

Is this the EU's best offer?

The EU's bad offer to the UK has been conditioned by what the Prime Minister asked for. Mrs May and her team were trying to cherry pick in the way the EU told them not to, so they have ended up with no deal at all about the future relationship after two and half years of talks. If she had asked for a Free Trade Deal along the lines of Canada plus, with various arguments about how the Irish border would work we would be in a much better position. There are plenty of technical and practical ways of handling the border on existing technology, so we would have found out if these issues had been pressed whether the EU was up for a Free Trade deal or not. The Prime Minister's refusal to table a free trade agreement, and her long delay over pressing more practical solutions for the Irish border has led to the current impasse with the UK Parliament and the complete lack of a Future Partnership Agreement other than a few pages a vague aspirations and plenty of negotiation to come.

Once Parliament has voted down the Withdrawal Agreement – as MPs currently say they will – the UK government needs to return to the EU with the individual detailed issues that are best resolved prior to just leaving, and to table a full Free Trade Agreement. We will then find out for sure whether the EU is serious about an FTA or not, and can in the meantime get on with fulfilling the pledge to leave. Immediately anyway the UK government should publish its tariff schedule for March 29 2019, set out details of how we will run our own borders from that date, and provide the necessary permissions for continuing trade and activity.

Mrs May rightly says the country wants shot of all the arguments and delays about Brexit. That is another good reason why we must veto the agreement she has come up with, because it sentences us to an indefinite future of endless talks about our future partnership, shorn of our bargaining position by all the concessions made in the Withdrawal Agreement.