

The Treaty of Sandhurst

Last week the government concluded a new Treaty with France, called the "treaty concerning the reinforcement of co-operation for the co-ordinated management of our shared border". I have called it the Sandhurst treaty, in honour of the place where it was solemnized.

Parliament has recently submitted the EU Withdrawal Bill to intensive scrutiny. Hundreds of amendments have been debated, 45 votes taken on the ones most favoured by the Bill's opponents, and 12 days of lengthy discussion on a Bill whose main purpose is to ensure continuity of law once we leave the EU in accordance with the instructions of the voters.

I have no problems with Parliament doing its job thoroughly. I want a strong Parliament. What I would now like is for those same Opposition MPs to be equally demanding when it comes to other things that are happening.

Lets take last week's new Treaty with France. It provides for the UK to send more money to the French government to reinforce the border, and for the UK to take more migrants from France. The government did not offer a Statement or debate to explain this, and are not proposing any Parliamentary process to examine and approve the new Treaty. So why did the Opposition, newly enamoured of the Parliamentary process, not seek an Urgent Question to find out what was going on? Why have they not proposed a debate in Opposition time if the government does not propose a debate in its time on this matter? Why does the Opposition complain about the Executive needing to have powers to transfer EU laws already agreed into good UK law but have no problem with the government signing a new Treaty with obligations on the UK?

The Treaty of Sandhurst is a development of previous Treaty collaboration on the Anglo French border in France. The underlying principle that it is easiest to police that border for people leaving France in France, and for people leaving the UK in the UK is clearly a good one which we wish to uphold. I still find it odd that the newly active Opposition forces in Parliament have nothing to say on this and allow the executive to do as they wish without comment or vote.