

The EU never gives up power easily

I am disappointed but not surprised that the EU is still trying to impede and damage Brexit. There is not a shred of democracy in them as they look at several strategies to undermine the clearly expressed wishes of UK electors to be self governing again.

Their preferred route is to try to turn the ambiguous and scarcely agreed Northern Irish Protocol into a device to keep the whole of the UK under EU rules and regulations. They forget their signature to Clause 13.8 of the Protocol which makes clear it can be clarified, superseded or dropped. That was put in there because the Protocol as drafted is contradictory and did not represent a final settlement of the issues it tried to cover. They want to bury Clause 16 which allows the UK to make unilateral changes to enforce the parts of the Protocol the EU does not like – the measures to prevent diversion of GB trade and the measures to ensure the freedom of the UK internal market including NI. The EU refuses to adopt any negotiating mandate which could produce an answer or compromise. Instead they deliver idle threats and seem to delight in the damage they have done to Northern Ireland politics and the Good Friday Agreement. The UK has tabled proposals which protect the EU's single market, their alleged worry, whilst restoring UK trade to NI. The EU refuses to budge.

The EU sought to disrupt the UK's independent vaccine policy when early investment and great research reached a good answer. They regularly threaten retaliation if we adopt any policy that they do not like which deviates from EU practice. They have allies and friends in the UK civil service and on the Opposition benches in Parliament who are looking for ways to thwart the government when it wants to change regulations, remove taxes or make other changes that could help UK prosperity and growth. The Treasury fights against any proposed VAT cut and delights in accepting the very dubious EU view that we could not cut VAT in Northern Ireland. All the time we were in the EU we were allowed to set different VAT impositions from the Republic and to fix different excise arrangements. The sums owing were not settled at a border post but by electronic transfers away from the borders.

The EU's little helpers try to stop any repeal or amendment of EU laws and would like to smuggle some of the latest efforts of the EU legislative machine into UK law by arguing they are necessary or desirable in their own right. The EU doubtless want to invent a new circle of EU control for states falling short of being full members, or it may just wish to lock the UK back in via an Association Agreement.

Ministers who want to get on with improving the UK economy tell me they encounter plenty of official resistance as they seek to amend and repeal. They need to overrule and get on with it. The pro EU forces say we have to accept when we leave there will be downsides, and accept we need to follow EU rules to trade with them. I say there can be plenty of upsides if we cut free properly. You can always trade with them as many other countries do that are not members, through the World Trade Organisation's most favoured nations

rules. There is so much to win if we get on with setting our own laws and taxes. It is a strange institution that shows more flexibility towards Mr Putin over buying and paying for Russian gas than it does to the UK, a friend and ally, over internal trade within our own country.