

We urge all MPs to vote against May's deal tonight

The Prime Minister claimed on 10 December 2018 that she had decided to postpone the Commons vote on her deal because “on the issue of the Northern Ireland backstop, there remains widespread and deep concern”.

But it is important to be clear that the “widespread and deep concern” goes well beyond the issue of Northern Ireland. It includes the terms of the transition period; the still uncertain financial arrangements; continuing jurisdiction by the ECJ; no guarantee of a trade agreement; and many other matters, such as fishing rights, Gibraltar and so on.

Perhaps the best summary of the madness of May's deal has been given by Mervyn King, an economics professor who served as Governor of the Bank of England for a decade:

“There are arguments for remaining in the EU and arguments for leaving. But there is no case whatever for giving up the benefits of remaining without obtaining the benefits of leaving. Yet that is exactly now what the government is proposing. It simply beggars belief that a government could be hell-bent on a deal that hands over £39 billion (although it may be much more), while giving the EU both the right to impose laws on the UK indefinitely and a veto on ending this state of fiefdom.”

The UK will be out of the EU but still ruled by the EU. It is the very opposite of “taking back control”. This will be the case whether under a transition period, backstop, or bespoke relationship based on the Political Declaration. The only remaining question is just how deep the EU's control over the UK will be.

Worst of all, May's deal would lock the UK into an

international treaty from which there is no unilateral right of departure. It would bind future parliaments and future electorates for generations to come. In this sense it is worse than EFTA, the EEA and even the EU itself – all of which a member country has the right to leave. Mervyn King is right to conclude that, “If the deal is not abandoned, I believe that the UK will end up abrogating it unilaterally – regardless of the grave damage that would do to Britain’s reputation and standing.”

Like Mervyn King, we believe that the withdrawal agreement “beggars belief”. We therefore urge MPs of all parties to vote against it tonight. It is an agreement totally unworthy of the Parliament of a free people.