Five Questions on Brexit to KENNETH ARMSTRONG

Kenneth Armstrong & Maximilian Steinbeis

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1. What were your thoughts when you first heard of the result of the referendum?

It was not an unexpected result. Last week my prediction was 53:47. I wrote to someone early this week saying that in light of the pause of the campaign after the murder of Jo Cox MP it might be more like 51.8:48.2. And yet I was still shocked and became more so as it sank in.

2. Could an exit of the UK result in changes to the constitutional setup of the European Union, for better or worse?

My hope had been that Remain would be a platform not for the status quo but for real reform. The narrative from Tusk today was all about the unity of the EU27. It would be disappointing of that meant business as usual. There might be lots of dimensions to this but I still feel the relationship between the European Council and the European Commission lies at the heart of the issue of political responsibility and where reform might be needed.

3. What does the referendum teach us about the merits and limits of direct democracy?

Referendums are a poor way of deciding issues that have policy linkages and whose effects are uncertain in temporal terms and have significant intergenerational consequences.

4. Do you think the decision for Brexit could be

There might be a mood for a referendum to endorse the withdrawal deal and if rejected that would throw open the Brexit decision itself. Cannot rule it out even though not looking likely at this point.

5. Do you see a way to keep Scotland and Northern Ireland within the European Union?

The new normal is not 27+1. There is no single UK position and that will be significant in terms of the negotiation process. Key claims made by the Leave campaign are likely to yield pushback from the devolved administrations and with that a likely independence resurgence in Scotland. N Ireland is far less clear but obvious pretext for Irish nationalists to push for unification.

Questions by Maximilian Steinbeis.

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