

Unravel the tangled web

Marie Briguglio

Saturday, 7 December 2019, 09:42

Last update: about 3 years ago



As the political atmosphere reaches crisis point, more and more people, appalled at the prospect of being complicit through silence, have spoken out, their words laced with sadness, disgust, anger and some fear. But even those who have remained quiet will likely have found it hard to avoid being caught up in the toxic tide of negative emotions. For some, this is a particularly difficult open ment as they disassociate from a party they identify with, perhaps even love, only to find th

And yet, this is perhaps one of the few positive things that can emerge from this turmoil: the prospect of a larger cohort of people who are interested in political issues, but who do not have strong partisan loyalties. This could be the seed of a new literacy in politics devoid of worship of political demi-gods.

In a desert of cynicism, this are other oases where hopeful discussions are taking place.

Such constructive discussions are focussing on the need to reform our educational curriculum to increase critical thinking skills, civic and political education, media literacy, emotional intelligence and conflict resolution. Questions are also being asked as to why student organisations are increasingly modelling their activism on the dominant political duopoly, and how to instead seed debate, research and activism in a political, non-partisan space.

There is talk of the need to examine the system of political recruitment to attract a wider spectrum of candidates, beyond those who can survive the back-stabbing, business-dependent environment it has become. Linked to this is the need for a transparent system for party finance, duly audited with proper remedy for abuse. There is a desire to attract politicians who enter office not to fuel the free market in its worst offences and ride its tailcoats for private gain, but to have the courage to regulate the market and ensure social wellbeing - beyond lip service. There is talk of a broader, more viable space for independent candidates and a revision of the district-based electoral system.

There is also discussion is also about the need for autonomous institutions with transparent and meritocratic recruitment procedures, to examine, in particular, the judiciary, the police, infrastructure provision and planning. There is a clear need to reduce the appointing powers granted to the Prime Minister and to limit positions of trust. There is hope for contracts in the public domain to be viewed without redactions, following green and clean public procurement. There is the need for an emboldened commission against corruption and better resourced open cement bodies. There is a whole list of legislative instruments begging to be revised for

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powers of the Prime Minister (whoever he or she may be), how to tackle conflicts of interest in parliament and other bodies, how to reform the constitution itself, and while we're at it, how to conduct a proper consultation, with clear time frames, explainers and a systematic out-reach.

These are beautiful discussions, ones that instill hope among those of us who are active participants in matters of political interest. But they are not ones we can have yet. We are still waiting for the slate to be wiped clean through resignations and arrests, to be assured that investigations are happening without interference, to feel confident that justice can take its course, to believe that change can *actually* happen. The tangled web of capture must first unravel. Only then can we afford the luxury of lofty thoughts about weaving a better political future.