

Shopping for an EU Agreement

When I go shopping I do not put cash on the counter and then ask what the shop might have that I would like in return for my money. I ask to see the goods, enquire about the price and then decide whether to buy. I only produce the money when we have agreed the whole transaction, and as the shop releases the goods.

The EU wants the UK to shop the wrong way round. They expect us to put up a lot of money without telling us what it buys, and then keeping us in the dark for too long about whether we might get anything for the cash. They have invented a rule that they cannot reach an Agreement with us on our Future Partnership until we have left, which is most unhelpful and does not seem to be based on the strict letter of Treaty law.

Looking at the draft Withdrawal Agreement it is difficult to see why we would want to sign that, and certainly not without knowing what if any Free Trade Agreement will be reached. It will need considerable amendment, especially over the borders and freedom of movement issues. As it commits us to making a large financial contribution it must not be signed before we have an Agreement on all matters which is fairer to the UK than this one sided interim production.

Labour's customs contradictions

“Cherry picking on stilts said one critic of Labour’s idea for the UK negotiating stance. They want “full access to” EU markets maintaining the “benefits of the single market and customs union” . The UK should also be able to “negotiate agreement of new trade deals in our national interest”, and should not be a “passive recipient of rules decided elsewhere by others”. There’s a good series of contradictions for you in a few sentences.

You cannot be in a customs union with a Customs Union and negotiate your own free trade deals on the side. You have to impose their common external tariff on everyone else. Nor is it at all likely that you can stay in a customs union with the rest of the EU without having to accept their rules.

It is unlikely the EU would offer us membership of a customs union without requiring that we accept their rules, and without demanding payments and continued freedom of movement. In other words a customs union would look much like membership of the EU without a seat at the table to be outvoted in person.

Meanwhile it is Groundhog time again in the Commons on this issue. We have twice had important debates and votes on whether the UK should stay in the

customs union or not. (Amendments to the Queens Speech and to the EU Withdrawal Bill) Twice the Commons has decisively rejected this idea. Now some MPs want to do it again as a amendment to the Trade Bill. I do not see the point of doing it all again, and would expect the government to win another vote on this, even if this time Labour is on a whip to support the customs union instead of whipping to abstain.

The UK will rejoin the high table of global influence

Out of the EU the UK will have more influence in the world

The UK has often been a force for good

We have faced down genocides and warmongering dictators

We have often with our US ally stood for freedom, self determination and democracy

We stood up for the values of freedom and self determination when we helped liberate Kuwait

Freed the Falkland islanders

And defeated the Axis powers in 1945

Some say if we leave the EU we will become isolated and less powerful

That is selling us short and misunderstanding the realities

Out of the EU the UK will regain her voice and vote in international bodies where the EU has displaced us

We have not given up our seat on the UN Security Council

Let us take the WTO as an example

We were an influential founding member

In recent years we have had neither voice nor vote, as the EU has spoken for us

Out of the EU we will once again be a strong voice for free trade worldwide

Far from being isolated we will have new allies

Under WTO rules the EU cannot impose on us any barriers they do not impose on

all the other WTO members

So if some in the EU have in mind retreating behind some stockade of tariffs and regulations

They will be picking a fight with the USA, China and the rest at the same time

Out of the EU we will be able to regain our voice and vote in various worldwide standards making bodies, whose work often requires the EU to implement the results

Labour changes its mind and wants the UK to belong to “a customs union”

The Labour Manifesto was quite clear in 2017 that they wanted the UK to see through Brexit, including running our own trade policy. They laid out considerable details about the features of a global trade policy they wanted for us, which clearly ruled out staying in the or a customs union. Many pro Brexit voters voted Labour because they stood on a pro Brexit ticket.

Of course an Opposition party can change its mind. This particular change of mind has two big downsides for Labour. one is pro Leave voters who voted Labour will not be happy with this. The second is there is no obvious offer of “a customs union” on the table from the rest of the EU. They have told us we have to leave without cherry picking, so why would this much debated variant be on the table? Both Leave and Remain campaigns, and the UK government., told us before the referendum that leaving the EU meant leaving both the single market and the customs union. I don't see that anything has changed since then.

A new Migration policy

Leaving the EU will give us the freedom to decide who we should welcome into our country

Many people who voted for Leave, and both government and Opposition are keen that the UK should be open to talent,

Welcoming to entrepreneurs and investors,

Enthusiastic about extending academic networks through shared scholarship and exchange

And generous to those fleeing danger and intolerance

Many also feel we do need to impose some limits on unrestricted migration into low paid jobs or onto benefits

We want those who join us to enjoy good housing and decent living standards

That requires us to expand our numbers at a sustainable pace

We also want a migration system which is fair between the EU and the rest of the world