

Deal to some means signing a dreadful one sided Withdrawal Agreement – why would we want to do that?

I am against us signing up to the draft Withdrawal Agreement. It is all take and no give from the EU. We do not owe them money after we have left. Why offer them £39bn for nothing?

Some in the government say they will only recommend signing the Withdrawal Agreement if there is at the same time a Future Partnership Agreement. Others in government accept under questioning that there will be no such Agreement drafted and ready to sign at the same time. The best they expect is some kind of Heads of Terms, or more likely an agreement to talk about such an Agreement. So why would anyone conducting sensible negotiations sign the Withdrawal Agreement without seeing a completed Future Partnership Agreement, or at the very least enforceable Heads of Terms which secure sufficient to justify the Withdrawal Agreement?

I do not see what in the proposed Partnership Agreement justifies the idea that we should pay them £39bn anyway. The essence of the Partnership Agreement is likely to be a Free Trade Agreement. That is in their interests more than ours given the imbalance of trade under the current tariff free model. No country pays another for a Free Trade Agreement. Canada did not pay the EU to sign its pretty full FTA with them.

The proposed Partnership from the UK side also ranges widely over Intelligence and Security, where we contribute more than the EU does, and over criminal justice co-operation where countries do not pay each other to enter into extradition agreements.

The debate about so called Deal or No Deal is a mis description on both sides. Deal as envisaged by the EU is not a deal. It is an insistence that the UK signs up to a penal Withdrawal Agreement, to be followed by 21 months more business uncertainty as the two sides haggle more about future trading arrangements. No deal is not no deal. It will be a series of decisions to carry on trading and working across the Channel using the World Trade Organisation, the Chicago Convention on aviation and other international agreements and bodies to ensure smooth passage under an internationally approved system of governance.