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## **Europe: Changing the Model?**

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In his speech on the occasion of the Charlemagne Prize, Mario Draghi, in order to explain Europe's weakness in the face of the major challenges of the moment, in addition to his well-known criticisms of current EU leaders, also questioned the integration model that Europe has established over the last 70 years. Draghi stated that, mindful of the tragedies of the 20th century and to avoid the centralization of power and the risks of hegemony, Europe has adopted an integration model that prioritizes rules over political discretion and seeks to sublimate conflict by decentralizing decisions among a large number of independent agencies, with procedures that are slow, cumbersome and can often appear bureaucratic. Draghi does not deny the great successes achieved by this model, but he notes that it is no longer up to today's challenges. Hence his call for a "pragmatic federalism." With those words, Draghi is not just offering advice on policies to pursue; he is also raising a potentially explosive structural issue that deserves in-depth discussion.

European integration began exactly 70 years ago with the establishment of the ECSC, based on Jean Monnet's intuition, commonly described as the "functionalist model." What is it? Although its implementation is extremely complicated, the conceptual definition is relatively simple. European states are sovereign, but they are aware not only of having common interests and a common destiny, but also of periodically facing problems that require collective action. When they agree on this and define the objectives to be pursued and the means to achieve them, they freely agree to share a part of their sovereignty and to entrust the implementation of those objectives to common institutions. The most important is the European Commission, but in recent years the European Parliament, elected by universal suffrage, has also gained greater importance. However, there are also a large number of independent agencies entrusted with specific tasks; by far the most important of these is the European Central Bank. The logic of this conceptual path explains, among other things, why in some cases the system requires majority voting and in others it does not. Draghi is right in noting that such a model prioritizes rules over political discretion. This underscores the central role the Court of Justice plays in the system. Essentially, it is more of a process, or a method, than a model. It can be summed up in the slogan: nothing is possible without states, nothing can last without institutions. Upon closer inspection, even if it came from the Cartesian mind of a Frenchman, all this is conceptually not far removed from the Constitution, which is highly decentralized and enshrines rules, looking askance at the "Princely discretion" that Germany adopted after the trauma of Nazism.

From the beginning, it was clear to everyone that Monnet's plan was a hybrid animal destined to evolve, but in what direction? It was criticized both by federalists, who emphasized its shortcomings, and by defenders of national sovereignty - primarily, the Gaullists, who believed Monnet's model consisted of removing power from politics, which could only be national, and handing it over to a bureaucracy. After the ECSC, Europe attempted the adventure of military integration with the EDC. By its very nature, the

EDC would have necessitated a federalist evolution. The experiment failed for the well-known reasons, and the economic process resumed with the Treaty of Rome and along the lines of rigorous functionalism. This did not prevent most analysts, and even policymakers, from continuing to view functionalism as a transitional phase. But towards what? Towards a federation according to some, towards a confederation according to others. Despite this, except for De Gaulle, who ultimately failed in his attempt, no one has ever seriously attempted to change the nature of the model. Various treaty changes have occurred; some, such as the Single European Act, Maastricht and Lisbon, have been quite substantial. In many cases, majority voting has been extended, and the competences of the EEC, which had since become the EU, have been expanded. However, no changes, not even the aborted "Constitution" project or the creation of an institution that is in many respects "federal" such as the ECB, have substantially altered the balance of the institutions and therefore the functionalist nature of the process.

The reality is that this hybrid model, considered by most to be transitory and whose objectives Monnet had never fully defined, albeit amidst great political difficulties and often behind the times, has enabled the extraordinary progress of European integration. To the point that some, such as Jacques Delors, began to question whether functionalism was not, in fact, a transitory form, but a new political model. According to Delors himself, it was an Unidentified Political Object (UPO). He also compared it to a bumblebee: it has all the characteristics of being unable to fly, yet it flies. The truth is that advocating an evolution of functionalism toward a federation or a confederation would, in both cases, require a break or a qualitative leap unlike anything that has gradually occurred thus far. In the federal scenario, the centrality of the European Council would no longer make sense; in the confederal scenario, the recognized superiority of European law, and therefore of the decisions of the European Court of Justice, over national law would no longer be admissible. It is no coincidence that the role of the Court of Justice was at the centre of the debate that led to Brexit.

What drove the process? There were essentially three factors: the continuing perception, albeit belated, of the need for joint action; that which Monnet called the "de facto solidarity" produced by the success of joint action, which increased political support for the next steps; and finally, political leadership based on the Franco-German partnership - inevitable because it all began with the awareness of the need to definitively address the "German question," which had sparked so many conflicts over the past centuries. This leadership was crucial, not because the two countries were in agreement, but precisely because their starting positions often diverged. This leadership was also supported by the indispensable contribution of the Commission and of other countries: Italy first and foremost, but also the Benelux countries, and with the inconsistent and problematic participation of the United Kingdom, which ultimately led to Brexit.

Draghi is now putting his foot down and saying that this model is no longer suited to addressing the challenges of a profoundly changed world, with the crisis of multilateralism and transatlantic solidarity, as well as with the need for more active forms of industrial policy to close the technological gap. And above all, with the need for Europe to fully assume responsibility for its own security. Is this assertion well-founded? It is certainly true that the upcoming challenge, that of defence, brings us very close to the heart of sovereignty, which we had already touched upon with the monetary union. More profoundly, it is a problem that brings us back to the analysis of John Pinder, a perceptive and deeply pro-European but now-forgotten British observer. Writing in the 1960s, Pinder distinguished between "passive integration," for which the EEC was certainly well-equipped, and "active integration," which he considered more problematic. In other words, Europe had created a system that was highly efficient at eliminating obstacles, but less capable of having member countries "act together." All this may seem

simplistic, but there is some truth to it. The EU has achieved its greatest successes when it established common rules or eliminated national ones. Its success is much more modest when it comes to common spending. Citizens are generally happy with the abolition of obstacles and borders. The main example of a common policy, the agricultural policy, which absorbs a significant portion of the budget, does not seem to have generated the same level of political consensus. It is a fact, however, that today those same citizens who once asked us to abolish obstacles are now demanding greater protection in a world perceived as more hostile.

If the above is true, Draghi's stone thrown into the pond could cause very strong ripples. The problem is complicated by the fact that Monnet's model is rarely understood by the media, the political class, and therefore by public opinion. A mistake from which Draghi himself is not entirely free, is to interpret the often cumbersome nature of the process as the resignation of politics in favour of an irresponsible bureaucracy. The reality, however, is very different. Despite its complexity and its errors, the process remains entirely in the hands of politicians at all levels and the "mistakes of Brussels" almost always originate in the capitals. To deny this is to underestimate the complexities of European society and the history of its peoples, but above all, to provide an easy starting point for populist polemics.

That said, functionalism, with all its flaws, is Europe's Constitution. If we deem it obsolete, what should we replace it with? Draghi himself, unfortunately, is not helping us. What does he mean by pragmatic federalism? We know that the term has different institutional and constitutional implications depending on the country. But above all, where is the driving force? No one can seriously delude themselves that these could be the "founding countries" around the Franco-German alliance. Draghi himself tells us why: his list of countries driving the joint defence effort includes France, Germany, Poland, the United Kingdom, the Baltics, and Scandinavia. He could have added the Netherlands. This is indeed the new cornerstone of European policy, and not just in defence and security: the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, and the Baltics (plus Switzerland) are also the European countries at the forefront of innovation. However, at first glance, they do not seem like a group very capable of producing a federalist project. So, perhaps wisdom advises us to use Draghi's appeal as a call to "act together" and, as far as method is concerned, to continue to focus on the adaptability of Monnet's functionalism. In essence, to bet that the bumblebee will continue to fly.