Europe: the temptation of sovereignty and the silence of the lambs

The Covid crisis19 opened Pandora's box of harmful passions. Enough with globalization! Stop Europe! Down with the government (especially in France)! Discord reigns between the main blocks and within the blocks. Europe seems to be deeply divided between East and West, North and South, the rich and the poor. Even within states, political spaces have never been more fragmented.

What will come out of this crisis for the European Union? For now, the most "sovereignty" is unanimous. Economic, industrial, digital, technological this is put to all sauces ... But for the benefit of whom? Of the Union or of its member states? Will the crisis be resolved by more or less Europe? Nobody knows.

In this context, we must keep a sense of proportions. No, the situation is no better elsewhere, neither in the United States, nor in Brazil, nor in Russia and especially not in China. And no, a return to the narrowest nationalism which would require the closing of borders is not desirable. Besides, there is an absolute imposture to make believe that the return to the nation-states would be the remedy. As if they had disappeared from the European institutional scene. What a joke! These are member states that oppose in the European Council, whether between the Netherlands and Italy on coronabonds, or between Hungary, Poland and the rest of the Union on civil liberties. The only structures that work - the European Central Bank, the Commission and the European Parliament are essentially supranational institutions where decisions escape the rule of unanimity to better defend the general interest.

We can certainly blame these institutions for some blunders in their communication. But their response has been overwhelming and will be as effective as possible within the legally binding framework that is theirs. Can it be said that the responses given by national governments were more massive and more effective? Can we say that the United Kingdom, which has recovered all of its "sovereignty", has provided a better response to the crisis? Obviously not.

If the Union has failed, it is its member states that bear the responsibility for it, meagerly measuring their solidarity. The Union has only a few tools at its disposal enabling it to exercise this solidarity. Without the unanimous agreement of the member states, neither the Commission nor the democratically elected European Parliament can vote a budget and even less raise the tax. However, each time that the Union has exclusive competence, as in the matter of trade negotiations, it can hold high on the other blocs and have an authentically "geopolitical" vision, that is to say, not be vassal of the United States, weak vis-à-vis China, nor in permanent conflict with Russia. On the contrary, each time that the member states are in command, as in defense or foreign affairs, they act in a dispersed order and in the end each aligns itself, according to its most immediate interests, with the positions of a more powerful actor.

The Union's fragility stems from the fact that its member states have only implemented unfinished solutions: a common currency without a budget and without fiscal policy and a defense policy, without defense instruments, at the forefront of which is a body effective and legitimate decision-making.

The solution catches the eye: the federal state. The problem is that, since 2005 and the failure of the French and Dutch referendums, the word is taboo. And it is precisely for this reason that the Union is in great danger. More than ever federalists must speak out and not be silent like the lambs that are brought to the slaughterhouse. Because help will not come from the leaders of

the member states. They are already having enough trouble running their own country in the storm. They won’t do more, either they don’t want to, or they can’t. They have been elected by their fellow citizens and will be accountable to their constituents. We can't blame them.

So what to do? Speak well, debate, in a word, play politics and take an active part in the debates to come within the convention on the future of Europe. The federal time will come when at least one transnational political party with this objective has enough elected representatives to make its vision of the general European interest triumph. As Thucydides said, the bravest will surely be those who have the clearest vision of what is before them and the courage to go out to meet it.