

Why I am still optimistic about our future relationship with the EU

Those who fear no deal or a bad deal are too pessimistic.

They exaggerate the importance of government, treaties and rules. They underestimate the energy, good will and positive approach of most people on both sides of the Channel.

The first thing to grasp is the UK will not be on her own. Under WTO rules which govern the EU as well as us, the EU cannot do anything adverse to us that it does not also do to the USA, China, India and the other major countries of the world. Similarly, under international law, the EU cannot pick on UK people, evict our citizens from their homes on the continent, or impose special taxes and requirements on UK people and companies that it does not also apply to Americans, Chinese and all other non EU citizens and companies.

The second thing to grasp is many people and governments on the continent think it a good idea to get on with their neighbouring states, particularly where they sell lot of goods and services. Just in case they don't, the Treaty they all drafted and signed makes them pursue good relations and trade with the neighbours. I always find it odd that the people who most love the EU have such a low view of the way it will behave, expecting it to be petty, nasty and to seek to operate outside international law and outside the norms of civilised behaviour. I think many of them are better than that, and those who might fall short have self interest to push them to keep open their access to the UK.

The third thing to grasp is all those companies on the continent wanting to carry on selling us goods and services, all those individuals wanting to come to the UK to take skilled job or to study, will still be a pressure on the governments of the EU. Just as there are many people in the UK who value their ability to travel on the continent, to study there, or to trade there, so there are many people on the continent wanting the same access to the UK.

Of course the EU institution will try it on and ask for lots of money from us, as they will miss our large contributions. They also know there is no legal basis or political reason why we should pay them any special extra payment on leaving. They also know that in the end, after much huffing and puffing, they need a deal. We know we can get on fine under WTO terms, if they really do want to be difficult.

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