

The collapse of great political parties on the continent



<https://johnredwoodsdiary.com/>

When I wrote my book about populism a few weeks ago I drew a contrast between the long trends on the continent to the demise of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats in most places, and the recovery of support for Conservative and Labour in the 2017 election. In February this year as I sent it to the printers the Conservatives were on a healthy 43% in the polls. The reason was simple. The Conservatives had embraced the Brexit verdict and we were on target to leave the EU on 29 March 2019. It seemed very likely the Withdrawal Agreement would not be passed, as it was extremely unpopular with much of the electorate, uniting Remain and Leave voters against. Implementing a timely and clean Brexit could lead on to other changes that would be welcome – spending the money on our priorities including some tax cuts with more spending on schools and social care, boosting the economy, developing our own global trade policy, setting out our own borders policy and restoring our fishing grounds.

Mrs May's decision to delay our exit and to blame Parliament led to a big fall in Conservative poll ratings. Her even worse decision to hold the European Parliamentary elections, three years after our decision to leave, led to a further slump in Conservative poll ratings. People write in and tell me I have to solve this problem. I need to do something.

My remedy is simple. We need a government that will go to the EU and explain the Withdrawal Agreement is completely unacceptable to Parliament and people, and cannot pass. We will leave at the first opportunity – October 31 if the EU does not co-operate or earlier if they will co-operate. We will offer free trade talks and no new barriers to our trade on exit if they agree under Gatt Article 24. It would be better to leave with such a deal than with just the various smaller deals we have in place for a so called no deal exit.

That is all the easy bit. I will continue to argue and vote for that in Parliament. That is entirely in line with what I promised I would do in the General election, and with the Conservative party Manifesto of 2017. The difficult bit is how to get the government to do just that, as it shows no wish to save itself at the moment.

I have made clear my wish to see Mrs May either change her policy in the way described or to give way to a PM who can do the job. If the Conservatives do not deliver a clean Brexit soon the polls will stay bad for the party and the country will continue to feel let down. I on my own do not have the power to get these changes, and nor so far does anyone else. That is what these days are about – trying to get the change we need.

The immediate future of Brexit rests on a Conservative Prime Minister and will continue to rest on a Conservative PM until the end of this Parliament at least. Any individual MP resigning the Conservative whip would not bring about the change many of you want, but would make achieving such change one vote less likely.

The book is

“We don’t believe you”

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