

W(h)ither Europe?



Turkey is now home to as many as 3.25 million refugees mostly from Syria and it is unclear just how long it can contain the pressure of those who want to move on to Europe. In any event, the sealing of borders both around and inside the EU produces a kind of existential crisis of fear and suspicion which continues to poison much of European politics.

By Michael Prior

They are casting their problems at society. And, you know, there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look to themselves first. It's our duty to look after ourselves and then, also to look after our neighbour. Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister, 1987

As we wrote about in a previous *Thinker*,¹ there is something going on in Europe which is more than the usual back-and-forth between centre-left and centre-right parties, something

more akin to the shift of political tectonic plates. We characterised this as a hegemonic crisis, a breakdown in the consensual hegemony which pulls together disparate elements in capitalist society into something approaching a cohesive society; and suggested that this could be seen as the fourth such crisis in the history of European capitalism. However, assigning names and categories may satisfy historical analysis but it does little to help the immediate questions as to just what is going on and where Europe may be heading.

The neoliberal hegemony ushered

in around 1980 drew its social cohesion from the idea that freeing up individual enterprise within an unfettered market system would provide economic benefits for all, even if the balance of such benefit would flow selectively to the most wealthy. It was a lie, of course, but it cast its intellectual shadow very wide particularly with regard to its inevitable worldwide dominance. Consider the then British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, speaking to his own party in 2005:

I hear people say we have to stop and debate globalisation. You might as well debate whether

autumn should follow summer... The character of this changing world is indifferent to traditions. Unforgiving of frailty. No respecter of past reputations. It has no custom and practice. It is replete with opportunities, but they only go to the swift to adapt, slow to complain, open, willing and able to change.

It was this unflinching, almost messianic, belief in the inevitable dominance of neoliberalism which was, indeed remains, its most potent force; remains because despite the economic catastrophes of the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008, neoliberalism is still the fallback mode of all international institutions and many governments, for example the newly elected leader of France, Emmanuel Macron.

The economic faults of neoliberalism, particularly its blind faith in unregulated markets, have been thoroughly picked over. Its social consequences have been less well-analysed but they are, in some ways, even more devastating and pervasive. In 2007, a group of British socialists produced an analysis of what they saw as social crisis in Britain under the title *Feelbad Britain*² The opening lines of this were:

The starting point for this analysis of contemporary British society is simple: the observation that in an era of apparently unprecedented overall material prosperity and economic stability, people seem to feel no better than before and quite possibly worse. Obviously the "feel-bad factor" affects us all in different ways and to different degrees, but there is enough of it about to suggest a general trend across society, amounting to what we would characterise as a crisis in social relations and others have called a "social recession". We are a society of people who don't appear to like themselves or each other very much. Twenty-first century Britain, our country, is afflicted with a deep-seated and widespread social malaise.

They went on to characterise various aspects of this crisis, for example growing rates of mental illness drawing particularly on the work of Richard

Layard:

Layard's group at the London School of Economics observed that "crippling depression and chronic anxiety are the biggest causes of misery in Britain today", with one in six so suffering. This is the view not only of this one group. You can tell a lot about a society from the health of its children. According to another appraisal, there are "sharply rising rates of depression and behavioural problems among under-17s. This year, the British Medical Association reported that more than 10% of 11- to 16- year-olds have a mental disorder sufficiently serious to affect their daily lives. At any one time, a million children are experiencing problems ranging from depression to violence and self-harm. What is truly sobering is how abruptly these problems have arisen. The incidence of

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depression in children was almost flat from the 1950s until the '70s. A steep rise began in that decade, doubling by the mid-80s, and doubling again since. The rises have affected both sexes and all classes, although children in the poorest households are three times as likely as wealthy ones to be affected."

In 2016, the British National Health Service issued prescriptions for 64.7 million items of antidepressants, a massive 108.5% increase on the 31 million antidepressants which pharmacies dispensed in 2006.

Shortly after *Feelbad Britain* was published, a wider international study, *The Spirit Level*, using cross-sectional analysis, highlighted the "pernicious

effects that inequality has on societies: eroding trust, increasing anxiety and illness, (and) encouraging excessive consumption".³ It showed that for each of eleven different health and social problems: physical health, mental health, drug abuse, education, imprisonment, obesity, social mobility, trust and community life, violence, teenage pregnancies, and child well-being, outcomes are significantly worse in more unequal rich countries.

Trends in inequality vary between countries but, in general, throughout Europe and America there was a trend of decreasing inequality after WWII for thirty or so years with a trend of increasing inequality thereafter from around 1980. The impact that this has had on the eleven indicators examined by Pickett and Wilkinson across all these countries is very hard to sort out from all the other factors involved. But what *The Spirit Level* shows is that the key ethical underpinning of neoliberal dynamics, that greater economic inequality is acceptable, indeed necessary, as part of a general increase in economic wealth, may in fact be a driver for increased social problems.

These problems are evident at the level of social organisation as much as at the level of individuals. Indeed as Margaret Thatcher so eloquently and truthfully put it in 1987, it is at this level, what she called 'society', that the key destruction reaped by neoliberalism takes place. The effective destruction of trade unions in many countries is the most obvious example of this but it extends through to many other areas of what Robert Putnam called 'social capital' in his 2000 book, *Bowling Alone*⁴ Putnam shows how Americans have become increasingly disconnected from family, friends, neighbours and democratic structures, and warns that their stock of 'social capital' – the very fabric of connections with each other – has plummeted, impoverishing lives and communities. This article is focussed on Europe but it is clear that many of the issues raised by Putnam concerning the USA have relevance across here as well. In particular, it is hardly necessary to draw comparison between the 'wildness' and unpredictability of much European politics and the election of Donald Trump.

As much as any other component of social organisation, European political structures themselves have been decimated. Peter Mair's book, *Ruling the Void*,³ has been cited before in *The Thinker* as the most comprehensive analysis of this decline. Its opening paragraph sets the stage:

The age of party democracy has passed. Although the parties themselves remain, they have become so disconnected from the wider society, and pursue a form of competition that is so lacking in meaning, that they no longer seem capable of sustaining democracy in its present form.

Mair catalogues how electoral turnout, party membership and general participation in political activity have all declined throughout Europe and he links this decline from the 1980s with the decline of wider social organisation:

A tendency to dissipation and fragmentation also marks the broader organisational environment within which the classic mass parties used to nest. As workers' parties, or as religious parties, the mass organisations in Europe rarely stood on their own but constituted just the core element within a wider and more complex organizational network of trade unions, churches and so on. Beyond the socialist and religious parties, additional networks ... combined with political organisations to create a generalized pattern of social and political segmentation that helped root the parties in the society and to stabilize and distinguish their electorates. Over the past thirty years, however, these broader networks have been breaking up ... With the increasing individualization of society, traditional collective identities and organizational affiliations count for less, including those that once formed part of party-centred networks.

The recent French elections provide a clear example of this decay. Initially in a Presidential contest, and then in succeeding parliamentary contests, a virtual unknown, Emmanuel Macron won decisive victories first over the far-right candidate, Marianne Le Pen, and then over all other groups, with

his newly formed 'party' En Marche winning 350 out of 577 seats. The most humiliating defeat was for the French Socialist Party which went down to just 29 seats securing only 5.7 per cent of the vote. In the 2012 election after former president Socialist President Hollande came to power, the Socialist Party secured 280 seats. Le Pen's Front National was reduced to only 8 seats, though its leader, Le Pen, did gain a seat in a former coal-mining district in northern France. The other left group based on the social movement, La France Insoumise, led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, also did badly, gaining just 17 seats. Macron's victory was, however, gained on the basis of a national turnout of only 42%, much the lowest of postwar French elections. In the Presidential election won by Macron, there were 20% abstentions

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and 10% deliberately spoiled voting-papers.

These elections were dominated in part by personalities and in part by the popular movements, often led by such personalities, which have come to replace parties in much current European politics. Often called 'parties' these lack most of the normal features associated with established political parties without much in the way of structure or indeed formal policies, certainly no clear process for

the formation of policy nor for the election of leaders. They may not in fact have members as such; the Party for Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands only has one member, its leader Geert Wilders. Le Pen's Front National, usually included in any list of these new formations may actually have suffered precisely because it did have many of the trappings of the traditional party.

The usual characterisation of these groups is that they are 'populist', a term which is used in widely different ways and with little attempt at definition. Essentially it means appealing to ordinary people and bypassing an established political elite. A recent attempt to characterise such groups has been made by David Goodhart in his book *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics*. In this he advances the idea of new social categories, the Anywheres and the Somewheres, and he lists the populist groups as follows:

First, the Mainstream: parties that can mount a challenge to Anywhere liberalism but are most appealing to decent populist Somewheres, and more mainstream voters generally, and do not have roots in the far right. These include UKIP in Britain; the Five Star Movement in Italy; the Danish Peoples' Party; Alternative für Deutschland in Germany; the True Finns; and three of the four governing parties (as of late 2016) in the Visegrad Group (the alliance of four Central European states)—the Law and Justice party in Poland, Fidesz in Hungary, and Smer in Slovakia (the Czech Republic has a populist, and popular, president in Milos Zeman but does not have a populist government). Second, the Anti-Islamists. Hostility to Islam is important to most European populists but some are overwhelmingly driven by it, and it has caused some groups to drop any traces of anti-semitism (if they had them) and often stress their support for homosexuality, female equality and free speech. Party of Freedom in the Netherlands is one of these, the Danish People's Party also has a strong anti-Islam focus as does Pegida the German-centred movement (though it is largely a

street movement and attracts violent off-shoots). Next are the Reformed Far Right: parties which have roots in more extreme organisations, in some cases even neo-Nazi ones, but have reformed substantially and are keen to become 'clean' (or at least some of their factions are). Amongst these are the Front National in France, the Sweden Democrats, the Austrian Freedom Party and Vlaams Belang in Belgium. Finally, the Unreformed or Barely Reformed Far Right. Many of these parties or street movements, the unconstitutional populists, are overtly racist and white supremacist and generally support repatriation of non-natives: Jobbik in Hungary, Golden Dawn in Greece, Phalange in Spain, Kotleba in Slovakia.⁶

Although published recently in 2017, Goodhart's list fails to include the two recent French arrivals, En Marche and France Insoumise, both of which would fit into his first category. He also puzzlingly omits Syriza in Greece, largely responsible for the destruction of Pasok, the Greek Socialist Party, perhaps because it has been in power in Greece almost long enough to be counted as a traditional party. Goodhart makes the bold claim that "Populism is the new socialism. Almost all European populist parties now have an overwhelmingly working class voter base and most have policies towards economics and globalisation that have more in common with the left than the right, or might better be described as statist/protectionist. Indeed, several of the big parties – including both UKIP and the Front National – have been dragged sharply to the left in recent years."

The one major European country which appears to run counter to this rise of populist movements is the UK, which in the June election saw the two major parties, Conservative and Labour, win 82.5% of the national vote, a percentage increase of 15% since the previous election in 2015. Although Labour had the greatest share of this increase, 9.5%, the Conservatives, led by the much-derided Teresa May, actually gained 5.5% more of the popular vote over 2015. The result of this swing under the British first-past-the-post system was that Labour gained

30 seats and the Conservatives lost 13, the balance being mainly losses by the Scottish Nationalists. The result is that Britain now has a hung Parliament with the Conservatives having no clear majority. However, underlying this headline are two important factors; first that the 15% was achieved by the effective destruction of the smaller British parties, notably UKIP and the Greens. Second, the results showed a major shift in the traditional class basis of the two parties in England with the biggest swings to the Conservatives in the constituencies with the biggest proportion of working-class voters as shown in Fig. 1.⁷ The shift was particularly marked in constituencies with a mostly white working class.

Once staunch Labour strongholds in old mining districts such as South

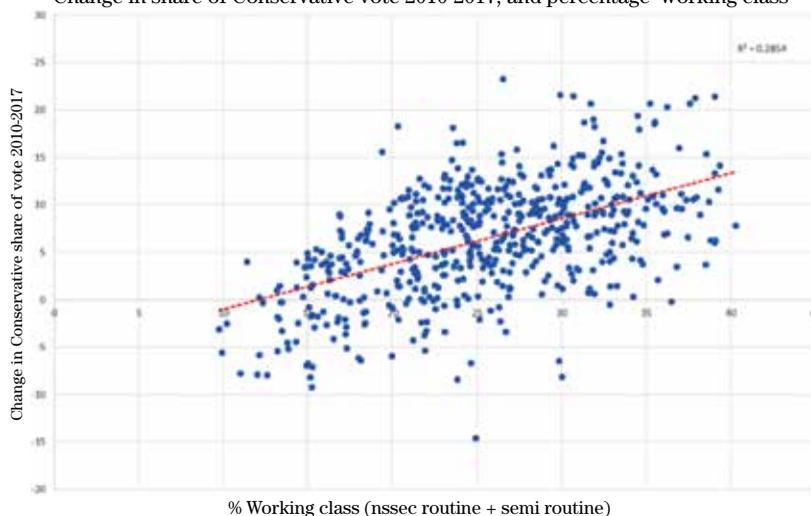
Yorkshire and North East England showed swings to the Tories of 15-20% with a few actually being won by them. It is not unreasonable to compare these swings to the gains made by the Front National in the old mining districts of northern France, once bastions of socialism, now the site of Marianne Le Pen's seat.

The British Labour Party is now in some respects similar to the various populist parties in that because of a change in party voting rules which allowed participation by a new class of 'supporter' as well as members proper, a rather eccentric left-winger was elected as its leader by the membership, despite the vehement

opposition of most of its MPs, backed a social movement called Momentum. This new leader, Jeremy Corbyn, seems to attract almost messianic support from many of the new, younger members of the party precisely because he is not part of the established political elite but is an honest, if limited, politician. On the other hand as shown in the figures, the northern working class appear to view him with suspicion as being a London smoothy and, despite losing seats overall, the Conservatives made significant advances in northern seats.

There is an odd, if perverse, similarity between Corbyn's success and that of Emmanuel Macron in France despite the fact that in ideological terms they are wholly dissimilar. Macron achieved a stunning majority of almost 90% in Paris in the French Presidential

Change in share of Conservative vote 2010-2017, and percentage 'working class'



elections. His En Marche movement achieved similar success in the Assembly elections at least inside the Périphérique Boulevard which marks the administrative boundary of Paris. Outside this boundary of 'official' Paris, in the poorer districts which were once called the 'red belt' round Paris, his vote dropped away and France Insoumise won seats though the voter turnout dropped down to below 30%. In the first round of the Presidential election, it was possible to walk from the Channel to Switzerland along the old, now defunct, coal and steel regions of France and from Spain to Italy through the départements in which the Front National came top

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even though in the second round, Macron decisively beat Le Pen.

Macron like Corbyn attracted huge crowds of adoring young voters at his rallies. Both are accomplished public speakers and able to present themselves as outside the normal elites of professional politics, even though this stretches the record for both of them; Macron having been Minister of Economy, Industry and Digital Affairs in 2014 until 2016 whilst Corbyn has been an MP, albeit on the backbenches since 1983. Macron's political position is quite different to Corbyn's as he is very much a neoliberal wanting to water-down much of France protective labour law and reduce state benefits whilst Corbyn wants much the reverse, being essentially a 1970s socialist whose core belief is greater state-participation in pretty much everything. However both have benefited hugely from the social category introduced by Goodhart, the Anywheres, young graduates who have moved to metropolitan areas to pursue careers often in the new digital sectors whilst Somewheres are less well-educated, often older people who have stayed near to their birthplace and have generally suffered either unemployment or stagnation in their local economies, often the old coal and steel regions.

As illustrated by the huge ideological differences between these two, any attempt to generalise about where Europe is heading is hindered by the contradictions within the new populism. As Tolstoy wrote in the opening sentence of *Anna Kerenina*: *All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way* and this might be said to apply to the unhappy countries of the European Union. The social impact of neoliberalism compounding its economic impacts has produced a range of responses, each in their own way pulling apart the political structure of European countries but each, as Goodhart's slightly haphazard classification illustrates, is pulling in rather different directions.

In eastern Europe, there has been a steady increase in the importance of right-wing nationalist governments which has led in the case of Poland to its imposition of controls over the

press to being questioned within the EU. The similar trends in Hungary led to the former Belgian Prime Minister and prominent current member of European Parliament, Guy Verhofstadt, taking to Twitter to exclaim *"With its current policies, Hungary would not have been allowed to join the EU in 2004."* The EU does have the power to suspend member states that offend against human rights but this draconian power has never come even close to being implemented. However, the refusal of the so-called Visegrad group (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia) to participate in the refugee dispersal plan agreed in the summer of 2015, whereby EU member countries would relocate 160,000 refugees across the bloc is causing strains. The decision is legally binding; however Poland and Hungary haven't taken in a single refugee between them, and they openly oppose the mandatory nature of the scheme. The Czech Republic, which holds elections in October, took in just 12 last year and none this year, with the government saying in June that it would withdraw from the scheme because of security concerns. Slovakia has relocated just 16 refugees out of the 902 it was supposed to take. The Visegrad Group has relocated 28 refugees in total out of an allocated

combined quota of 11,069. It is possible that the European Commission will take action over this but just what form it would take is unclear.

Meanwhile another issue is pulling Europe apart: the continuing impact of the 2008 financial crisis and the austerity programmes imposed on many countries. Fig. 2 shows a key aspect of this, youth unemployment. It might, loosely, be thought that a country with more than a quarter of its young⁸ unemployed is slowly dying and on this basis, Fig. 2 shows that all southern Europe including France cannot survive. Belgium and Slovakia also fall into this dismal camp but it is noticeable that the other countries of northern Europe, broadly, have much lower youth unemployment though only Germany is below 10% at 6.4% and the EU as a whole barely escapes below 20%. Comparable figures for the USA are 10% and for Japan, 4.9%.

The basis for this deep problem is the continuing impact of the 2008 financial crisis and the inability of Europe to pull out of the resulting economic depression. One factor in this, indeed the focus of the neoliberal thinking which still pervades the continent, is the high and in many cases increasing levels of public debt reduction which characterises the

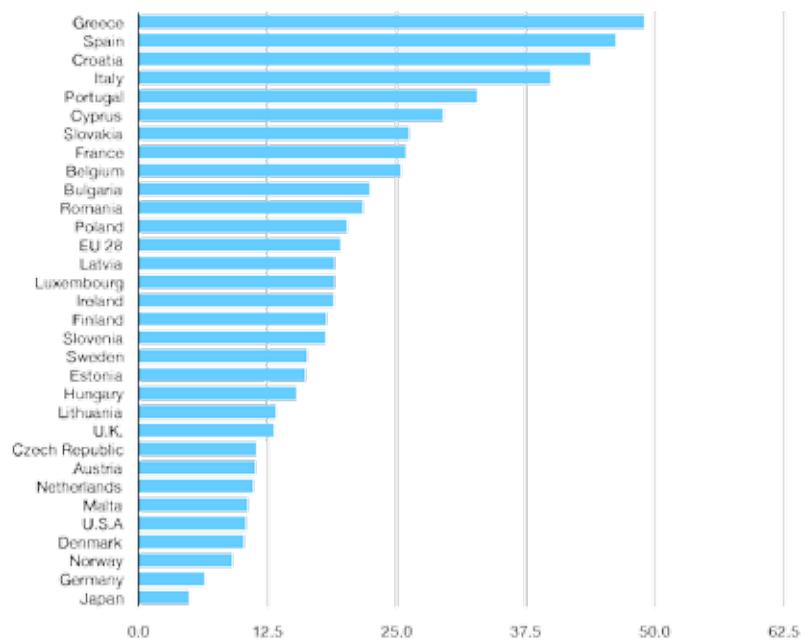


Fig 3: Youth unemployment in European Union countries, % Q4 2015
Source: Eurostat

economic mindset of institutions such as the European Central Bank and, perhaps most important, of the German and French governments. In his opening speech, the new French Premier, Edouard Philippe, made it clear that debt reduction would form the centrepiece of his economic policies, though what he spelt out remained just the same-old neoliberal nostrums of reducing state expenditure, reducing labour controls and lowering corporation tax. This fixation remains; despite the almost universal opinion of independent economists that the austerity imposed by debt-reduction programmes is actually harmful.

Altogether there are five European nations whose debts are larger than their GDP, and 21 that have debts larger than the 60 per cent-of-GDP limit set out in the Maastricht Treaty, a limit which is, in principle, legally binding, amongst whose number is the supposedly virtuous Germany. Greece's public debt is, unsurprisingly, the highest in the EU – standing at 177 per cent of its GDP. Italy and Portugal are the next most indebted countries, with debts of 132 per cent and 129 per cent of national economic output respectively⁹, essentially the same bloc of countries slowly dying from levels of youth unemployment. The two others above 100% are Cyprus and the one northern European country in the group, Belgium. Spain and France hover in the high 90s.

Essentially one can see Europe as containing two unstable blocs; a group of eastern European states – the Visegrad group possibly plus Bulgaria and Romania – which have relatively low public debt and reasonably stable if not prosperous economies, which are resolutely opposed to accepting any significant numbers of refugees and which have nationalist and increasingly authoritarian governments. These countries have no intention of leaving the EU and they receive substantial direct financial benefit from membership. They are not, however in the eurozone apart from Slovakia. Then there is a southern bloc including Spain, Greece and Italy plus Portugal and Cyprus which have large and unstable public debts, very high youth unemployment and other negative

economic indicators and have large populist political movements. They have significant anti-EU social movements. One of the key questions is whether France should be included in this group. All the economic and social indicators suggest that it should, particularly as its established political parties have been destroyed in the recent elections to be replaced by the now commonplace social movements. On the other hand, its newly elected government is firmly bound to EU membership.

To these groups, can be added the United Kingdom which, of course, has added its own brand of instability by actually deciding to leave the European Union.¹⁰ The tortuous negotiations leading up to this so-called Brexit must be concluded by March, 2019 and there are no signs that the EU

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negotiators will offer the UK anything other than a hard ride. A key reason for this is that there is a general fear that if the UK appears to be having a soft exit, it will spark other moves to leave, particularly in Greece and Italy.

The future of Europe and the EU hinges around Germany which alone of the major EU countries appears to have a stable political system and a reasonably prosperous economy. Despite the incursions of the groups like Alternative für Deutschland and Pegida, the coalitions of the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats with the smaller Green Party and the Die Linke (the left party formed by a split with the Social Democrats) still hold all the seats in the Federal Parliament, the Bundestag; and in the most important state assemblies they have formed

stable coalitions. Underpinning this political stability is the performance of the economy which, notably, runs huge and increasing trade surpluses with the rest of the world including other EU countries. In May, 2017, alone the country had a surplus of €22.0 billion up from €20.7 billion in May, 2016. It is often noted in the southern bloc of depressed EU economies that their common currency with Germany prevents the usual response to running trade deficits, currency devaluation, whilst Germany benefits worldwide from an under-valued euro.

The German government now essentially runs the EU with its dominance enhanced by the election of an enthusiastic poodle, Emmanuelle Macron, following behind the redoubtable Chancellor, Angela Merkel, wagging his neoliberal tail. This dominance is best expressed by the barely-concealed fact that Germany's Finance Minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, is the essential arbiter of Greece's fate with his dogged insistence that Greece follow an increasingly harsh austerity programme if it is to receive any further bailout funds, even though nearly all economists including the IMF believe this approach to be worse than useless.

The fact is that allowing Greece to slowly die protects German interests not least in ensuring that loans made to Greece, sometimes on a corrupt basis, by German institutions are protected.¹¹ The reassertion of the German-French axis which formed the original basis of the EU may yet prove the Achilles heel for German neoliberalism. If Macron fails to do anything about the dire state of the French economy and if the country descends into riotous semi-anarchy – the French do good riots – then Macron may prove difficult to put quietly to sleep. It is also possible that in the elections due in September, the SPD may become the majority party in the Bundestag. The leader of the SPD, Martin Schulz, has been critical of the failure to assist Greece and is likely to campaign on an anti-austerity programme similar in some respects to the successful Labour campaign in Britain in May. According to opinion polls, support for the SPD has fallen away since early-summer 2017, when it came close to the support for the

CSU, but it could recover and leave Angela Merkel's position as Chancellor in some doubt and the 'grand coalition' between the CSU and the SPD unstable. On the other hand, there is, so far, little sign of the fundamental political instability which has beset most other EU countries.

So where does this leave the future of Europe? Most of the factors noted above will continue to fester.

The refugee crisis continues with tens of thousands attempting to leave Libya mostly for Italy where 93,000 have arrived in the first half of 2017. In addition, to the end of May, 1,244 refugees were known to have drowned, joining Yohanna in unmarked graves.¹² However, the flood of refugees from the Middle East via Turkey has been stemmed by the EU bribing Turkey with some €6 billion in aid plus visa-free travel for Turkish citizens. Internal borders have been closed so that those who have arrived are contained in Greece and Italy which have become huge holding pens for more than hundreds of thousands of migrants, all hoping to receive permission to travel elsewhere, a process which can take years or result in deportation to Turkey. These controls may limit the impact of immigration in most of the EU though Austria recently announced that it may deploy its army along its border with Italy to stop 'illegal' crossing. On the other hand, Turkey is now home to as many as 3.25 million refugees mostly from Syria and it is unclear just how long it can contain the pressure of those who want to move on to Europe. In any event, the sealing of borders both around and inside the EU produces a kind of existential crisis of fear and suspicion which continues to poison much of European politics.

The other issue which will certainly arise is another financial crisis with the euro, similar to that of 2008. The European banking sector is still riddled with problems particularly in the south. Greek banks are essentially broken; whilst as recently as June this year, the Italian government stepped in to wind up two failing lenders, Veneto Banca and Banca Popolare di Vicenza, and prevent a bank run, at a total cost which could rise to €17bn. This bill will be footed by the government despite

EU rules forbidding this. Meanwhile the world's oldest bank, Monte dei Paschi di Siena, is struggling with bad debts which, over the entire Italian banking sector, are believed to total at least €360bn. In Spain, the Banco Popular had to be rescued in June by a forced sale to the larger Santander Bank for €1 whilst Portuguese banks are still in the recovery ward.

Even in Germany, the once-mighty Deutsche Bank is still suffering from falling revenues and low profits after it had to recapitalise in 2016 in order to survive. It has incurred litigation charges of 15 billion euros since 2009 on extravagant bets and poor conduct including the sale of toxic mortgages and sham Russian trades and it is still

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involved in litigation over claims of alleged sanctions violations.

Financial crises tend to erupt in modern capitalism every dozen years or so as some unforeseen hiccup interrupts the piling up of bad loans in asset bubbles. Chinese banks and the associated housing bubble is one possibility and so is the collapse of the UK housing market on the back of the flood of low-cost mortgages financing a London property boom amidst the general chaos of Brexit. Whatever its origins, there is little doubt that one of its consequences will be another crisis in the unstable eurozone with its uncorrected level of public debt and structural imbalances.

Meanwhile on the western fringe

of Europe, the UK stumbles along in a slow-motion crisis of national and regional collapse as the protracted negotiations to set the terms of its departure from the EU limp towards their probable end in March, 2019.

This is all beginning to sound rather apocalyptic rather like the opening of the fourth seal to reveal a pale rider. Many would accept that there are troubled times ahead for Europe but prefer to believe that we will get through by muddling along avoiding the worst by settling for second- or even third-best. After all, although Trump was elected Le Pen was not. Previously I quoted our most recent Nobel laureate writing in 1967 at the beginning of the previous hegemonic crisis that “the times they are a’changin’”. This time it may more appropriate to quote another Nobel laureate, WB Yeats, writing in 1919 at the beginning of an arguably more devastating crisis:

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed,
and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while
the worst
Are full of passionate intensity...
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born? ■*

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- ⁷ <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2017/06/does-working-class-need-ask-its-labour-party-back>
- ⁸ In these statistics, defined as under 25 years old
- ⁹ These figures are based on mid-July statistics
- ¹⁰ This decision based on a referendum held in 2016 was discussed in *The Thinker*, vol. 70, 2016
- ¹¹ See *The Thinker*, January, 2016 for the way in which German arms manufacturers bribed their way to huge Greek arms sales.
- ¹² Yohanna's story is in *The Thinker*, vol. 69, 2016