

# How will Boris Johnson negotiate?

***By Graham Eardley, Chairman of UKIP Walsall***

Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty no longer regulates dealings between the UK and the rest of the EU, as it did when the UK was a member. We are now in the world of Article 218 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

The UK has finally left the EU and it will be interesting to see if the UK finally manages to get a deal with the EU or whether or not a clean-break Brexit will come to pass, as envisaged by numerous Brexiters, including yours truly.

The EU have published their draft mandate for negotiations, which talks about zero tariffs and zero quotas – a zero/zero deal. However, this puts a sting in the tail whereby in return for the zero/zero deal the EU calls for a level playing field due to the U.K.'s geographic proximity to the European Union<sup>[1]</sup>.

In response the UK's Prime Minister has said that there is no need to accept European Union regulatory standards.

“We have made our choice – we want a free trade agreement, similar to Canada's but in the very unlikely event that we do not succeed, then our trade will have to be based on our existing Withdrawal Agreement with the EU.

“The choice is emphatically not ‘deal or no deal’. The question is whether we agree a trading relationship with the EU comparable to Canada's – or more like Australia's.

“In either case, I have no doubt that Britain will prosper mightily.”<sup>[2]</sup>

It will be interesting to see quite how the Prime Minister will handle the situation if neither a Canada deal nor some kind of “cherry picking” deal is available. But at least you get the impression that the EU knows that the UK is serious this time and in this round of trade negotiations.

I hope that (unlike previously) the UK is prepared to walk away so that at that juncture the EU might come to their collective senses and offer a proper Canadian style deal.

As the trade negotiations will not begin in earnest until March of this year there are a number of other pointers to look at so we can see whether the government does mean business this time.

One of these pointers will be the UK Government's attitude to the World Trade Organisation meeting in Geneva where, instead of being at the back of the room, the UK will take its place at the top table.

On Tuesday the 4th of February 2020, Julian Braithwaite – Britain's Permanent Representative to the United Nations – took up an office space at the Geneva headquarters of the World Trade Organisation.

The UK will play a full role at the WTO during the transition period, although it has been alleged by an anonymous source that there could be some pushback from the EU on this.

So as a Brexiter I would like to say that the UK has made a good start in laying out where it stands.

As a consequence of the Government's stance, Nigel Farage – in an effort to remain relevant to the discussion – has now said he will launch a new think tank. I would argue that this is an effort to keep up with the current zeitgeist and a means of staying relevant.

As for me, following the collapse of my UKIP branch and the fact that even more luminaries have left the party since my last blog, I too must also question is there any other political party with any relevance for a Brexiter other than the Conservative party led by Boris Johnson and backed up by Dominic Cummings.

Reluctantly, in the short term I cannot see any other political party from a former Leave standpoint that can hope to gain an ounce of relevance in the current political climate. So, I shall therefore remain as active as I can within current think-tanks and similar campaigning organisations as we see how the negotiations pan out during the year.

<sup>[1]</sup> <https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-britain-eu-document/eu-seeks-ambitious-deal-with-britain-demands-fairness-idUKKBN1ZX1AA>

<sup>[2]</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-51351914>

<sup>[3]</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2020/02/01/britain-ready-speak-wtos-top-table/>

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