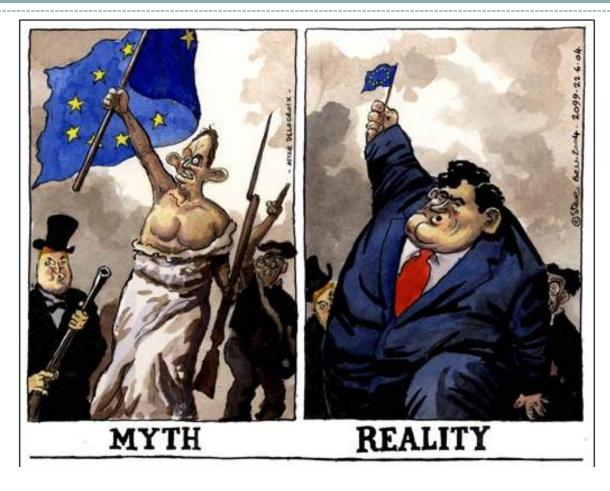
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The British Elections and their Impact on the EU – Why it doesn't matter. European Center for Excellence, FIU, Miami, 30 September 2010

Early signs for optimism

- David Cameron's first prime ministerial visit – to Paris.
- William Hague From Euro-bashing leader and loud support for invasion of Iraq to 'quietist position on the EU.'
- Europe minister David Lidington – a pragmatic former FO adviser.
- Lib-Dem influence on Conservatives



Coalition programme for Government: No, No, No?

- > Britain should play a leading role....
- But 'no further powers should be transferred to
 Brussels without a referendum.'
- > Being constructive while being obstructive?
- Defending British sovereignty – too little too late?



European Foreign Policy post-Blair

- Hague is not Miliband but has big say over foreign policy.
- Reviving the Foreign Office (where Mr Hague is going down well).
- Creating a National Security Council.
- Sending the best diplomats to Brussels.
- Exactly the kind of technocracy that bored Blair.
- Exactly the kind of thing Hague has a feel for.

- Cameron must bind in leftleaning Lib Dems without alienating right-wing Tories.
- Disgruntlement is quiet but real (and intensifying).
- Hague not a ideologue a positive for Britain's relations with Europe.
- Importance of the Coalition, that he helped broker.

Britain and Europe – with but not of...



Europe à la carte has emerged as Britain's vision for the EU.

Offers the country what it wants without obstructing others.

> It also reflects reality:

- some EU members use the single currency, the rest retain their own;
- some belong to the Schengen agreement on border controls, others have opted out.

The hazards for Britain

> Two-tier Europe

- European Council and the Euro group
- Euro crisis
- Franco-German motor

Con/Lib-Dem outlook:

- Coherence can be overrated, especially when set against the need to keep together two parties with radically different takes on Europe.
- Cameron can continue muddling through with his vague and piecemeal Europe policy.
- Not clear if Cameron understands the EU – exit stage left from EPP.
- > Ultimately, he's not Thatcher.

The curse of Europe

- Europe matters a lot to a minority of voter.
- Majority rarely rate it as a decisive influence on how they vote.
- No votes in Europe potentially troublesome.
- Undermined two former Conservative PMs.
- History not forgotten issue has potential to tear party apart.
- Cameron could easily cheer core supporters by picking a fight with the European Union.
- Has a Thatcherite edge



Why it doesn't matter, much

- > No confrontation likely over Europe.
- > Far too pragmatic
- Agreeing next budget
 - ► Recession a stick to beat the dog...
- Reform of the CAP
- European Working Time Directive, a meddlesome tool for limiting overtime.
- Should pro-Europeans be worried? No...
- Not until the next Parliament.
- The coalition will struggle to agree on crudely populist policies.

Neither Cameron nor Clegg can easily announce policies that drip with the red blood of partisan conflict.

- Domestically, dangers are bigger for Lib Dems than Tories.
- Possibility of defections to Labour?
- Radical reform (Big Society) at home (if successful) *might* spill over onto the Continent.