

Mrs Merkel was no friend of the UK and helped the EU lose our membership

It is true that Mrs Merkel will soon retire from the office of Chancellor after a signal achievement of winning and keeping such a high office for 16 years. No-one else in her era came anywhere near such an achievement. She not only exercised great authority in Germany but also in the EU, where she was the leader of choice amongst the member states that the EU turned to to strike deals and find compromises to keep some momentum to the project. Being the Leader of the largest population, the largest national economy and the biggest financial contributor in the EU of course helped in carving out that niche.

Her diminishing numbers of fans and supporters in Germany will mourn her passing. They saw in her stability and calm, a woman who eschewed political gestures and strong arguments. She worked behind the scenes, sought compromises, changed policies when the wind changed and often sat on things for a long time before venturing into the argument. For most of her time Germany grew more prosperous, and unemployment stayed low following the SPD led contentious labour market and benefit reforms at the opening of the century.

Her legacy however should not be air brushed because she was a survivor. She leaves her party gravely weakened, sitting on around half the vote in recent polls compared with what she achieved in the Federal elections of 2013 (21% in a recent poll versus 41.5%) and facing a difficult election. We will see soon how the party has performed in the actual election.

She has undermined the policies and principles of the conservative party she inherited. She led the party from support for nuclear power to a policy of closing it down. She changed policy from controlling migration to welcoming in hundreds of thousands of new economic migrants. She claimed to represent German conservative principles in the EU based around low levels of debt and no money printing only to allow or be unable to stop massive Quantitative easing programmes, the issue of EU debt and general large overshoots of the German inspired Maastricht debt and deficit criteria by many countries. She tried to reassure worried Germans that Germany's wealth and tax revenues would not be used to subsidise high deficit countries elsewhere in the EU, only to permit the build up of over Euro 1 trillion of German deposits at zero interest at the ECB which was lent on at zero interest to the deficit countries. She leaves her successor with difficult issues over the transition to net zero, the requirement to close down the German petrol and diesel vehicle industry and the need to get out of coal whilst ending nuclear.

More importantly, her main legacy in the EU is to have greatly assisted in the unintended exit of the UK from the EU. She led Mr Cameron and Mrs May to think that she had power to settle the EU position, which may have been true, and that she might be the helping hand they needed. Instead she was a hawk denying Mr Cameron any negotiating wins to take home to persuade floating

voters to stay with the EU. She offered Mrs May no help to shape a deal which more MPs could have accepted. Her enthusiasm to force the UK into a federal project which a majority of the public were never going to accept sealed the fate of two UK Prime Ministers and allowed Leave to win both the referendum and the 2019 General election.