Pechino non è stata incoraggiante per Obama: questa è infatti l'impressione che si trae dalla dichiarazione finale di Hu Jintao, ed essa trova sostegno nel servizio degli inviati del Financial Times - 'At their joint appearance in the Great Hall of the People following their meeting, both leaders gave the impression that there had been sharp disagreements on a wide range of issues.' E' forse un'affermazione di Hu - 'The talks were candid, constructive, and very fruitful' - a dare loro lo spunto per ricordare i vertici USA-URSS: 'Much like the lengthy statements that the US and USSR produced during their rare bouts of detente, however, a great deal of continuing disharmony could be read between the lines.' Il riferimento alla Distensione può tuttavia aiutare a capire lo stato dei rapporti fra le due potenze: non un'alleanza ineguale, basata sulla "strategic reassurance", ma un confronto responsabile che mette in luce convinzioni e interessi divergenti. Dei tre punti all'ordine del giorno - 'climate change, economic recovery, nuclear non-proliferation' - l'unico sul quale si è registrata convergenza è stato il primo, 'But [the] announcements of a series of new clean energy initiatives, from carbon capture research to a project on electric cars, could not paper over [mascherare] the fact that both [leaders] had sharply downgraded prospects of a big deal on climate change in Copenhagen next month at the Asia Pacific summit in Singapore last weekend.' Sulla "nuclear non-proliferation", Hu è stato molto sbrigativo: 'the Iranian nuclear issue [va risolto] through dialogue and negotiations.' Quindi né sanzioni, né la minaccia di azioni militari - almeno la Cina dimostra di non subire l'influenza della lobby pro-Israele. Nella dichiarazione di Hu è assente qualsiasi accenno alla politica del cambio; la Cina non ritiene dunque di doversi giustificare per aver agganciato lo yuan alla moneta di riserva del momento, il dollaro. Alla difesa, Hu preferisce l'attacco: 'I stressed to President Obama that under the current circumstances, our two countries need to oppose and reject protectionism in all its manifestations in an even stronger stand.' Un altro episodio indicativo dell'atteggiamento cinese lo raccontano Cooper, Wines e Sanger nell'articolo già citato: 'In a July meeting, Chinese officials asked their American counterparts detailed questions about the health care legislation making its way through Congress. The president's budget director, Peter R. Orszag, answered most of their questions. But the Chinese were not particularly interested in the public option or universal care for all Americans. "They wanted to know, in painstaking detail, how the health care plan would affect the deficit," one participant in the conversation recalled.' Sorprendentemente, ma non troppo, la giustificazione della linea cinese viene da Robert Reich, un uomo di sinistra: 'the larger explanation for Chinese frugality is that the nation is oriented to production, not consumption. [...] The Chinese government [...] wants to create more jobs in China, and it will continue to rely on exports. Each year, tens of millions of poor Chinese pour into large cities from the countryside in pursuit of better-paying work. If they don't find it, China risks riots and other upheaval. [...] To this extent, China's export policy is really a social policy, designed to maintain order.' La conclusione di Reich esclude soluzioni indolori ai problemi del mondo: 'Both societies are threatened by the disconnect between production and consumption. In China, the threat is civil unrest. In the U.S., it's a prolonged jobs and earnings recession that, when combined with widening inequality, could create political backlash.'

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