

## 22. THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN LEFT

*MJS France*

As the last polls throughout the Western world showed, we are at a turning point in history. Numerous analysis can be done about the changes we observed in the past two years. Whether it is with the Austrian, Portuguese, Polish elections or the Brexit referendum, the results defied the odds.

As new forms of populists political movements emerge through independent candidacies we can observe the birth of a strong anti-establishment movement. We hear it a lot in the media, and everyone from every side of the political chess started to claim how anti-establishment they are. But even more worrying, this climate of defiance against the system is the nest of all of the most twisted conspiracies against media outlets and information coming from governmental agencies.

This defiance allows politicians to deliver **their** “truth”. We see a decline in politicians offering a way, a solution, a certain analysis of the society according to their values and their philosophies at the benefit of politicians stating what they consider true or false. The right and left divide is being replaced by a right or wrong divide.

So far, those who took the most advantage out of these structural changes in the public opinion is the far-right and centrist populists. The “5 Stelle” movement in Italy, of the victory of Brexit and its leader, Nigel Farage or the election of Donald Trump on the other side of the Atlantic sends a strong message in favour of populism all over the world.

But if we go deeper into the analysis of the results, not only can we see a rise of the far-right, but more importantly a rejection of traditional, mainstream blurry centre-left or right political parties. Its best depiction is in Austria, where we saw the usual centre-left/centre-right match was replaced by a match by a far-right/ecologist match with a – close – yet incontestable victory of the Ecologist candidate, Alexander Van der Bellen. There’s also the now famous “Bernie would have won”.

What people are craving for is strong ideologies and a radical change in their everyday life. The electorate wants a shift from the traditional liberal left and the soft right. It appears to most that the fastest way to a radical change in policies is a radical change in politicians, resulting in strong electoral changes all around the world.

The most recent signal about this phenomenon is the victory of Benoît Hamon during the primaries in France although he was far from being the poll’s favourite. This victory reveals a change in the European left similar to those we can observe with Iglesias, Tsipras or Corbyn. All of those movements were unsuspected by the media and the polls as they bear new ideas and grew on collective intelligence. But it also raises a hope in creating a new European left alliance.

While the far-right and the conservatives colonized the political debate with subjects like terrorism, immigration, deficits and debts we can see the appearance of leftist candidates such as Hamon bearing new ideas, like renewing our democracies, talking about the Universal Basic Income, about assets’ taxation, about the burning subject of ecology, and promote capital redistribution through strong fiscal reforms.

When we face the rise of a strong and organized far-right with Trump, Hooper, or Le Pen with unapologetic ideologies, combined with the rejection of traditional parties, the best way to prevent the progression of the populists worldwide is to show a strong unapologetic and united left in Europe.

While the results of the far-right in the last polls might be frightening, the change in the left might open the way for a more social and ecologist Europe.