

THE JUNCKER COMMISSION: An Early Assessment

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Comments welcome

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Abstract

This paper offers an early evaluation of the European Commission under the Presidency of Jean-Claude Juncker, following his contested appointment as the so-called *Spitzenkandidat* of the centre-right after the 2014 European Parliament (EP) election. It confronts questions including:

- What effect will the manner of Juncker's appointment have on the perceived legitimacy of the Commission?
- Will Juncker claim that the strength his mandate gives him license to run a highly Presidential, centralised Commission along the lines of his predecessor, José Manuel Barroso?
- Will Juncker continue to seek a modest and supportive role for the Commission (as Barroso did), or will his Commission embrace more ambitious new projects or seek to re-energise old ones?
- What effect will British opposition to Juncker's appointment have on the United Kingdom's efforts to renegotiate its status in the EU?

The paper draws on a round of interviews with senior Commission officials conducted in early 2015 to try to identify patterns of both continuity and change in the Commission. Its central aim is to assess the meaning of answers to the questions posed above both for the Commission and EU as a whole in the remainder of the decade.

What follows is the proverbial ‘thought piece’: an analysis that seeks to provoke debate and pose the right questions about its subject, as opposed to one that offers many answers. Its subject is the European Commission under the Presidency of Jean-Claude Juncker, the Prime Minister of Luxembourg for 18 years and the chair of the Eurogroup of Finance Ministers of the Eurozone for 8 (until 2013). Juncker’s Presidency is unique in that he is the first ever Commission President elected under the *Spitzenkandidaten* system, whereby the main political groups in the European Parliament (EP) chose to nominate one of their members as Commission President, with European Union member governments obliged by the Lisbon Treaty to take account of the results of EP elections in choosing the next President.¹ His Commission is also the first ever to be explicitly structured on a two-tier basis, with a group of senior (7 Vice-Presidents, including a ‘First’ VP plus Juncker himself) Commissioners overseeing the work of (the other 20) more junior Commissioners. Finally, it is no exaggeration to suggest that Juncker’s Commission has arrived at an exceptional political moment in the EU’s evolution: when austerity in the Eurozone has stirred strong populist (mostly anti-EU) impulses, there is little political consensus amongst EU member states (including its most powerful ones) about the direction Europe needs to take, and Germany’s political dominance is undeniable.

This paper offers what is very much an *early* assessment of the Juncker Commission, based largely on a series of interviews with senior Commission officials conducted 6-9 January 2105. At that point, (leaving aside the Christmas holidays) the Juncker Commission had served in office for fewer than 40 working days. The ‘sample size’ for our assessment is thus inordinately small, with more than 4 years (at least) ahead before any definitive judgments on the Juncker Commission are possible. Still, there remains scope to consider where the Commission stands in the transition from the 10 year Presidency

¹ Lisbon (Article 17 (7) TEU) gives the EP the right to ‘elect’ the President of Commission as proposed by the European Council (of Heads of State and Government), whose proposal – by qualified majority voting – must take into account the results of EP elections (now always held before a new Commission is due to be chosen). The new treaty states that, if the EP fails to elect the European Council’s nominee, then another candidate must be proposed. Previously, the EP had the right to ‘approve’ the nomination put forward by the European Council.

of José Manuel Barroso to Juncker's Presidency (see section 1 below). The way in which the Juncker Commission was 'constructed' – how its President as well as those who serve under him were chosen as well as its unprecedentedly new working methods – also provides clues as to what we might expect (see section 2). Perhaps above all, students of the Commission need to think carefully about what it might mean at the present political moment to declare that Juncker's will be a 'political' Commission (see section 3). The Juncker Commission's prospects (section 4) may be appraised based on what has transpired thus far and what challenges the Commission faces between now and the end of the decade. A conclusion offers reflections on the factors that are likely to determine the fate of both the Commission and the EU more generally at a time of significant political turbulence in Europe.

From Prodi to Barroso to Juncker

Debate about the Commission's position in the EU institutional system has featured prominently in the research literature since the nadir moment when the entire College (of Commissioners) was forced to resign under the Presidency of Jacques Santer in 1999 (see for example Peterson 1999, 2015; Hooghe 2001; Dimitrakopoulos 2004; Kassim *et al* 2013: 130-50; Wallace and Reh 2015). What often goes unappreciated is how the Commission's weakness at that moment became very much a *shared* concern of all with any stake in European policy cooperation, not least the EU's member states. Two examples illustrate the point.

The first was the decision of the European Council meeting in Berlin, little more than a week after Santer's resignation, to appoint in his place Romano Prodi, the first former Prime Minister of a large EU state (Italy) to become Commission President, after 10 minutes of discussion (Peterson 2012: 101). By no means was Prodi's tenure an unambiguous success. Officials who served under him rated his performance only marginally stronger than that of Santer in the largest-*n* attitudinal survey ever conducted of the Commission (Kassim *et al* 2013: 165). Still, Prodi's prioritisation of administrative reform of the Commission as a hallmark of his Presidency, with former British Labour Party leader Neil

Kinnock chosen to pilot root and branch changes, clearly endeared him to European leaders.² Prodi also invested considerable political capital in shifting the debate on enlargement, to the point where a previously very hesitant European Council decided to open accession negotiation with no fewer than 12 applicant states at the December 1999 Helsinki summit. Whatever verdict we reach on the Prodi era (1999-2004), there is no question that restoring the position of the Commission was a priority at the highest political levels after Santer's fall.

A second illustrative example shows how a robust, efficient Commission is widely viewed as a sort of European 'public good'. Consider the decision – an almost shocking one in retrospect – by the Convention of the Future of Europe (in its draft of a new EU 'Constitutional Treaty') to reduce the size of the College in order to increase its effectiveness. Proposals to do so date all the way back to the 1979 Spierenburg report, when the then European Community counted 9 member states and the College had only 13 members (with all member states appointing one and France, Germany, Italy and the UK appointing two). Working on the basis of collective responsibility, a smaller College was viewed by Spierenburg³ and many others in Community circles as more nimble and less compartmentalised, with fewer, larger portfolios ensuring better coordination of its policies. Spierenburg's injunction was mostly ignored, yet still the size of the Commission was always 'one of the most passionately debated' issues in 'all IGCs since the Maastricht IGC' (Piris 2010: 226).⁴ The Treaty of Nice – in force as of early 2001 – had mandated that 'the number of Members of the Commission should be less than the number of Member States' once the EU had enlarged to 27 or more. Vaguely, the Treaty signalled that 'a rotation system based on the principle of equality' would come into effect at that point

² The point is clear in the Berlin summit's Presidency Conclusions, which stresses that 'The European Union needs, as soon as possible, a strong Commission capable of taking action' and then mentions the need for administrative reform of the Commission multiple times, culminating with: 'the next Commission ought to give urgent priority to launching a far reaching programme of modernisation and reform' (see http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/ber1_en.htm).

³ Spierenburg was a Dutch diplomat and, crucially, a former member of the precursor to today's Commission: the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community.

⁴ IGCs are intergovernmental conferences that bring together member states to negotiate changes to the EU's found treaties. There have been no fewer than 5 starting from the Maastricht IGC of 1991.

(Galloway 2001: 190). The point was reached on 1st January 2007, almost a year in advance of agreement on the successor Lisbon Treaty (which only came into force in late 2009) and with the Commission several years into the Presidency of José Manuel Barroso, the former Portuguese Prime Minister. At the time, the need to split existing (already narrow) policy portfolios to assign duties to 2 new Commissioners from Bulgaria and Romania led to the insider wisecrack that they should be designated Commissioners for Christmas cards and car parks. As such, the Lisbon IGC adopted the formula that the College would be reduced to two-thirds the number of member states, again with a system of equal rotation. The long-cherished right of each member state to send one of their own to Brussels as a Commissioner, who could then appear in the national media and (crucially) explain in their own language what the Commission was doing and why, thus was to be sacrificed for wider good of a smaller, more efficient College.

These plans came a cropper when a referendum in Ireland yielded a 'no' vote on Lisbon in June 2008. A key sticking point in the Irish debate had been the withdrawal of the right of Ireland – a small state with a very local political culture – always to be represented in the Commission. As a way to lure the Irish back into the fold, the European Council decided in December 2008 to abandon the planned reduction in the size of the College. Nearly 30 years Spierenburg found a College of 13 too big, the EU reverted to the safe route of appointing one Commissioner per member state, or a whopping 28 in Barroso's second Commission (2009-14).

The size of the Commission matters in several ways. First, as Piris (2010: 226-7) shows, because the Commission decides by simple majority with one vote per Commissioner. In an enlarged EU, it thus became possible for a majority opinion to be adopted by Commissioners representing only 11.32 per cent of the EU's population. Meanwhile, Commissioners from the six largest member states – which themselves claim over 70 per cent of the Union's population – could easily be outvoted.⁵

⁵ Piris' (2010) figures relate to an EU/College of 27 since he was writing prior to Slovenia's accession in 2013.

Of course, the Commission votes very rarely. Barroso trumpeted the fact that no votes were needed at all in his first Commission and 'probably 5' in his second (quoted in Keating 2014a). Moreover, the EU's Treaties make clear the independence of Commissioners from their or any other member government. Once confirmed, prospective Commissioners even take an oath of independence. Still, the idea of a Commission that – for the first time in EU history – had the exact same composition (one per member state) as all versions of the Council of Ministers led to fears of 'the risk of the Commission falling into a sort of intergovernmentalism' (Piris 2010: 226).

An early assessment of the effect of enlargement on the Commission, and the reversion to a one per member state College, asked whether the very *meaning* of the term 'intergovernmentalism' (always slippery to start with) had to be rethought in the context of the new EU. It almost certainly meant 'more complicated bargaining and coalition-building, which in itself might actually make the position of the Commission stronger' (Peterson 2008 775). Foreshadowing more recent and general work on the EU's 'new intergovernmentalism' (see Bickerton *et al* 2015), the EU appeared to be becoming 'more fluid, less great power dominated, with more widely distributed veto points that are likely to be overcome, if at all, through new forms of network governance' (Peterson 2008: 776). An enlarged Commission that featured – to put the point benignly – one first and main *access point* per national capital might well end up less autonomous but more integrated into the EU's institutional system.

In any event, Barroso's own response to an enlarged College of 27-8 was to run a highly centralised, Presidential Commission on which his mark was stamped with vigour and authority (see Kassim *et al* 2013: 166-71). Soon after his appointment, he warned of the dangers of 'fragmentation' or 'Balkanisation' of the College. He then used his cabinet, or office of personal advisors, to keep a tight grip on the policy agenda. Furthermore, the role of the Secretariat-General - the arm of the Commission responsible for servicing the College, linking it to the permanent services (or

‘Directorates-General’), and overseeing interdepartmental coordination (see Kassim 2006) – was transformed. In the past, the Sec-Gen (as it is known) was a mostly neutral arbiter with no particular policy or political agenda. Under Barroso it became almost an extension of the President’s cabinet and enforcer of the President’s agenda. In the aforementioned survey of Commission officials, a clear majority – nearly 60 per cent – agreed with the statement: ‘The Secretariat-General is becoming more political and influential in the life of the Commission’ (Kassim *et al* 2013: 194). Told of this finding, one Sec-Gen official responded: ‘And so there are those who are quite happy for us to be a notary. [Laughter] No. No, those days are over. I think that is done’ (quoted in Kassim *et al* 173-4).

Yet, Barroso’s Commissions were still criticised as timid and unambitious. His claims that ‘the basic legitimacy of our union is the member states’ tarred him with the brush of ‘intergovernmentalist’, while the political left pummelled his ‘neo-conservative agenda’ and privileging of a ‘liberal Atlantic’ clique within the Commission.⁶ As Barroso handed over to Juncker, one analysis suggested that as ‘people think about his [Barroso’s] legacy, many have described a period in which the Commission lost influence in the face of member states and failed to set the agenda’ (Keating 2014a).

Predictably, Barroso fought back. Arguably, he legitimately was able to marshal considerable ammunition in doing so. The implementation of the Lisbon Treaty was handled mostly smoothly by the Commission and gave it new, substantial powers in multiple different policy areas, particularly what used to be called Justice and Home Affairs (rechristened Police and Judicial Cooperation; see Geddes 2012). Close coordination with the new permanent President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, meant that Barroso and his Commission contributed significantly to the EU’s response to the post-2008 Eurozone crisis (despite Barroso’s (2014: 19) admission that the Union was ‘building a boat in the middle of a storm’). Specialists on the financial and sovereign debt crises should

⁶ Barroso, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen MEP (President of the European Parliament Socialist group), and Jean-Louis Bourlanges MEP respectively quoted in Peterson 2012: 107).

be left to judge the Commission's laying of the groundwork for the European Stability Mechanism (a permanent crisis resolution fund of €500 billion) and its design of the 'two pack' and 'six pack' sets of legislation that reformed EU economic governance. The same goes for its role in the troika (along with the European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund) set up to negotiate and police the terms of bail-outs of Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Cyprus. But Barroso was on strong ground in claiming '[w]e now have powers and competencies that our predecessors could not even dream of' (quoted in Keating 2014a). The list extended to surveillance (and even rejection) of draft member state budgets, the Commission's push for EU supervision of European banks,⁷ as well as its role in executing a new intergovernmental fiscal pact. One senior Commission official (with cabinet experience) mused that Barroso's would 'end up viewed as one of the successful Commissions in history. We almost lost our currency, our [EU] budget and banking sector. But a lot of crises got solved when the Community approach finally won out in the end'.⁸

A final point of defence for Barroso was that much more attention was focused on who would replace him than who would replace Van Rompuy as European Council President: '[e]ven the British press were calling the Commission presidency the top job in the European Union. That was the real debate about who was going to lead Europe. If the Commission was irrelevant, do you think all that debate would have taken place?' (quoted in Keating 2014a). Barroso was certainly right that the choice of Juncker as his replacement provoked an intense political row at the highest level, with his nomination confirmed only after the first-ever vote in the European Council (by qualified majority) instead of the unveiling of a consensus choice, as in all previous cases. Judging where the Juncker Commission stands certainly must start by considering how it was constructed.

Constructing the Juncker Commission

⁷ Barroso (2014: 37) recalled that one national EU leader warned him not to use the term 'banking union' because it was not in the Treaties.

⁸ Interview, Brussels, 7th January 2015.

The choice of Juncker via the *Spitzenkandidaten* system was, by itself, enough to politicise his candidacy for Commission Presidency as none previously had been. By some estimations, the EP's interpretation that the Lisbon Treaty mandated it to have each of its political groups choose a candidate for the Commission's top job, and then for the European Council to choose as nominee the *Spitzenkandidat* whose group won the most seats in the 2014 EP election, was an astonishing institutional power grab. Yet, as Peter Ludlow (1992) once argued, Europe's institutions *are* Europe's (or, at least the EU's) politics, and it might simply remain the case nearly a quarter of a century later. That is, in the absence of direct political engagement by EU citizens with the Union's operation – leaving aside the debatable case of EP elections (are many voters really *directly* engaging?) – the politics of the EU, how it should work, and according to what kind of vision are played out in institutional politics.

Political opposition both to Juncker personally (too much of a 'federalist') and, even moreso to the method by which he was chosen, was led by the United Kingdom's Prime Minister David Cameron, under pressure from his increasingly Eurosceptic Conservative party. Cameron initially seemed to find support from Germany's powerful Chancellor, Angela Merkel. She agreed that other candidates might be considered ('anything is possible'⁹) and appeared to signal that the prerogative of the European Council to choose the Commission President ('guided' by the result of the EP election) should be maintained. So did the premiers of Hungary and Sweden (and, by some accounts, that of the Netherlands).¹⁰

However, in the month between European Council meetings in May and June 2015, Merkel found herself caught in a political firestorm in Germany over her refusal to back Juncker. Much of the German press was indignant, with the tabloid *Das Bild* editorialising:

⁹ Quoted in *The Guardian*, 30 May 2014: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/30/angela-merkel-jean-claude-juncker-european-commission>.

¹⁰ On the latter point, see BBC News, 10 June 2014; <http://m.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-27757991>.

Europeans want Juncker as EU president. [The German candidate of the Party of European Socialists bloc, Martin] Schulz got the second best result. A third, who didn't stand for election, can't be allowed to get the job. That would turn democracy into a farce. You may get away with something like that in the GDR or in far-right banana republics. But not in the EU.

Meanwhile, the influential German philosopher Jürgen Habermas told *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* that if the European Council 'really were to suggest someone else as a leading candidate, it would be a bullet to the heart of the European project. In that case you couldn't expect any citizen to ever involve themselves in a European election again'. Juncker also hailed from the same political family and EP political group as Merkl's own Christian Democratic Party, whose MEPs rallied in his support. The secretary-general of Merkl's German coalition partner, the Social Democrats, added that Juncker's endorsement was essential as '[a]nything else would have amounted to a deception of the electorate'.¹¹ All pressures pointed one way for Merkl. In endorsing Juncker, she even went out of her way to criticise Cameron for his rhetoric calling for European leaders to 'stand up' against an EP 'stitch up' and his linking of Juncker's appointment to the result of a foreseen UK referendum on continued EU membership: 'we act in a European spirit. We always do that...Threats are not part and parcel of that spirit'.¹²

In the end, Juncker was confirmed by a European Council vote of 26-2. Only Hungary's Victor Orban, an advocate of transforming his country into an 'illiberal state' analogous to Russia, Turkey or China, voted with Cameron against Juncker.¹³ The chain of events illustrated two points about the intergovernmental politics of the EU (again, played out in a debate about EU institutions). First, the very large majority vote in favour of Juncker – including even the Swedish Prime Minister, Fredrik

¹¹ All 3 of the above quotes from the same source in note 9.

¹² Cameron and Merkl both quoted in *The Telegraph*, 10 June 2014; <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron/10888727/Dont-threaten-me-over-Juncker-appointment-Anglea-Merkel-warns-David-Cameron.html>.

¹³ Orban quoted in *The Economist*, 14 February 2015; <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21643194-germany-and-other-european-countries-worry-about-hungarys-ties-russia-viktor-and-vladimir?zid=309&ah=80dcf288b8561b012f603b9fd9577f0e>.

Reinfeldt and his Dutch counterpart, Mark Rutte – was indicative of how the EU, perhaps as never before, was very much German-led. Second, it showed how isolated the UK had become in high level EU debates.

After Juncker was confirmed (officially by a rubber stamp EP vote of 422-250, with 47 abstentions), the next step was for member states to decide who would constitute his College. There are good reasons to believe that, after the EP power grab in putting Juncker forth, most states made their own decisions about whom to put forward as Commissioner candidates with little input from Juncker, besides a few heeding his pleas for political or gender balance. His College emerged as a rather mixed bag, with a large crop of former Prime or Foreign Ministers, as well as others with little high level political experience (see table 1).

Table 1 – the Juncker Commission

Commissioner (Nationality)	Position/portfolio	Relevant previous post(s)	Party group (EP*)
Jean-Claude Juncker (Luxembourg)	President	Luxembourg Prime Minister	European People's Party (EPP)
Frederica Mogherini (Italy)	Vice-President and High Representative for CFSP	Italian Foreign Minister	Party of European Socialists (PSE)
Frans Timmermans (Netherlands)	First Vice-President for Better Regulation, Inter-institutional Affairs, the Rule of Law and Charter of Fundamental Rights	Dutch Foreign Minister	Party of European Socialists (PSE)
Kristalina Georgieva (Romania)	Vice-President for Budget and Human Resources	EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid, World Bank	European People's Party (EPP)
Andrus Ansip (Estonia)	Vice-President for Digital Single Market	Estonian Prime Minister, MEP	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)
Maroš Šefčovič (Slovakia)	Vice-President for Energy Union	EU Commissioner for Inter-institutional Relations and Administration, Ambassador to the EU	Party of European Socialists (PES)
Valdis Dombrovskis (Latvia)	Vice-President for Euro and Social Dialogue	Latvian Prime Minister, MEP	European People's Party (EPP)
Jyrki Katainen (Finland)	Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness	Finnish Prime Minister	European People's Party (EPP)
Günther Oettinger (Germany)	Digital Economy and Jobs	EU Commissioner	European People's Party (EPP)

Johannes Hahn (Austria)	European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations	EU Commissioner	European People's Party (EPP)
Cecilia Malmström (Sweden)	Trade	EU Commissioner	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)
Neven Mimica (Croatia)	International Cooperation and Development	EU Commissioner	Party of European Socialists (PES)
Miguel Arias Cañete (Spain)	Climate Action and Energy	MEP, Minister for Agriculture, Food & Environment	European People's Party (EPP)
Karmenu Vella (Malta)	Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries	Minister for Tourism and Aviation	Party of European Socialists (PES)
Vytenis Andriukaitis (Lithuania)	Health and Food Safety	Minister for Health	Party of European Socialists (PES)
Dimitris Avramopoulos (Greece)	Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship	Foreign Minister	European People's Party (EPP)
Marianne Thyssen (Belgium)	Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility	MEP, leader of Flemish Christian-Democratic Party	European People's Party (EPP)
Pierre Moscovici (France)	Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs	Minister for Economy and Finance	Party of European Socialists (PES)
Christos Stylianides (Cyprus)	Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management	MEP	European People's Party (EPP)
Phil Hogan (Ireland)	Agriculture and Rural Development	Minister for Environment	European People's Party (EPP)
Jonathan Hill (UK)	Financial Stability, Financial Markets and Capital Markets Union	Leader, House of Lords	European Conservatives and Reformists
Violeta Bulc (Slovenia)	Transport	Deputy Prime Minister	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)
Elżbieta Bieńkowska (Poland)	Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs	Deputy Prime Minister	European People's Party (EPP)
Věra Jourová (Czech Republic)	Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality	Regional Development Minister	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)
Tibor Navracsics (Hungary)	Education, Youth, Culture and Sport	Foreign Minister	European People's Party (EPP)
Corina Crețu (Romania)	Regional Policy	MEP and Vice-President, EP	Party of European Socialists (PES)
Margrethe Vestager (Denmark)	Competition	Economic Affairs Minister	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)
Carlos Moedas (Portugal)	Research, Science and Innovation	Secretary of State to Prime Minister	European People's Party (EPP)

*All 28 Commissioners are members of national political parties that are represented in EP party groups.

The list started (apparently) with Frederica Mogherini. She was chosen – also by a decision of the European Council – as the EU’s High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, additionally becoming a Vice-President and Commissioner within the College. The choice of Mogherini was not uncontested, with as many as 11 Central and Eastern European EU states initially signalling opposition on the grounds that she was too pro-Russian (after Russia had annexed Crimea and provided troops and weapons to east Ukrainian separatists) as well as inexperienced (having served as Italian Foreign Minister for less than a year).¹⁴ However, the Italian Prime Minister, Matteo Renzi, found himself in a strong position to insist on her appointment after his (and her) party won 41 per cent of the Italian vote in the 2014 EP election. Besides, Mogherini fit the bill in terms of the balance that is always prioritised in share-out of top EU jobs: extending to gender, large/small state, and old/new member state.

After reflecting on how his Commission would be different from Barroso’s – something that Juncker appeared almost to fetishize – the new President announced that he would designate the same number of Commissioners as Vice-Presidents (7), but that they would play very different roles compared with VPs of the past (see below). Frans Timmermans – former Dutch Foreign and Europe Minister – was designated as the first-ever ‘First’ Vice-President of the Commission. The move made political sense for Juncker, who announced that Timmermans would take most of the responsibility for any ‘renegotiation’ of the UK’s status prior to its referendum on its continued EU membership as promised by Cameron, with whom Juncker had an obviously scratchy relationship. In his EP confirmation hearing, Timmermans sought to woo the UK by promising to cut red tape and grant more authority to national governments, deriding a Commission proposal to regulate how olive oil was served in restaurants (which was much-scorned in the UK), extolling Winston Churchill, and calling the UK ‘the birthplace of common sense’.¹⁵ Revealingly, Timmermans was also at pains to be

¹⁴ See BBC News, ‘Key EU jobs go to Italy and Poland’, <http://m.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-eu-28999186>.

¹⁵ Quoted in *Financial Times*, 9 October 2014.

deferential to MEPs, hailing how Juncker's was 'the first Commission born in the European Parliament' (quoted in Global Counsel¹⁶ 2014: 1).

Tapping Timmermans – a Dutch Socialist - to be 'First' VP also allowed Juncker to give his Commission a semblance of political balance that critics (especially on the left) claimed that it lacked. VP appointments were split between the Socialist and European People's Party (EPP, centre right), with 3 each and 1 for the Liberal Andrus Ansip, a former Estonian Prime Minister (for nearly a decade). Still, the College as a whole was dominated by the EPP political family, with exactly half (14) of its members linked to the centre right, as compared to only 8 Socialists and 5 Liberals (see Table 1). By the numbers, the 2014 EP election yielded a Parliament made up of 30 per cent EPP and 25 per cent Socialist MEPs (and only 7 per cent Liberals), with Socialists actually commanding slightly more votes overall than the EPP.

Again, Juncker's scope for influencing national nominations to the Commission was limited, allowing him to disclaim responsibility for loading the College with members of his own political family. And several nominations caused him severe political headaches. One was Cameron's choice of (Lord) Jonathan Hill, a former lobbyist and backroom operator in the UK Conservative party, who was an almost unknown political figure even in his own country. After Hill's nomination, one of Juncker's aides said '[I]ike everyone else we had to look on Google to find out who he is'.¹⁷ Inevitably, Cameron lobbied for Hill to be given a major policy portfolio, leading Juncker to assign him the financial services brief of utmost importance to the City of London. MEPs gave Hill a rough ride, hauling him back for a second confirmation hearing after he gave a lacklustre performance in his first. Still, he was nodded through after Juncker carved out of his portfolio responsibility for

¹⁶ The lead author in this 'Insight' briefing is Stephen Adams, a partner in Global Counsel and top advisor to (Lord) Peter Mandelson, both when the latter was EU Trade Commissioner and Deputy UK Prime Minister.

¹⁷ Quoted in *The Telegraph*, 1 October 2014.

enforcing EU rules on bankers' bonuses, which the UK government was seeking to overturn in the European Court of Justice, and assigning it to the Czech (Liberal) Justice Commissioner, Věra Jourová.

An even more bizarre story was that of Slovenia's Alenka Bratušek, who nominated herself for the Commission during her final days as Prime Minister after losing her party's leadership. Her self-nomination even had failed to find majority support in her own cabinet, leading her to use a special rule of procedure allowing the counting of absent ministers as voting in favour. Nonetheless, Juncker tapped Bratušek for the weighty post of Vice President for Energy Union and stoutly supported her as a female former premier who had saved her country from an EU bail-out.¹⁸ He thus did himself no favours when Bratušek gave a dreadful performance in her EP confirmation hearing. After meeting with leaders of EP party groups, Juncker accepted the fresh nomination of Violeta Bulc, a career entrepreneur with only weeks of experience as a minister Slovenia's post-Bratušek government. Uncannily, Bulc's nomination had to be rammed through the Slovenian cabinet using the same special procedure as Bratušek's (Keating 2014b).

Bulc's inexperience apparently ruled her out for the VP for energy job. Thus, Juncker had to find another candidate for the post while also finding a suitable portfolio for Bulc. In a move greeted with headlines about how Juncker had taken 'another gamble' (see Keating 2014c), the Slovakian nominee, Maroš Šefčovič, was shifted from transport to energy with Bulc offered the former portfolio. In some ways, Šefčovič seemed a safe choice after distinguishing himself as a competent Commissioner for Administration in the Barroso II college. Yet, his links to Slovakia's centre-left government led by Robert Fico were close. Fico had emerged as a major dissenter on EU climate change and energy policy, while maintaining (and defending) close ties to Putin's Russia. In

¹⁸ *Financial Times*, 9 October 2014. Gender is another matter of imbalance in the Juncker Commission, with only 9 female members out of 28. A sign of Juncker's lack of sway over national nominations was his public complaint that '[u]nfortunately, and despite my repeated requests, most of the governments insist on sending male candidates. A Commission without a significant number of women is, in my view, neither credible nor legitimate' (quoted in *The Telegraph*, 25 August 2014).

Barroso's second Commission, Šefčovič had twice voted the Slovak line in opposing proposed emissions reduction limits and allowances under the EU emissions trade scheme.

In the end, Juncker's gamble paid off and Šefčovič and Bulc were both confirmed. However, the new Commission President had to mollify MEPs on the Parliament's Transport Committee who declared themselves 'very disappointed with the reshuffle',¹⁹ especially with 'losing' Šefčovič and being sent a political novice in Bulc. Juncker thus added transport to Šefčovič's 'mission letter', a set of instructions sent to all Commissioners by Juncker outlining their duties and – in the case of Šefčovič and other VPs - which other Commissioners' work they would 'steer and coordinate'.²⁰

Juncker's mission letters (all around 6 pages long) clearly aim to make clear what will be different about his Commission. All contain noticeably frequent use of the term 'political': 'I want the new Commission to be a strong and *political* team', working on the basis of '*Political* Guidelines [that] are...somewhat akin to a political contract that I concluded with the European Parliament', with the Commission's work focused on 'the priorities of the *Political* Guidelines', and so on. All single out the special role of Timmermans as First VP, especially by warning that he will have effective veto over any new initiative proposed for the Commission's Work Programme or weekly College meetings. His approval is thus presented as required for 'full *political* ownership'.²¹

Both the Mission letters and Juncker's first communications to the Commission's (2014a; 2014b) services emphasise that 10 priority projects laid out in his Political Guidelines are where the Commission's time and efforts are to be focused. Yet, the inventory of objectives reads like a laundry list, 'sweeping but insubstantive' (Global Counsel 2014: 2). It stretches from specific

¹⁹ Michael Cramer, German Green MEP, quoted in Keating 2014c.

²⁰ Mission letters for all new Commissioners can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019_en.

²¹ Juncker's instructions on how the new working methods would be implemented by the services repeatedly states that any major policy initiatives required validation or 'a favourable opinion' by the First VP 'as a rule' (Commission 2014b: 2).

objectives – such as agreeing a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with the United States, creating a ‘Capital Markets Union’, and launching a €300 billion investment plan – to aims that almost could not be more vague: ‘making the EU a stronger global actor’, ‘bringing about a Union of democratic change’, and creating ‘an area of justice and fundamental rights based on mutual trust’ (Commission 2014a: 2).

What *is* made clear is that Juncker had ‘decided to organise the new Commission different from its predecessors’ in order ‘to overcome silo mentalities’. Vice-Presidents would be charged with overseeing and coordinating the work of ‘ordinary’ Commissioners so as to ‘help me exercise my presidential prerogatives’ (Commission 2014a: 2). Each VP is assigned to lead a ‘project team’ of Commissioners in their area of responsibility, such as ‘Euro and social dialogue’, ‘energy union’, or ‘digital single market’. Remarkably, Vice-Presidents would *not* have Directorates-General working under their direction but instead would rely on a beefed-up Secretariat-General, which ‘will play an enhanced coordinating role for major initiatives’ (Commission 2014b: 1).

In a sense, Juncker was trying (finally) to solve the age-old problem of a College that is simply too big. By no means was he the first Commission President to do so. For example, Santer created 6 ‘*Groupes de Commissaires*’ to try to coordinate related policies.²² But they took no actual decisions, facilitated few actual policy discussions, and mostly featured exchanges of information about what different Commissioners were doing (Peterson 1999: 57).

For his part, in a backhanded way Prodi could take some credit for the ‘strange and complicated formula’ (Piris 2010: 228) proposed by the Convention on the Future of Europe, according to which only a sub-set of Commissioners would have the right to vote in the College, with others

²² For example, the *groupe* for cohesion policy brought together the Commissioners for social, environment, transport, agriculture and monetary policy under the chairmanship of the Commissioner for regional policy.

participating in its meetings as non-voters. Earlier, Prodi had proposed a new inner cabinet of 10 VPs that would meet weekly with exclusive rights to vote, with all other Commissioners relegated to second-class status as participants in once or twice-monthly 'political strategy' sessions (Peterson 2004: 24). Both of these wished-for formulas died political deaths. Barroso made his own bid by creating five 'clusters' of Commissioner in key areas, such as competitiveness, external relations, and equal opportunities (Peterson 2012: 112). But none seemed to make the College any more cohesive, perhaps inspiring his pulling of the Secretariat-General into his own Presidential orbit.

Thus, while not short of antecedents, Juncker's new formula breaks new ground. It also creates interesting new possibilities for strategic use of the Commission's powers. To illustrate, Mogherini was designated by Juncker as Vice-President responsible for all EU external affairs, including trade policy. Trade had never been within the remit of the previous High Representatives – Javier Solana or Catherine Ashton, Juncker's new system thus created the prospect, at least, that the EU's considerable weight in international trade might finally (as rarely before; see Young and Peterson 2014) be used to support its more general foreign policy agenda.

On the other hand, the VP system threatens to blur responsibility and accountability. The system 'leaves his Vice-Presidents potentially stranded without the support of their line Commissioners', and thus '[m]uch more than any political agenda, [Juncker's] political management skills are likely to define this Commission' (Global Counsel 2014: 2). As the next section shows, Juncker's new formula also has elicited very mixed views from Commission officials, of a kind entirely predictable when any administration is asked to embrace radical change. The question of whether it will work to make the Commission more efficient, strategic and effective is in fact wrapped up in a larger, more primordial question: precisely what does it mean to have a more *political* Commission?

A 'Political' Commission – Meaning?

One of the first reactions to Juncker's declaration that his would be a less technocratic and more political Commission came from his predecessor. Barroso seemed to damn it with faint praise: 'I think the Commission has to be – and mine was – a political body. But it should not be a politicised or partisan body. I think the Commission should remain a political body, but my advice is to avoid partisan lines of fracture and polarisation' (quoted in Keating 2014a).

Perhaps the notion of a more political Commission starts with Juncker's selection via the *Spitzenkandidaten* system, which gives him and his College more legitimacy and an actual mandate.

One senior Commission official poured scorn on the idea:

Juncker has a very party political agenda. The *Spitzenkandidat* was a very bad idea. Our mandate lacks legitimacy...We are confusing political messaging with our policy role. We have become too party political. We will end up more authoritarian and less collegial...we need to be more evidence-based, and a party political agenda is the opposite of that.²³

Another, similar view held that any mandate from the EP was worth far less than one from the EU's most powerful member states, particularly France and Germany (see Global Counsel 2014). The Kohl-Mitterrand alliance on monetary union or 'Merkozy' consensus on the response to the Eurozone crisis are clear examples. With very basic divisions between Paris and Berlin on the Eurozone's evolution, and other large member states focused on national priorities (the UK's emphasis on services market liberalisation or Italy's on greater budget flexibility), Juncker lacked any bargain between key member states on which to build a policy programme. Besides,

Behind the fragile united front of the *spitzenkandidaten* process there is little more substantive agreement on political priorities in the European Parliament than in the European Council. Delivering for his left-right coalition of his supporters in the Parliament in fact will demand a muting of Juncker's political instincts, not a sharpening (Global Counsel 2014: 3).

Others were more charitable. One *chef* (of a 'normal' Commissioner's cabinet) noted:

This new College has lots of impressive people with great CVs. We've got former Prime Ministers and former Foreign Ministers who understand politics. If a 'political' Commission is less bureaucratic and just a rules-based administration, then fine. But we can't stop being

²³ Interview, Brussels, 7th January 2015.

science-based...The jury is still out on the VP system. It's courageous to try a new structure. No one doubts the need to break down the silo mentality.²⁴

Another *chef* (again, of a non-VP) commented:

A star chamber chaired by Timmermans has cut lots of proposals; more than ever before. Finally, we've got someone asking 'why are we doing this'?...We need a slimmed down agenda on jobs and growth, with every portfolio geared to how we get more. A political Commission means we're going to look at what is politically necessary and possible. No more long College or *hebdo*²⁵ meetings. We're going to focus on 2 or 3 political priorities.²⁶

The verdict of an official with experience in a former President's cabinet, and now in a top position in the Secretariat-General, was emphatic:

It's a revolution in the way the Commission is run – in a good way...previously, we had 27 portfolios all working in isolation. It was the silo mentality run riot...A 'political Commission'? I don't know what that means; it can be interpreted in many different ways. If it means political prioritisation, that's very welcome. If it means a party political orientation, then no: that etiquette doesn't travel across borders.²⁷

One senior official with considerable management experience in the Commission insisted:

I actually do think stressing the political agenda gives us more legitimacy. I don't personally believe in the *Spitzenkandidaten* system, but it means the Commission can defend itself from its detractors...For example, in our assessments of the Italian, French and Belgian budgets. We treated them in a more flexible and thus political way, and not purely mechanically. Barroso couldn't do that because he lacked the legitimacy that Juncker has.²⁸

Moreover, the new Juncker formula could be defended on the grounds that it provided the flexibility to put sensitive dossiers in the hands of Commissioners whose nationalities did not make their judgments suspect. Just as Juncker appeased Cameron's UK by giving Hill financial services, while pacifying the EP (especially) by stripping banker bonus rules out of his portfolio, the new VP system allowed him to clip the wings of the new Economic and Financial Affairs Commissioner, France's Pierre Moscovici. Juncker thus required him legally (and uniquely) to prepare and submit assessments of national public budgets with Latvia's Valdis Dombrovski, a deficit hawk and VP for the Euro. The move made political sense as Moscovici had served as French Finance Minister from

²⁴ Interview, Brussels, 7th January 2015.

²⁵ *Hebdos* are weekly meetings of *chefs* that prepare meetings of the full College.

²⁶ Interview, Brussels, 7th January 2015.

²⁷ Interview, Brussels, 8th January 2015.

²⁸ Interview, Brussels, 8th January 2015.

2012-14, and the Commission was required to rule on the French budget only two weeks after its instatement in November 2014.²⁹

One of the Commission's most seasoned Directors-General (one of its 'mandarins', or most senior permanent officials) was at least even-handed:

I'm favourable to the VP system: it is a bold experiment that obviously depends on good will, but things were too 'siloed' before. It empowers the Sec-Gen enormously, with the result that I'm not unlikely to have some 35 year old twerp telling me what I should do in my portfolio. The VPs need to be authoritative, not authoritarian. If the new system damages collegiality within the College, well, that was all kind of myth in the past anyway.³⁰

Another vastly-experienced official in the services was more circumspect:

There's only one Vice-President – Timmermans – in practical terms. The idea of clusters never worked in the past and the new system will delay things...but the Sec-Gen might well be like the Delors-era cabinets: 'let's blow this proposal up just to show we can'. And they can do that without doing the real work.³¹

So, ultimately, we are left without a clear verdict on a bold, ambitious attempt to change the way that the Commission works. What it means to be a 'political Commission' is also an unanswered question. One example illustrates: apparently under Juncker's injunction, his College openly endorsed Stavros Dimas' candidacy for President of Greece in December 2010, on the grounds that Dimas was a former Commissioner and that his election (by the Greek parliament) 'could help remove uncertainties around financial markets'.³² In the end, of course, Dimas' candidacy was rejected, forcing Greece to hold a snap election, with the fiercely anti-austerity (seen by many in Greece as imposed by the EU) Syriza party sweeping to power. Advocates of a more political Commission thus have to be careful about what they wish for.

The Juncker Commission's Prospects

²⁹ See *Financial Times*, 30 September 2014.

³⁰ Interview, Brussels, 8th January 2015.

³¹ Interview, Brussels, 9th January 2015.

³² Annika Breidhardt, a Commission spokesperson quoted *Euractiv*, 10 December 2014; <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/euro-finance/european-commission-officially-backs-government-candidate-greek-elections>.

What fate can we predict for Juncker's Commission? As ever in the life of the Commission, a lot will depend on factors beyond its control. At this early and preliminary point, it is impossible to know what they might be. But we can identify issues that have bubbled up already that may determine its destiny.

One is the leak of 28,000 pages of previously confidential documents detailing special tax deals that were cut between large multinationals and Luxembourg while Juncker was Prime Minister of the Duchy. Juncker insisted that he was not personally involved in such deals, with Luxembourg's tax authority acting on an 'autonomous basis', but also conceded that he was 'politically' responsible as Prime (and also Finance) Minister. With Luxembourg already under investigation by the Commission for its sweetheart deals with Fiat and Amazon, Juncker promised new EU legislation to make such tax affairs more transparent. But one Commission spoke for many in concluding: 'this could harm all of us...Juncker might say the wrong thing about it some day when he's being flippant, or is angry or pissed (drunk). It could be a disaster'.³³

A second factor that may determine the Commission's fate is the nature of the 'brain behind the brain' at the top. Numerous interviewees agreed 'we have a weak President with a strong chief of staff',³⁴ who was – by most accounts – 'brilliant intellectually but with no people skills'.³⁵ Juncker's *chef* of cabinet, Martin Selmayr, had managed the former's campaign to become the EP's *Spitzenkandidat*, after previously serving in top positions in the Commission and posts linked to the German CDU.³⁶ Not since Pascal Lamy (later a Commissioner with a huge portfolio for EU Trade and subsequently Head of the World Trade Organisation) had dominated the Commission as Jacques

³³ Interview, Brussels, 7th January 2015.

³⁴ Interview, Brussels, 8th January 2015.

³⁵ Interview, Brussels, 7th January 2015.

³⁶ A strikingly self-promotional copy of Selmayr's CV is available at <http://www.europainstitut.de/index.php?id=1166&L=1>.

Delors' *chef* did any head of a President's cabinet appear to wield such untrammelled influence.

One extraordinary story making the rounds in Brussels concerned how Juncker had to clean up after the Bratušek mess. Allegedly, after Bratušek's nomination was withdrawn, Selmayr passed Šefčovič in a corridor of the Berlaymont (the Commission's headquarters) and told him that Juncker wanted him to shift from transport to Energy Union and become a VP. Mindful that he had already prepared for and sat his EP confirmation hearing with the Transport Committee, Šefčovič asked Selmayr to arrange a meeting with Juncker to discuss the new proposal. The following morning, Šefčovič was surprised to arrive at his office to find an email from Selmayr indicating that Juncker would announce the Slovak's appointment as VP for Energy Union that day at a 12 noon press conference unless he responded urgently with objections.

One official with cabinet experience estimated 'people are afraid of Martin. He's a symbol of unaccountable power in the hands of people who are inexperienced and don't know the house'.³⁷

One *chef* cited an early dispute between Juncker and the new Trade Commissioner, the Swede Cecilia Malmström, about the sensitive and vital matter of Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) in the TTIP negotiations (with Juncker seeking to shift the issue to Timmermans), insisting that the flap: 'was all Martin...he is widely-loathed. He pushed through a lot before Commissioners found their feet'.³⁸ All of this, it might be thought, could be the normal *sturm und drang* of a new Commission bedding down, especially an unprecedentedly political one. But all of this, it should be recalled, had transpired after fewer than 40 working days.

If Selmayr is really the power behind the throne, it points to another potentially fate-determining factor for Juncker's Commission: how extraordinarily German-dominated it appeared. By one estimation, no fewer than 41 Germans served in Commission cabinets once the dust settled on the

³⁷ Interview, Brussels, 7th January 2015.

³⁸ Interview, Brussels, 7th January 2015.

Juncker Commission, up from an approximate (and fluctuating) total of 22-7 during the Barroso decade. This result was probably due to combination of imperatives, including the wish of Commissioners to have a more or less direct political line to Berlin, lobbying by the German EU delegation in Brussels, the centrality of Merkl to the providence of Juncker's investment plans, and – as alleged by one official – how 'Martin [Selmayr] insisted on them, even though many are very inexperienced. It is part of the "clean out the stall" agenda'.³⁹

Yet, it also pointed to the wider political reality of how the EU itself is now German-dominated as never before. With the UK in such bad odour, France's weak economy, the Greek/Eurozone crisis far from over, and crucial decisions still to be made on Banking Union, power is now concentrated in Merkl and Berlin to an overwhelming extent. One senior official claimed palpable evidence of a 'Germanification of the EU's institutions. A sort of cultural creep. The Germans just don't get the services sector, they only do manufacturing...In a sense, the Germans don't really "do" markets, but still think what they're doing is universally valid'.⁴⁰ Another suggested that the new EP was 'also very German-dominated. The German EP groups are very cohesive in relative terms'.⁴¹ Whether these views are plausible or not, Juncker's fortunes seem likely to be shaped as much and perhaps more by decisions taken in Berlin as opposed to Brussels.

A fourth condition with the potential to derail Juncker's agenda was one that arose perhaps naturally the embrace of an overtly political agenda. Focusing ruthlessly on a limited number of political priorities (even if Juncker's grab bag of objectives was interpreted as fitting that bill) means that others must inevitably fall by the wayside. For example, a single-minded focus on jobs and growth perhaps makes political sense, but at what cost to environmental protection or action on climate change? Juncker's political messaging gave no hint that either would be a main concern of

³⁹ Interview, Brussels, 7th January 2015.

⁴⁰ Interview, Brussels, 7th January 2015.

⁴¹ Interview, Brussels, 9th January 2015.

his Commission. Meanwhile, his own lack of influence over who member states nominated as Commissioners meant accommodating some rather peculiar characters, logically in posts of minimal influence. The 'optic' that resulted from the composition of his team reflected as much. A bird-shooting Maltese, Karmenu Vella, was designated Environment Commissioner. A mildly climate sceptic Spaniard with links to the oil industry, Miguel Arias Cañete, was assigned the climate change portfolio. It did not require too much cynicism to suspect that one reason Juncker opted for a radically new system of empowering VPs was to keep these and other characters in line, as well as to ensure that the brave new political Commission toed the new party line.

CONCLUSION

We have ranged widely in evaluating what eventually may be – and indeed already is - distinct about the Jean-Claude Juncker era in the life of the Commission. We can be confident about some conclusions: his is the most explicitly *political* Commission ever seen, the new system of oversight by VPs is a radical departure, and no College has ever been so dominated by one European political family. These are obviously very early days for the Juncker Commission, the vast majority of whose future remains unwritten. Still, three concluding points are worth delivering as punchlines.

The first is a dog that has not barked very loudly in this paper. Despite all the emphasis on sorting out the Euro, the British 'problem', or jobs and growth, Juncker's near-term fortunes - as well as those of the EU as a whole – could well be determined by its external policy performance. Even if it were not for a host of other pressing issues (such as Iran or ISIS), Russia/Ukraine and TTIP would be enough by themselves to justify such a judgment. Despite the presence in Juncker's Commission of multiple former Foreign Ministers (including the powerful Timmermans), none besides Mogherini hailed from a large EU member state, and even she had very limited previous experience.

Second, we need to step back occasionally and appreciate how diverse the European Union of 28 has become. Its enormously dissimilar national political cultures reflect, perhaps above all, widely variable democratic experiences. The point is reflected in the almost farcical process by which multiple Slovenian candidates for the Commission were chosen or how Šefčovič – previously a career diplomat – ran first on the list of prospective MEPs for Fico’s Slovakian Party of the Democratic Left in the 2014 EP election before being reappointed for a second stint as Commissioner. It was also exposed by the irony of Věra Jourová assuming responsibility for policing limits on bankers’ bonuses, a job she no doubt never could have imagined having while locked away for a month in a Czech prison on trumped up, (apparently) politically motivated corruption charges.⁴² It also may be seen in the perceived political need for Cameron to appoint a faceless unknown as British Commissioner. Or, consider how Tibor Navracsics, Juncker’s new Education Commissioner, previously had served as Hungarian Justice (as well as Foreign) Minister and was central in the passing of domestic laws (extending to media independence) that were widely-viewed in Brussels as infringing on civil liberties. Juncker deserves some sympathy for having to cobble together his ‘political team’ from such a motley crew that, itself, mirrors the sundry political mosaic of the new Europe. As Barroso once said of trying to build a cohesive College from a large group of 27 or more nominees, many of whom he had never met, ‘it is like a blind date’ (quoted in Peterson 2012: 108).

A final point is perhaps obvious, but also inevitable. The fate of Juncker’s Commission lies not in his or its own hands. It has always been thus: even the purported glory of the Delors years was possible only because of contextual variables – national receptivity to European solutions, dramatic political change in East and Central Europe, and a favourable economic cycle – as Ross (1995: 234-7) makes clear. Once these conditions passed, the second half of Delors’ decade at the helm were very much less happy or productive times for the Commission (Peterson 2012: 101). Juncker’s Commission might pick its spots and battles carefully, even wisely on the basis of its self-declared political

⁴² See *Financial Times*, 27 September 2014.

agenda. But it will certainly still find itself buffeted by macro-political forces and developments over which it has little or no control.

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