

The collapse of Labour and Conservative sister parties in the Euro area

It looks as if neither the Republicans (Conservative) nor Socialists (Labour) will have a candidate in the last two to be French President. It looks as if a third force party run by Mr Wilders will be the top performing party in the Netherlands election in March. Syriza came from nowhere to be the largest party and form the government in Greece. Pasok (Labour) have no seats in the present Greek Parliament. In Italy Grillo's 5 Star Movement is well ahead of the two old main parties in the polls. In Spain Podemos and Ciudadanos have made huge inroads into the traditional centre right and left main parties, making it impossible for either to form a stable government easily.

I find it extraordinary that these once great governing parties of the post war world in Europe have given up their pre-eminence so easily. It shows just how out of touch they have become. The main driver of their demise and of the popular discontent seems to be the bad impact of EU austerity economics and the Euro on their economies. When a country has half its young people out of work and around a fifth of its entire workforce laid off, it is no wonder voters seek a better way. The traditional parties are either deaf to the entreaties of those who want change, or impotent to change the things that matter because they have locked themselves into the EU and Euro schemes.

Whenever a country gets into a predictable governing crisis owing to its fractured party politics the EU proposes a technocrat led coalition government following the Brussels rules. When a country votes for decisive change, as Greece did when it elected Syriza to government, the EU works to ensure there can be no positive change and redoubles its efforts to enforce the very policies that have led to the political explosion in the first place. Economic failure can lead to a cry for strict controls on the movement of people, and a sharper nationalist rhetoric, as people hit out in search of a solution to a problem which their EU loving rulers scarce admit exists.

It is one thing for the traditional parties to decline, as they are. It is another for a single strong challenger party to emerge and take over government. That so far has only happened in Greece, though it could happen elsewhere this year. It is an even more difficult thing for that challenger party to break free from the shackles of conventional EU politics and improve the outlook. So far Syriza has been unable to do that, owing to voter ambiguity about the Euro project.

Marine Le Pen is made of sterner stuff than Syriza. Were she to win she would take France out of the Euro and run an economic policy she thinks would change France for the better. The AFD in Germany want to take their country out of the single currency, and have recently defeated the two traditional parties in Land elections. They remain well behind Mrs Merkel's party in polls for a national election. Sgnr Grillo is playing on the growing

unpopularity of the Euro in Italy and may want to exit were he to win.

The ruling elite of the EU, with its single currency and panoply of Brussels controls, is on trial in this years elections in the Netherlands, France, Germany and probably Italy too. The triumph of Brexit and Trump show there could be an upset for the ruling EU group in one or more of these. Meanwhile the Euro elite fasten their seatbelts and proceed with the same approach.