

The WTO global trading model and Mr Barnier – time for the media to mend its language

There is a lot of bad and misleading language used about Brexit. Apparently Mr Barnier is about to embark on his own version of Project Fear, claiming the so called “No Deal” option will be difficult. The UK government will make sure all is ready to depart without a Withdrawal Agreement if necessary. Why would the UK want to sign such a one sided Withdrawal Agreement anyway? What is Mr Barnier offering to make it worth our while?

Let me attempt to adjust the language to be more balanced and descriptive.

“No Deal” is the WTO global trading option. Far from being without trading rules and without a working system for importing and exporting, the UK would rely on the WTO system for its EU trade just as it relies on that system for the bulk of its trade today which is conducted with non EU states.

“Crash out” are the words often used by Remain to describe leaving without paying the EU £39bn for the privilege of leaving. As we do not owe them any money, most people would call that just leaving, not crashing out. We will not crash, and will have lots more cash.

“Fall off the cliff edge” is another fatuous phrase they use. There is no cliff edge. Planes will fly and lorries will move through ports the day after we leave just as they did the day before. We will carry on trading and travelling, investing and being tourists in each other’s countries, as we do today in numerous non EU countries.

The EU talks about a “disorderly Brexit” if we leave without a Withdrawal Agreement. That means we leave without paying which annoys them but is good for us. The EU will find that people, companies and global rules will work just fine. The continental exporters to the UK will make sure they can still sell to us as they sell to other countries not in the EU. There is nothing disorderly about the way EU states trade with non EU states.

The use of this pejorative language is silly and misleading. The proponents of the EU say they wish to defend the international rules based system. Presumably their beloved EU does just that. In which case, as a law abiding member of the World Trade Organisation, the EU will not be able to discriminate against the UK after we have left and will not be able to impose new additional tariff or non tariff barriers. The EU has to treat us as it treats all other most favoured nations under WTO rules.

As the bulk of the UK’s trade with the EU is imports, I assume even Mr Barnier will understand they need continued decent access to the UK market. The good news for them is we are offering that, as long as it is reciprocal and within WTO rules.