

Will Boris Johnson turn the UK into a failed state? It?...

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I note the [Telegraph](#) has reported this morning that:

Boris Johnson would rather defy the law than ask for another Brexit delay, he has indicated, as Labour was accused of plunging Britain into a constitutional crisis.

The Prime Minister said he “will not” carry out Parliament’s instructions to seek an Article 50 extension if he fails to agree a new deal, adding he was only bound “in theory” by a law passed on Friday.

I would hope for some slightly better excuse for law breaking from our prime minister. All of us are only ‘in theory’ obliged to comply with the law precisely because our free will permits us the opportunity to decide not to do so. Indeed, culpability is often (but not always) dependent upon evidence of that intent not to do so. In that case, of course the new law only applies to the Prime Minister ‘in theory’. But in practice, his stated intent to not comply also proves that in practice he would be culpable for not doing so.

What this claim does do is leave us in the most quite extraordinary position. We would have a Conservative Prime Minister wilfully breaking the law. It’s not an attractive precedent: suggesting that it is up to a person to decide which laws they shall comply with is not a good example for anyone in authority to set.

And we will have a Prime Minister wilfully in contempt of Parliament.

Whilst what we most certainly will not have is a functioning government: the assumption on which Johnson was appointed only a few weeks ago, which was that he could command a majority in parliament, has clearly failed.

So what now?

We know that we will not get a general election at his behest, although we will undoubtedly have one before November is out.

So his only legal option is to resign if he is to avoid the obligations of office.

And then the Queen would have to invite Jeremy Corbyn to form an alternative government. She would have no choice.

But Johnson might of course choose to break the law.

Then we are in wholly uncharted territory.

To say that we are at risk of state failure is now to simply record a fact. It's not even speculation any more. The Tories have brought us to a point where it is apparent that constitutional failure, even within the vague parameters by which that has to be defined in our case, appears entirely possible. Quite literally the rule of law, including those of precedent on which we are so dependent, would have been broken. And then we join those other states in the world where this happens in being described as a failed state.

Will Johnson take us there? I think he might. This is uncharted territory. And dangerous beyond imagination, quite literally.

I am hoping he might see sense. But I am not optimistic.