

Voters are suspicious of international agreements

There is growing suspicion of government by international treaties. Democratic countries find increasing restrictions on what their elected representatives can do as they tie themselves in a colonial type relationship to global and regional quangos. The ultimate most powerful one is the EU

Prime Ministers and Presidents are expected to devote considerable precious time and energy to travelling around the world to talk to each other at conferences. This is increasingly bizarre, full of hypocrisy as most of them tell the rest of us to give up jet travel to save the planet. These all too regular events come with a price, normally requiring the leaders to pledge more public spending to some global cause. They also can result in signing up to expensive and freedom sapping future commitments, as with the net zero plans at successive COPs.

These conferences also have an opportunity cost. Leaders strutting at conferences cannot at the same time pursue domestic aims and solve home problems. Money and above all precious Leader time and energy is diverted. Leaders are also more exposed to the press and international pressure groups which can result in illjudged or unwanted commitments. These gatherings are thought to promote more trade friendship and understanding but can instead create or worsen disagreements through presence which might otherwise lie dormant.

The recent wish to host President Biden in Northern Ireland was a good example of a badly judged visit which highlighted the differences. It had come with the high price of the Windsor Agreement.