

The end of politics as we know it or the grand coalitio...

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The [FT has a headline this afternoon](#) that says:

New Austrian leader warns mainstream parties may 'disappear'

The story leads with:

The head of Austria's railway system took over as the country's chancellor on Tuesday, promising to shake up a coalition government that has seen popular support erode amid worries over immigration and rising unemployment.

A number of thoughts follow. The first is the amusing one that a head of British Railways might have been seen as a saviour of any government in the UK.

Much more prosaically, the issue here is serious in the light of the real possibility that the far right in Austria might win the shortly forthcoming presidential elections. Neither of the two leading political parties, which have between them ruled Austria since 1945, have a candidate in the run off for that election.

That though leads to the question as to whether a 70 year old system should last, which is a sentiment reinforced by their willingness to enter a 'grand coalition' to maintain their grip on power. Is this just the failed neoliberal hegemony in operation for all to see, and does it, in fact, invite rejection in the interests of democracy as the new Chancellor obviously thinks possible?

This is a real question. Austria is far from alone in facing this issue. It is entirely plausible that the UK could face a similar problem and the willingness of some centre ground politicians [to cooperate too closely for comfort](#) only strengthens the impression that the supposed 'centre ground' of UK politics is as out of touch with public sentiment, political reality and the need for change, as the Austrians obviously think their main parties are.

Many, of course, think this explains the appeal of both UKIP and Jeremy Corbyn. That may well be true. The SNP, Plaid Cymru, the Greens and even the DUP and Sinn Fein in

Northern Ireland might also be indication of the success of alternatives and the failure of the supposed centre that now very clearly embraces only parts of the Conservative, Lib Dem and Labour parties. But in that case surely we need to embrace change and not suggest that threats are the answer?

I do believe change is needed. I do not think that the centre-right hegemony has any of the answers our economy needs at present because it is built on a failed economic philosophy that does not embrace the respect for people, planet, place and time that must be at the core of twenty first century politics. I also think the right would offer a much worse form of that logic that would pose a real threat to many. But in that case those who appreciate the need for change have to rise to the challenge.

Three things follow. First, if a grand coalition is needed it must be amongst those who realise that there is a need for a new economic and political paradigm.

Second, because change must be peaceful it is beholden on all who wish to achieve that goal to deliver that process within the constraints of the existing system whilst agreeing that its reform is a necessary consequence of working together, including PR thereafter.

Third, that means electoral coalitions must be created before another general election to achieve the goal of reform that can deliver a real prospect of difference within democratic and economic choice thereafter without resort to the far right being required.

My appeal to the party leaders who realise that change is required (and this may be everyone but David Cameron, Nigel Farage and the rump of parties like the BNP right now) is to agree that over-arching all their differences is the need for grand reform to restore real democracy to the UK, to create electoral reform and true accountability and to agree to work together in advance of the next general election to deliver this as a grand coalition for change committed to govern for one year, deliver PR, House of Lords reform, and more effective devolved power and to then to call another election under a new system of voting.

Is that too much to hope for in the face of the crisis in politics that is very clearly evolving?