

British politics is crying out for truth not fantasy on...

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I read two articles on Brexit last night from which, I felt, elements might be combined. The first was from the always excellent [Flip Chart Fairy Tales](#) blog (which I strongly recommend) where it was argued that:

There are essentially 3 reasons why customs borders exist:

- * *To impose tariffs and quotas;*
- * *To confirm the imports' countries of origin;*
- * *To ensure compliance with regulations and standards.*

A free trade agreement with the EU would only get us over the first of these. To avoid the second would require continued membership of the EU Customs Union (or the negotiation of something similar). To avoid the third we would need to stay in the European Economic Area and abide by the rules of the single market.

This gives the government a problem. If it is serious about its guarantee of no border checks, it can't fulfil its stated aim of leaving the Single Market and Customs Union. Yet, almost every day, a government minister repeats that the UK will do just that. The problem with this is that the moment the UK leaves the customs union, there have to be border checks. There is really no getting around this.

There is [no high-tech solution](#) to make the border disappear. The idea that border checks will take place somewhere discreet, far away from the border, is also nonsense. The law-abiding would comply but the point of border checks is to discourage the would-be law breakers. As officials from Norway and Switzerland [explained to MPs](#) in November, even the most technologically advanced countries with the most friendly relationships with their neighbours still have border checks. When you move from one customs regime to another, there is a visible border.

I agree with this. [But my conclusion comes from a Guardian editorial](#):

As Mrs May put it on Monday, Britain is committed to uphold the [Belfast/Good Friday](#)

[agreement](#), to maintain the common travel area with Ireland and, crucially, to avoid a hard border in Ireland. But these goals — all massively desirable — are not compatible with the UK's departure from the single market and customs union, to which Mrs May remains committed. Any future regulatory divergence between the UK and the EU — between the UK and Ireland — can only create a dangerous situation on the Northern Ireland border with the republic.

It is hard to know which is worse: that Mrs May knows this and does not mind such an outcome, or that she knows it and is pretending to parliament and the public that it is not a problem. Either way, this is the politics of impossibilism and of circle-squaring. Either way, British politics is crying out for truth not fantasy on Brexit. But Mrs May will not and cannot provide it.

Those last two sentences say it all. The reality is known, But we have politicians who are either ignorant of it, or are in denial. Either or both are deeply dangerous. At least some consensus on that is now beginning to emerge.

But Labour still will not say it.