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## Towards a Labour hegemony?

The masses make history, and in the current moment, the masses are pointing towards a Labour hegemony



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Well-wishers greet Joseph Muscat outside the PL headquarters. Photo: John Pisani

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The result is clear: in the European election without Europe, Labour thrashed the Nationalist Party.

The Labour Party may be heading towards the construction of a hegemonic formation: made up of the articulation of discourses and policies that are gelling well together from an electoral perspective, even though they may be contradictory.

I'd call it a Third Way articulation of social-democratic, socialist, neo-liberal, liberal and nationalistic discourses. Whether this "politics without adversaries" will eventually implode is something which, at the moment, is difficult to see, particularly when the persona of Joseph Muscat keeps gaining such stature.

Perhaps Labour's best weapon at the present moment is the Nationalist Party.

The Nationalist Party is on the centre-right in economic issues, but when it comes to values, it seems to be made up of two main factions – one conservative and one liberal, yet without a clear decision-making force, which, in the final instance, pleases nobody.

The Nationalist Party could have portrayed a Europeanist message in this election, yet decided to focus on the faults of the Labour government, when the general public is not in the mood of such negativism. This was a clear strategic own-goal, particularly when scientific surveys showed that Labour and Joseph Muscat had widespread support during the past months.

The small parties will get around 7 per cent of the vote, which is not an insignificant result. Yet, the result represents a plurality of non-reconcilable ideologies, so they can never be lumped into a singular political force.

When it comes to Alternattiva Demokratika – The Green Party, it did not manage to make significant gains from the 2009 and 2013 European and General elections. In the 2013 general election, the context was very difficult for AD, when so many people wanted a change in government, and yet the party managed to reverse a trend of losing votes in every election, by getting its highest result ever in a general election.

This time around, there was no government at stake – which, in theory, makes the context much easier for small parties. At least this is what happens in many European societies. AD did not manage to gain significantly from such a context, even though it had some good and honest performances on TV debates, particularly when the less prominent candidate Carmel Cacopardo refused to enter irrelevant tit-for-tat arguments on localized issues, and instead focused on rational arguments on European issues.

There could be a plurality of political, cultural and structural factors leading to AD's result. One also has to look at the fact that in 2009, AD adopted a moderate strategy (as in 2014), while in 2013 AD adopted a left-wing strategy, though I am not sure that this impacted AD's current result.

What is surely the case was that in the present, an all-and-out leftist void exists in the Maltese political landscape. This does not mean that a coherent left-wing force would have received a positive result.

The fact is that scientific surveys had been predicting the overall result for some time. But I want to point out that such surveys can never predict particular moments when historic ruptures are made. Such encounters may or may not take place.

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In the current moment, and beyond Malta's hegemonic formations, the EU is characterised by urgent issues, which did not feature in Malta's European Elections. The destructive policies of austerity and precariousness; the neo-liberal trade agreement with the US (TTIP); the imperialist dabbling in foreign policy; and the great leap backwards in climate change, are cases in point.



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