

I see no reason for a delay in Brexit

The Prime Minister gave her word many times that we would leave the EU on 29 March. The Conservative Manifesto said we would either leave with a good deal or with no deal. The government has had 2 years eight months to negotiate a deal, and to put in place everything needed to leave with a series of mini deals without a Withdrawal Agreement. I do not see why we should now change this approach and ask for a delay.

The EU has said it will not re open negotiations on the Withdrawal Agreement. Unless the UK can take the money back off the table and insist on leaving free to make its own trade deals and settle its own laws and borders as part of a new negotiation there is no point at all in a delay. Such a delay proposal would never be accepted in the EU.

Some people argue that the UK needs a longer time for Parliament to hammer out a consensus. There is no sign that Parliament will be able to do that. It could have done it at any time over the last couple of years but chose not too. The minor parties oppose Brexit outright and Labour has moved to a position of effective hostility to a proper Brexit. Labour has always seen Brexit more as an opportunity to damage the Conservatives and press for an election by playing up differences rather than looking for a national consensus, which is the normal attitude of an opposition in the UK. There is no reason this is about to change so the main opposition parties will suddenly want to work co-operatively to find the elusive compromise most people can accept.

The EU has always said we cannot negotiate a trade deal with them until we have left. That is why the best course of action for both sides from here is for the UK to leave on 29 March, but both sides to immediately enter serious talks about a free trade deal. This would allow both sides to carry on without imposing tariffs and new barriers to trade whilst we negotiated the details of the Free Trade Agreement. A long delay with us still in the EU would put off any negotiation of our future trading relationship, adding to business uncertainty and putting off investment.

The government and the private sector have prepared for a March 29 exit, and have spent money on stocks and other arrangements. There would be understandable anger by many if all that has been wasted.

The "long delay" idea needs whole hearted Labour support, EU consent, and is still in search of a sensible purpose for it. With 188 Conservative MPs voting against any delay Mrs May has no government majority for delay! Those who threaten us with a delay have to explain how and why.