

The message of the local elections

Both main national parties in Parliament lost votes and seats in the Council elections. The failure to get through Brexit as promised annoyed a lot of voters who wished to vote for anyone other than the two main parties as a result. The Conservatives were blamed for promising an exit with or without an Agreement by 29 March 2019 and then delaying. Leave voters were annoyed we are not out, and firm Remainers worried that nonetheless the party still says it wants to leave. Labour were punished for changing their Manifesto position of 2017 with a view to watering down or delaying Brexit by Leave voters, and by Remain voters for not being clearly in favour of revocation or a second referendum.

The Council elections were not a second referendum on Brexit, as the Brexit party did not stand, and as the switchers away from Labour and Conservative were both Leave and Remain supporters. There was a mood to vote for anyone who was not a candidate for Labour or the Conservatives in quite a few cases. Independents did well, without expressing a particular viewpoint on the EU referendum.

There were various local issues Council by Council, where some incumbent Councils were unpopular for perceived failings on their local decisions. Many of the doorstep conversations I had in the Wokingham and West Berkshire contests were about local issues.

Message to Councillors in Wokingham Borough

I would like to thank all Councillors who stood for re election but who lost their seats yesterday. I am grateful to you for all the hard work you put into your roles and for your service to the local community.

Many electors wanted change, both national and local. Much of the criticism of the Conservative party was about the failure to resolve the Brexit issue in a timely way. The government was criticised by both Leave and Remain voters for their draft Agreement and for the failure to secure a deal more could accept. Labour too suffered from criticism of its changed stance on Brexit compared to the General election and its role in the current impasse in Parliament.

There were also a number of important local concerns. Many relate to congestion, the disruption of our streets by utility works and the construction of new homes, and to the cumulative impact of substantial development on services and facilities. I am willing to work with the Council

to help shape a new Plan for the future based around lower housing targets, and to help the Council resist extra development over current plans. I am also keen for the Council to do more to improve junctions, upgrade our road network, help provide more school places and surgery capacity for the NHS and promote the new Town Centre in Wokingham.

I also congratulate all the new Councillors elected and look forward to working with them in the interests of our shared constituents. There is an important role for an informed opposition to criticise where things can be improved and to support where common cause is in the interests of our community.

[“We don’t believe you”](#)

I am bringing out a new book which looks at why populist parties and Presidential candidates are doing well in many elections. It looks at the big gap between what the establishments do and what the voters want them to do. It points out that the two sides do not just disagree about the remedies, but they now disagree about what are the main problems.

More criticism and disillusion set in with the series of difficult civil and religious wars in the Middle East. Electorates in the USA and the EU were not impressed by the political follow up to the military campaigns, and by the fall out from the bitter wars. It got worse with the banking crash of 2008-9. Governments and Central banks blamed the bankers, but voters thought the governing elite were partly responsible as well. In more recent years the failure to advance real incomes at the pre crisis pace, the attack on personal transport and the wish to control people’s thoughts on a wide range of topics, the alliance between big business and big government, higher taxes and the apparent scorn for democracy have all served to make the fissure greater between traditional political parties and candidates on the one hand, and the governing elites on the other.

The book has chapters on military intervention, austerity economics, Brexit, the collapse of the Social Democrats and Christian Democrats as governing parties in most of the EU, the clash between social media and conventional media, the way some large businesses side with big government to the annoyance of their customers, political correctness, large scale migration and the difficulties caused by the Euro.

“We don’t believe you Why Populists reject the establishment” Bite-sized books Available through Amazon

Mrs May strengthens Remain forces in Cabinet

The replacement of Gavin Williamson in Cabinet with Rory Stewart is the net change of yesterday's mini reshuffle. The purpose is clear. Mr Williamson thought we should get on with leaving the EU. Mr Stewart is wedded to Mrs May's deeply unpopular stay in and pay up Agreement. The Agreement delays our exit by around 2 years, maybe 4 years, and probably keeping us in the customs union and much else thereafter.

There was no leak of sensitive national security information. Someone leaked which Cabinet members opposed Mrs May's wish to let a Chinese company into the UK 5G system. This is no worse than the regular leaks from Cabinet that we have got used to. Mr Williamson denies he leaked.

Whatever the truth of this leak it is quite obvious the system is unfair. There has been no leak enquiry when the leaker could have been a Remain supporting Cabinet member. Yesterday was another bad day where the position of those who want to stop us leaving the EU as promised now was strengthened with an additional recruit who shows no sympathy for all those who oppose the Agreement for failing to take back control as the Leave majority wants to.

<https://johnredwoodsdiary.com/>

Just leave and table a Free Trade Agreement

On Tuesday EU Trade Commissioner Malmstrom gave an interesting interview stating EU policy on the major trade issues around the world. The principal concerns were the EU/US relationship and the EU/China relationship.

She was also asked about the UK position. She said

"If the UK leaves fully the EU and becomes a third country, it will still be a European country, it will still be our friend, it will still be an ally and a very important trading partner, so obviously we will have to try to find as comprehensive a trade agreement as possible with that country. But obviously it will not be 100% seamless because they are leaving the common market. Obviously it is in our interest as well as the UK's to have a trade agreement"

I have always said we can just leave and that will work fine, but it would be better to have a Free Trade Agreement. I have always thought it much in the EU's interest to have such an Agreement, but have pointed out they might want to damage themselves to damage us. It is important to know it is official EU policy to negotiate a Free Trade Agreement in good faith with the UK if we just leave. It is useful to know they want a comprehensive one, which is easy to do if both sides want it because we have tariff free trade at the moment. So why wont the UK government get on with it and table one? I am having another go at pressing the government to table an FTA, stop the Euro elections and leave.