

There is a solution to the EU mess. The price is two pa...

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As I have [already pointed out this morning](#), when we voted to leave the EU that is what we did. No conditions or red lines were attached to the voting paper. There were no footnotes. There was just a 'do we want to leave?', to which the answer was an unfortunate 'yes', only matched in its incomprehensibility as to meaning by our inability to answer that question.

The time has come when an answer is needed. Three things are certain.

The first is that May's red lines have to go. That is why the [Commons need to take control of this process](#).

The second is that Labour will not be convinced by Remain.

The third is that a second referendum will fail to catch the nuances, again. It could only ask for a selection between No Deal, which seems unlikely to secure parliamentary support to get in the ballot, or a deal of some sort, and Remain.

That still leaves the question of a deal of what sort? One has to be considered.

The fact is that we now know that leaving the EU could create substantial economic disruption. The only businesses that disagree do not import or export. Quite astonishingly, the Conservative Party is betraying its entire business base by pursuing the policy that it is undertaking.

And the government also thinks there will be mayhem. That is why it is planning for it.

Trade unions happen to agree.

And we now know that leaving the EU could breach all our obligations in Ireland. I find it almost unfathomable that some actually think this acceptable.

And on the ground what we know is that this will massively hurt the well being of the people of this country.

So we still need a compromise.

Labour says that compromise is staying in a Customs Union. But that does not really work unless it is for all practical purposes the EU Customs Union.

It is true that staying in will prevent some new trade deals. But those deals are, anyway, just fictions of fevered imaginations and there is no serious study that says they could ever remotely replicate the benefit of being in the Customs Union.

The disruption will, however, persist even if we are in a Customs Union. And Northern Ireland is not solved. Border checks also cover single market rules and so the disruption to trade would continue. Unless we stay in the single market for goods.

Goods are only 20% of our international trade. We would have services freedom.

And there is a precedent that says we would pay much less than we do now if we were in both the single market for goods and the customs union (Switzerland). And there is also a precedent that movement can be restricted. This is the so-called Jersey model that I have mentioned on this blog before. The best summary I can find this morning comes from the [Centre for European Reform](#). As they put it:

The agreement would need to include the following features:

- * Services access for UK firms would need to be roughly the same as that of any other third country. The UK, theoretically, could take to the world and try to sign services-only trade deals.*
- * The UK would need to agree to follow all of the rules of the customs union, single market rules for goods and the EU's VAT regime. All industrial goods and agriculture would have to be covered. Anything less would create a situation where checks on origin and standards, among other things, would still be required at the border.*
- * The UK would have to agree to rules on state aid, industrial emissions and social and employment laws, to avoid the charge of environmental and social 'dumping'.*
- * The agreement would need a surveillance mechanism, to check that the UK is complying with EU rules, and a court to settle disputes between the EU and the UK. Any new court would have to take account of the case law of the European Court of Justice.*
- * The EU would insist upon a financial contribution to the economic development of Central and Eastern Europe, among other things. The Swiss, for example, contribute around half the UK's current payments per head. They have a similar level of access to the single market as the proposal outlined here.*
- * The biggest question is whether the EU would insist upon free movement of EU workers as it stands, or whether it might be possible for the UK to negotiate controls on free movement, in exchange for the obvious damage that this agreement would do to the City of London.*

This means free-flowing trade at ports. Our well-being is secured.

It means we have left the EU.

We take control of migration.

We save money.

We solve the Irish border issue.

The referendum is honoured.

No tariffs would be payable.

So what are the downsides? There are three.

First, the Tories would self destruct.

Second, Corbyn can't bring himself to say this.

Third, there is then no obvious route to an agreement.

And then May has the nerve to say politics will be discredited if she does not get her way.

Politics could find a way through this.

At the price of two party leaders, and maybe their parties.

That is a price I would willingly pay.