

## Mrs May as a political leader

Mrs May inherited a working majority from her predecessor. She chose to hold an early General election which lost her the majority. Her last series of local elections saw major Conservative losses with the Conservative vote down to just 28%. Her dreadful decision to delay Brexit and hold European elections saw the Conservative party slump to an all time low of 9.1% in a national election. This is a very poor record and explains in itself why the party wanted her to go.

There were few silver linings. It is true she managed to get the Conservative vote back up to 42% in the 2017 election, reuniting Eurosceptics from UKIP with Conservatives under a banner of delivering our exit from the EU in a timely and positive way. That was her high point. She asked the whips to consult the Parliamentary party over whether to hold the 2017 election or not. She had always ruled it out when asked. I was one of those who advised against, but I assume she must have got many saying they wanted to do it. I wanted us to complete Brexit before going to the country, then setting out a post Brexit agenda.

She found it difficult understanding the cross currents of groups and voting blocs within the Parliamentary party. She always seem to exaggerate the numbers and strength of the Remain forces and in her last months in office seemed to delight in opposing the Leave majority on the backbenches, ignoring our advice and offers of support.

The most difficult thing to understand is why she ever thought the Withdrawal Treaty would pass, and why she persevered with the strategy of attrition trying to get more and more MPs to give in to vote for it. As I pointed out to her, even if in the very unlikely event that all Conservative MPs gave in the DUP were never going to accept the provisions on Northern Ireland so the legislation could not pass. Worse still insistence on the legislation threatened her whole government, which needed DUP votes to validate it and keep it in office.

The sorry procession of Ministers leaving office over the same issue would have alerted most politicians to the need to trim. The PM who was always willing to trim for the EU was never willing to trim for the Leave voting majority in the country or for the MPs who sought to represent them. It made her downfall inevitable. It means her successor has to rescue the country from Brexit delayed, and rescue the Conservative party from its historic 9.1% low in an election. Fortunately both tasks require the same positive action to get us out of the EU and to use the freedoms that brings for a better UK.