Berlin Campaign Conference 2025

28 OCTOBER 2025

Dmytro Sochnyev and Timothy Chan



The 2025 Berlin Campaign Conference (BCC) from September 3rd-5th brought together strategists, politicians, and think tank representatives from across the global centre-right – from India to Sweden to Canada – to address the decline of traditional conservative parties and the rise of populism. Attendees and a delegation from EPIS listened to what conservative campaign planners are doing to maintain competitiveness with various digital and electoral strategies.

New Messaging for a New World

Populists thrive on emotional and simple narratives, so centre-right parties were often encouraged by speakers and panelists to learn to better "frame the question voters answer at the ballot" and to "frame first, frame fast". Effective campaigns quickly define the key issue before opponents can and simplify voter choices into emotionally-laden binaries. In one discussed example from Georgia, the populist Georgian Dream successfully framed a vote for the opposition as a vote that would invite another Russian invasion. A typical lesson from case studies like Mongolia and the UK was that early agenda-setting and patriotic messaging can mitigate the reactional nationalism that buttresses many populist campaigns.

Social media and AI were likewise was identified as the main frontline of electoral politics. One important lesson was how the most effective online campaigns are boosted by networks of autonomous online "multipliers" who amplify messages across social media platforms. Yet because these accounts are technically unaffiliated, they can spread more provocative content while preserving plausible deniability, a tactic observed in both US and German elections. On the other hand, panels on AI underscored that public trust in it is high and directly shaping both news consumption and voter choice. So long as algorithms prioritise legacy media for sourcing answers to user queries, campaigns can design consistent and repetitive messaging legible to AI systems to influence visibility.

Shifting Demographics and Coalitions

A common theme was the voter realignment of conservative electorates. One polling data company's presentation, for example, used extensive polling data to illustrate how centre-right voter demographics are becoming younger, less affluent, and more ethnically diverse. In the U.S., Republicans gained ground among traditionally Democrat voter demographics: low-income voters, minorities, youth and women. A presentation by Canadian conservatives revealed how one of their strongest performances across the country came among Canadians of South Asian descent. Across Europe, however, parliamentarian conservative parties are losing younger cohorts to populist and far-right movements. Some argued that many centre-right parties now "bleed to both sides", to right-wing populists on one flank and centrist liberals on the other.

The conference gave different visions for how the global conservatives will adapt. Some conservative representatives, like those from the UK Tories, seemed to understand the threat but presented no tangible counter to alarming Reform polling numbers besides the need to reaffirm traditional values. A politician from the Austrian FVÖ explained how reaching out to the local Keralan Indian minority and campaigning on compassion for the socially disadvantaged helped her win in immigrant-rich Vienna. Incidentally, a panel about lessons on right-wing cooperation in the Nordics

featured one of the few populist actors admitted into the Berlin Marriott Hotel. Once under a taboo similar to the German Brandmauer until a "meatball dinner" between right-of-centre leaders shifted perceptions on collaboration, the Sweden Democrat on the panel augured a third future in which conservatives are increasingly marginalised even in their own spaces.

The BCC revealed a global centre-right struggling to consistently find its feet in changing technological and electoral currents. Its challenge ahead lies in turning the lessons shared into political renewal, though the outcomes are and will likely be dramatically different. Some parties are profiting from digital transformation, but some are likely to be consumed by increasingly prominent populist challengers.

EPIS