

New direction in the EU?

The possible new leaders of the EU have not received great reviews from the press and public commenting so far. The EU Heads of government took a long time to make up their minds who to recommend to the Parliament. Their decision dumped the Spitzenkandidat system they were meant to be following. Instead of recommending Manfred Weber, the leader of the EPP grouping in the Parliament to be EU Commission President, they recommended Von Leyen, the Defence Minister of Germany, who was not in the frame for such a post prior to the election.

The lack of direct democratic accountability of the Commission President is a worry for some supporters of the EU. That is why they invented the Spitzenkandidat system. Under this approach the leaders of the main party groupings contesting the European elections appear on public platforms and debate the future of the EU so the public can see what they would do if they won the European election and if their candidate became Commission President. Whilst it is not as good as making the post directly elected, it could provide more accountability than the behind closed door recommendation made after the election.

Von der Leyen is an unknown politician when it comes to the EU agenda. We are told she is an EU enthusiast who will presumably wish to support more steps to European integration. She is also a German conservative, who may not want to commit more German tax revenue to grants and transfers around the Euro currency union. She may find herself in disagreement with Christine Lagarde, the French former Republican, who is proposed to be the next President of the European Central Bank. Lagarde is also likely to be keen on more European integration, and may advocate a bigger EU budget with Germany making a bigger contribution to that budget.

Charles Michel, the former Belgian PM, becomes President of the Council. Known for seeking to reconcile opposites and to weld a coalition out of very different forces, he will need dark arts to construct alliances and coalitions for policies that can command majority support in the Council of Ministers and the Parliament.

The Conservative leadership election



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I will be voting for Boris when my ballot paper arrives. He has given a clearer pledge to get us out of the EU by 31 October than Jeremy Hunt. This is vital for the future of our democracy and for the recovery of the Conservative party.

He has pledged tax cuts for individuals earners and home buyers and more spending on local schools and the police. In contrast Jeremy has promised a further expensive large cut in Corporation tax for large companies, where we are more competitive. It is our tax rates for individuals and taxes on enterprise and property ownership that are holding us back and harming the revenues.

If I needed any more reasons to choose Boris rather than Jeremy, the issue of fox hunting would supply it. Jeremy Hunt announced he would want a further Commons vote on fox hunting and implied he supported fox hunting. I have no wish to see this divisive issue re opened in Parliament. It is very unlikely Parliament would vote a different way to last time, but it would stir up strong emotions on both sides. Mr Hunt then appeared to back down rapidly under fire, saying he did not intend to introduce such a motion were he to become Prime Minister and was merely reasserting the position from Mrs May's failed Manifesto of 2017. This made his position worse.

I look forward to our early exit from the EU without signing the completely unacceptable Withdrawal Treaty. I want a Brexit bonus budget to spend the money we save. We should stop all contributions to the EU from 1 November onwards.

[Aircraft noise over Wokingam](#)

I have submitted more evidence to the recent Heathrow consultation about the need to reduce aircraft noise, and have received an answer to my recent Parliamentary Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to limit aircraft noise over Wokingham constituency. (270234)

Tabled on: 27 June 2019

Answer:

Michael Ellis:

The Government recognises that aviation noise is a key concern for communities that aircraft fly over, including areas such as Wokingham. As part of its forthcoming Aviation Strategy, the Government has put forward a number of proposals designed to incentivise the aviation industry to successfully modernise airspace. The benefits of airspace modernisation are well known. For example, it should allow aircraft to climb more quickly than they can at present, and descend continuously, both of which will have a noticeable noise reduction benefit for overflown communities. The Government has also taken forward proposals for additional ways of representing communities' exposure to noise and requirements for optional analysis and consultation that will ensure communities are more engaged in the future decisions around airspace that affect them. London Heathrow Airport is developing its proposal for the Compton departure route, the operation of which affects communities near Wokingham. We expect that London Heathrow Airport will consult on its proposals next year, and this will provide an opportunity for communities to influence the final design for this departure route. The answer was submitted on 04 Jul 2019 at 12:20.

Can populists govern as populists?



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We have two good examples of populists now in power. In the USA Mr Trump is seeking to remodel government in line with his promises to the American people. In Italy a populist coalition between Lega and Cinque Stelle struggles to keep to its pledges to the Italian people.

Mr Trump's early months in office were afflicted by a reluctance of departments of government to implement his wishes. Secretaries of State and other senior officials he had appointed allowed the media to run a story that "grown ups" were still in charge of the Administration. Someone briefed that people could safely discount the President's tweets and views, as these were not what the government was doing. Mr Trump soon worked out that you have to be in power as well as in office if you wish to get things done. He embarked on removing a number of the senior people in the government who did not get on with his tasks, seeking a team of people who would reflect his wishes and

would stick to the campaign promises he made.

The governing establishment seemed to think using tariffs to seek better deals around the world was not the done thing. Mr Trump pushed on with the strategy and found a Commerce Secretary, a Treasury Secretary and a Secretary of State who accepted the direction of travel. Some of the Pentagon and State department seem to favour more military action in the Middle East. Mr Trump has been very careful to use minimum power and only in response to a military provocation. As he himself says, he is not a warmonger and would prefer the USA to be at peace.

There are times when the President's tactical changes to try to get advantage in negotiations with foreign interests make it difficult for the relevant government department to keep up. The departments have got better at keeping quiet when the President is on manoeuvres to gain improvements, as with the tariff threat to Mexico to get them to provide more policing of their borders. Mr Trump's wish to have wide ranging tax cuts was more of a mainstream policy which government and Congress co-operated in, with a successful outcome.

Mr Trump seems to show that a determined politician who wants to keep his word to the electors can make a reluctant governing machine do much of what he wishes. Conscious that a network of international treaties, the so called international rules based system, can impede the US ambitions for fairer trade or faster growth, the President has been prepared to bend or remove international obstacles to America First jobs based strategy. Faced with an often hostile Congress he has made full use of Presidential executive power and special role in international affairs.

In contrast under the much more comprehensive and stifling EU rules the Italian populist coalition has found it difficult to keep its promises. The wide ranging tax cuts Lega favours and the substantial basic income guarantee Cinque wants have proved difficult against EU enforced budget rules. The leaders of the two parties were forced to be Deputy Prime Ministers, with a PM over them acceptable to the EU with the force to keep Italy in the EU and Euro system. The government's wish to have a tougher migration policy has come up against the EU rules and requirements. The government's wish to rebuild the infrastructure and invest more in the economy is thwarted by debt and deficit controls.

The Syriza experiment in Greece ended in failure for the radical left party, unable to break out of the financial controls imposed by the Euro area because they ultimately would not or could not walk away from the Euro and establish an independent Greek economic policy. Italy is experiencing a similar dilemma. To do the things its government would like to do would require exit from the Euro. The populists are not willing to do something that big and might not have popular support if they tried it. The break up of the Soviet Union showed that it was quite possible for countries to leave a currency bloc and have different economic policies that worked well in a matter of months after exit. Current members of the Euro do not seem to think that would be possible or desirable in their case, so they will fail to be populists in power as well as in office.

Democratic politics should be about the needs of voters, not the vanities of the media and politicians

In France many demonstrators have taken to the streets for the last six months to protest against taxes which are too high, government which impedes their lives, and politicians who are out of touch with the mood.

In Hong Kong hundred of thousands have peacefully demonstrated against a government which wants to remove their freedoms and place them more firmly under Chinese control in ways they fear.

In the UK voters resoundingly rejected the two main political parties in the recent European elections for their collective failure to implement the decision of the EU referendum.

All across the continent of Europe traditional centre right and centre left parties have been voted out of office for their failure to put the prosperity and welfare of people above the demands of the EU scheme.

The response of the out of sympathy elites in each case is different. In Hong Kong it is likely the authorities will ignore the views of voters and will seek to find ways of suppressing the protests. The damage done to the Legislative Council building provides a reason the authorities will use to clamp down, in reprisals that may go beyond just the few who did physical damage to the place. In France the President says he is listening and makes a few token gestures over taxes, but drives on with the same old agenda despite the reversals. In the UK the ruling party is trying to change leader and find one who will implement the wishes of the people with many members of the Conservative party conscious that it has no right to political success if it fails to do the people's bidding. In Italy Lega and Cinque Stelle strain at the leash of unpopular Euro and EU rules but so far have declined to break out.

Tomorrow I will look at what happens when the populists get into power. Are they absorbed and turned into establishment clones, or can they assert their different agenda? Does the agenda work?