

Funding the Future

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The [FT reports this morning](#) that:

Spain could use the issue of Gibraltar to hold the UK “hostage” in the end game of Brexit negotiations, threatening business with serious disruption, according to William Hague, the former foreign secretary.

Lord Hague told an audience of manufacturers it was vital that Britain and the EU agreed a transitional deal to maintain trading links in the event of a crisis at the end of two years of formal Brexit talks.

I am not surprised that William Hague said this. He is a man who seemed to be born long after his time, and is utterly dedicated to that earlier era to which he so clearly belongs. What is more, he is a man who always managed to get his priorities wrong.

So here he dedicates himself to a British settlement established by force in 1713. Gibraltar did undoubtedly serve UK strategic purposes, especially as a naval base, for long periods. But let's not pretend that at a time when the navy has ever fewer ships, most of which are tied up in Portsmouth most of the time because there's no money to let them move, that this remains the case. I also suspect the RAF presence is little more than a Tiger Moth.

In that case Gibraltar is an outpost of an era that still exists only in the minds of the likes of William Hague. It's a remnant of Empire and colonialism that has no place in a modern Europe, in which the UK apparently wants no part. And it is funded by its activity as a tax haven and centre for offshore gambling. The first activity is intent on undermining the global economy and the legitimate tax revenues of democratically elected governments. The other is wedded to destroying individual lives. Quite emphatically, this is a place that is dedicated undermining well-being.

I am not keen on Brexit. Nor is Spain, and it owes us nothing on Gibraltar. Of course it will try to use it as a bargaining tool. And so it should. The anachronism of Gibraltar's status should come to an end. Its own abuse of its status only adds weight to the argument.

It's time for the UK to say goodbye to Gibraltar.