

The collapse of traditional cars

The decision of Ford to cease engine production at Bridgend is sad, but part of their long term retreat from manufacture in the UK. Their market share has shrunk dramatically from the high levels in the 1960s and 1970s . It is also part of the story of loss of sales and big financial losses in Europe as a whole. Just like Honda they have found it difficult to stay sufficiently competitive.

The immediate background to the closures both here and in Germany is the sharp decline in the world car market over the last year. In part this is the result of monetary squeezes here and on the continent. In part it is the result of the savage increase in VED taxes in the UK in 2017 with the limits on car loans, the increase in Chinese car sales taxes, and the rising interest rates in the USA. There is a world car downturn based on more tax and less credit.

The other big change is the sudden shift of the UK and EU governments against diesel cars and their insistence that people buy electric vehicles. The public have not warmed to these electric vehicles and the industry is still struggling to produce ones that are good value, with a big range and fast recharging. The public has held off from buying, as in many other countries told to go in the same direction. China has made faster progress with electric vehicles.

It is strange to watch the UK and other governments do this much damage to their car industry. It would be more normal to give the industry more time to develop new products with electric propulsion, and to make sure there are products people want to buy. In the meantime to avoid more closures in the UK as a matter of urgency the government should cut its tax rates on new cars, and loosen new car loans availability.

All change in the leadership election.

The decision of the 1922 Committee Executive to change the rules of the leadership election has changed its dynamics. We have gone from having a wide range of choices with more candidates likely to come forward, to a narrowing with more candidates likely to drop out even before Nominations close on June 10th. Putting in rising requirements for MP support for Nomination and the first two rounds makes it much more difficult for an outsider or different candidate to start from a small base and grow their support over the early rounds. There has been a mini rush for more MPs to declare for a candidate, creating a premier league of four, Boris Johnson, Jeremy Hunt, Michael Gove and Dominic Raab. Two candidates, Kit Malthouse and James Cleverly have already stepped down, with pressure on other candidates to do

the same for want of more support. This is now a more traditional election, with growing camps for the main candidates trying to Hoover up more votes and pledges by demonstrating momentum for their candidate.

Nominations close on June 10th. The first round ballot is on 13 June, the second round on 18 June, the third round on 19 June and rounds four and five if needed on 20 June. That would allow for a seven candidate race with just one dropping out at each stage and two winners to go on to the contest amongst the membership or for a more numerous field if more than one drops out between rounds owing to the new thresholds or candidate choice. It is likely we will not need rounds beyond June 20th. It would be worrying if we got to a last two only for the second placed candidate to do a deal to prevent a membership run off. Under the rules the race in the country can be eliminated by candidates colluding or changing their minds, as with the last leadership election.

I have now seen and heard a range of views from members of the Wokingham constituency. 50 came to a reception and others have emailed or spoken to me. There is no one stand out candidate commanding great support, with many members saying they do not know a number of the candidates and do not therefore wish to commit to one particular one at this early stage. Boris Johnson is the best known and attracted the most mentions wanting him on the ballot paper, but his numbers were still in single figures with most do not know.

I have now had the opportunity to talk to Dominic Raab, one of the two candidates in the front runners list who resigned from the government over the Brexit policy being pursued by Mrs May. He took the job of Brexit Secretary knowing the PM's commitment to the Withdrawal Treaty. He voted for the Withdrawal Agreement on the third vote despite having strong reservations about it. He states clearly that as PM he would get us out by October 31 with or without an Agreement. He also says he has a preference for an Agreement and thinks it should be possible to renegotiate it with the EU despite their repeated statements to the contrary. He wants changes to the backstop and some other matters, but seems willing to countenance a two year delay in exit and making further substantial payments to the EU. These views make it difficult for me to vote for him.

Michael Gove has repeated his support for the Withdrawal Agreement, and said he would countenance a further delay in our exit to try to get a better deal. He seems to think he might be able to renegotiate the Treaty, and seems to imply the only really bad feature of it is the Irish backstop which he would like to time limit. These views make it impossible for me to vote for him. Both these candidates have interesting views of a range of other topics, but if we cannot get out of the EU promptly and cleanly the policies we follow post Brexit will be drowned out by disappointment and continuing rows over Brexit. The general view of most of the candidates is in favour of relaxing austerity, with some tax cuts and some spending increases, as recommended regularly on this site.

MPs talk to themselves as the public looks for change

This Parliament went to war with the people when it decided to delay Brexit. Labour and government supporting Conservative MPs who were elected to implement the referendum decision decided to support a Prime Minister who broke her word and begged for an extension of our membership of the EU. From that moment the two main parties went into freefall in opinion polls and elections. Both hit just 28% in the locals with no Brexit party on offer, and then slumped to 14% and 9% in the European election when there was a pro Brexit party many wanted to vote for. Never have the two main parties been so low in support and esteem.

You would have thought this would wake up all those MPs who promised Brexit and then spent the next two years trying to dilute or delay it, or even to reverse it. Yet listening to the continuing conversations in both parties there are many who still do not get it. They want to believe the European election was just a warning or a by election or a flash in the pan. They want to believe it will all be different when we get to a Westminster election. They should try reading the latest opinion poll. That shows the Brexit party clearly in the lead at 26%, with Labour on just 22% and the Conservatives on a near wipe out score of 17%.

All those currently jostling for the position of Leader of the Conservatives have to understand the magnitude of Mrs May's decision to lose the trust of the people by delaying Brexit. In February the Conservatives were still on 43% in the polls because people believed her when she said deal or no deal we would be out on 29 March. Polling made clear they did not like her Agreement which had already been decisively rejected by Parliament. Many Leave voters did not see the Agreement as leaving, whilst many Remain voters thought the Agreement worse than staying in, so the Agreement lacked friends. If Mrs May misunderstood this, she surely now must understand it. Her Agreement was the only thing she offered in the European election, and the Conservative party was the only party offering it. It went down to a catastrophic defeat. Many former Conservative voters wanted to leave without the Agreement, and were happy voting for just that policy when the Brexit party came along with it.

Any person wanting to lead the Conservatives to success from this disastrous current showing in the polls has to deliver a clean Brexit as soon as possible and apologise on behalf of Mrs May and the outgoing government for the needless delay. It is difficult to see how someone who stayed in the government and argued for the Withdrawal Agreement could convincingly pull this off. The new leader then needs to move rapidly to using the new freedoms, the extra money and the other advantages of being a self governing country again to show the wider nation that Project Fear was wrong and that there is a good and prosperous future for us once out.

Meanwhile Labour has not even got to the point of contemplating a change of leadership as its civil war between Remain and Leave continues. If it lurches further to Remain and offers clearly a second referendum it will lose many of its remaining Leave supporters. It then has to go head to head with the Lib Dems and Greens in a very crowded political marketplace. Conservatives have a poor future if they do not win back lost Brexit voters. Labour has an even poorer future if it is a half hearted version of the Liberal Democrats.

What D day means to us



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Today we recall the launch of a mighty force to liberate the continent of Europe in 1944.

At today's commemoration our Queen will stand alongside the President of the USA and the Prime Minister of Australia as representatives of the allied nations that mobilised that awesome force. The President of France will attend, on behalf of the largest country they planned to set free. So too will the Chancellor of the new Germany that arose after her defeat, as a reminder that Germany too agrees the Nazi German tyranny over the continent had to be purged.

Some 160,000 troops made passage by boat to the beaches of Normandy, or flew in for a dangerous parachute drop as the advance party. Surprise was achieved despite the magnitude of the army and the length of time it took to assemble and concentrate the force, thanks to disinformation about where the blow would be struck. The Americans encountered the strongest resistance on Omaha, one of the five beaches, but Operation Neptune captured all beaches and began the long process of consolidating a position in France for the advance on Berlin.

In the days that followed D day temporary harbours were installed for future supplies and reinforcement, a pipeline was put in to fuel the highly mechanised armed forces, and air and sea control was established against the enemy planes and U boats. It took many more months of hard fighting with many losses to unite with the advancing Russians in Germany, but total victory was secured some eleven months later.

The second world war was a necessary tragedy. Germany's wish to dominate Europe with her Italian ally and Japan's wish to colonise much of Asia by military means had to be resisted and defeated. The axis powers would not compromise and could not be trusted to honour any possible peace agreement. The wanton Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, the long preparations for the German invasion of the UK, the impetuous and ultimately self defeating German invasion of the Soviet Union all demonstrated this was an occasion when military victory had to proceed diplomatic and political settlements.

It was a reminder of what happens when politics fails. Germany had been defeated just 21 years before the outbreak of the second world war. The Peace Treaty imposed on her created grievances which Hitler was able to manipulate to his own advantage. The victors' failure to intervene in Germany politics when Hitler overthrew the democratic constitution, or when he remilitarised the Rhineland showed a failure of resolve and understanding of what could happen next. Western politics failed to produce an acceptable peace, and more importantly failed to police a tough peace. German politics was subverted by a demagogue who restored German pride, won an election and then created an evil tyranny which went on to perpetrate mass murder on the battle field and in the gas chambers and concentration camps.

We owe much to the many allied service personnel who were killed in wounded during the liberation of Europe.

[You are welcome, Mr President](#)



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Today we should welcome the President of the USA to the UK on a state visit.

The USA is our principal military ally. Her leading presence in NATO has been crucial to our safety over the last seventy years, as we have dealt with the Soviet threat of the 1950s and 1960s, and the more complex and various threats to our security of more recent years. The USA is the world's most powerful democracy. The UK is one of the world's oldest and most experienced democracies. Together we project democratic values, argue for freedom, defend free speech and free enterprise, and stand up against dictatorships, genocides and abuse of power.

Many MPs and some of my constituents dislike Mr Trump and say we should not afford him the courtesies of a state visit. The MPs and protesters have done all in their power to limit where he can go and what he can do whilst in our country. I regret that. I will be honouring the office of President. The whole point of a State visit is it bestows on the State visitor the trappings of power whilst with us and confirms the power of the office the visitor holds. We respect the office, whilst reserving the right to disagree with the office holders politics, words and actions as an international politician. On many a state visit a visitor has been told in private communications exactly what the UK's position is on issues of the day and how we would like the visitor's country to change or to accommodate our views.

On this visit I will find myself in agreement with Mr Trump over Brexit and the UK's good future outside the EU. The President urged Mrs May, as I and others did, to take a firmer line in the talks she held with the EU to get a better deal. Unfortunately she was tarnished with the view that Mr Trump was a difficult person for UK tastes and did not accept his good advice. She failed to follow up promptly and vigorously on his offer to see if we can agree a Free Trade Agreement between our two countries, to sign as soon as we leave the EU.

I agree with Mr Trump's policy of promoting prosperity by lower tax rates and selective higher public spending. We can learn a lot from the much faster growth rate in the USA than in Europe. I agree with the President that the West needs to ensure cyber security at a time of unprecedented technological challenge, which will have an impact on our commercial alliances. I also agree with his approach to Middle Eastern politics, where he has bombed less and not intervened on the ground in the belief that further military intervention will not help. This is a welcome change from Presidents Bush, Clinton and Obama.

I study why some so dislike Mr Trump. They argue that his wish to secure US borders and to build a wall at the Mexican frontier is unacceptable. They did not say the same when Mr Clinton built a substantial wall along part of that frontier, or when various EU countries rushed up walls at the height of the migration crisis in 2015-16. They say his attitude to women is unacceptable, though he has not stood accused of improper relations with a young female intern in the way Mr Clinton was. They dislike some of his language about migrants. They think that underlying his policies are intolerant attitudes towards foreigners and unpleasant attitudes towards women. I am not here to apologise for all that he has done in his private life before becoming President nor to defend all his tweets.

I say to his critics we should respect the democratic decisions of our ally, and leave it to US politics to decide what are acceptable attitudes in their democracy. We do not go into the failings and wrong doings of State visitors from tyrannies and monarchies abroad, but we let them come and make their own statements. We have entertained dreadful people from thug states without a murmur of protest from MPs. Why be less courteous to a democratic ally who has stood the ultimate test of democratic scrutiny and media fury in his own free country? I do not agree with some of the things Mr Trump says, and sometimes disagree with his policies as with features of his trade war that

have a wide adverse impact. I do think we should welcome Mr Trump to understand him better and to collaborate with the USA as ally and friend in as many ways as are to our mutual advantage.