

Discussion Summary

Brexit and Trump – what does it mean?

The British referendum on continued membership of the EU and the United States' presidential election both gave surprising results, and expressed remarkable similarity in their insight into the moods of the electorates on both sides of the Atlantic. These similarities were evident in four areas:

1. The campaign messages: concern over immigration, appeal to voters who feel left behind or disadvantaged and concern over loss of jobs to foreign workers and firms, were common themes of the leave campaign and Trump's election strategy;
2. Age-related trends: in the UK the older generation tended to support leaving the EU and the younger generation supported remaining; in the US, the older generation tended to support Trump and the younger people favoured Clinton,
3. The educational divide: The less well educated (often the less well advantaged or older people) supported Brexit and Trump respectively, and the more highly educated people supported the Remain option and Hilary Clinton respectively,
4. The ethnic origin divide: The Republican president-elect was favoured by America's white votes and the Democratic Clinton drew more votes from ethnic minorities. Similarly in the UK, it was the white voters who tended to support leaving the EU and the ethnic minorities who supported continued membership.

Thus it is clear that the lust for a break with the status quo is strongest among those with the lesser influence over events, who feel that the establishment is letting them down. Beyond the UK and the US, disturbing trends are emerging in Europe. Intentions in the forthcoming elections in France, the Netherlands and Germany are all showing tendencies towards the right, with dissatisfaction with the EU, with rising immigration and with loss of independence generally. Whether right wing candidates gain power remains to be seen, but the movement in public opinion is clear.

What will be the outcome of Brexit and the Trump success? Opinions vary and signs are mixed. Trump's promise to distance the US from Europe could benefit the UK position, although American isolationism might act against our interests. Mr Trump's courtship with Russia could make the UK more wary about security issues, and senior figures are concerned about Trump's expressed policy intentions towards international trade and relationships with ethnic and religious groups. Within Europe the growing dissatisfaction with the EU and its influence could lead to instability on the continent, which history tells us is to be avoided at all costs.

The next meeting of the group is scheduled for Wednesday 8 February at the earlier time of **2.00 p.m.** Marilyn has kindly offered to host the meeting, for which our subject will be, **"What society would we wish for our grandchildren?"**, and Bill has offered to give a short introduction to the discussion.