

# Just imagine how the Tories might try to win in 2024 an...

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A regular commentator on the blog [asked an interesting question overnight](#). He asked:

*Let us assume for one moment that the Conservatives can win this general election with enough of a majority to “get Brexit done” (ha!) at the end of January 2020, and then capitulate to all of the EU’s demands to get some sort of trade agreement cobbled together by the end of the year (any fool can get an agreement by simply giving the other side everything they want, and giving up on whatever you want that they don’t like ... as we have seen already with the latest withdrawal agreement).*

*What are things going to look like in five years’ time, when Brexit has bitten in full force, and global warming is ratcheting up year by year? How do the Conservatives hope to win the \*next\* election?*

This is interesting for two reasons. First, it focuses on what this election should be about. Second, it lifts election thinking above the decidedly low level it has reached. So, let’s consider it. I may well offer a separate thought on what a Labour government might do as well in a later blog.

The Conservative manifesto gives almost no clue as to what a Conservative Government might really do barring one thing. It’s only objective, since it has become the Brexit Party in all but name, has been to deliver a withdrawal agreement from the EU by 31 January and an EU trade agreement by 31 December 2020.

I think a majority Conservative administration could deliver a withdrawal agreement by 31 January. Of that I have little doubt, although it will certainly upset some Christmas holidays. The deal is ready to go. I can’t see many Tories breaking ranks that early in a parliament. The Lords are tied by this being a manifesto commitment. It will happen. The deal is bad. The reaction from Ireland will be grim. The news throughout 2020 will repeatedly focus on this issue. But the deal will be done.

And I happen to think that Johnson has shown how he will get a trade deal done as well. Just as he abandoned red lines, convictions and the Union to get a withdrawal

agreement, so will he to get a trade deal.

But recall that some time ago Johnson admitted he had not read a deal he was discussing. Selected highlights were as far as he got. I am sure that he believes that the British electorate share his attitude to these matters. The assumption is that they will accept any trade deal because they will never appraise themselves of what it says. If the tin has Trade Deal written on it, that will do for them. Johnson is placing a great deal of faith in his MPs being of similar like mind so that they will vote it through, come what may. And the deal will be done.

I am not predicting the detail. I do not know it any more than anyone else might. But two things are certain if a deal is to be done. The first is that there will be vastly more alignment with the EU than any Tory now suggest likely. That is the only way a deal can be done in the time available. And getting a deal is, based on the evidence of selling Northern Ireland out to get one, more important than tearing up red lines.

But then, more importantly for my current argument, the deal will be ignored by Johnson and his government time and again. The evidence for this suggestion is also clear: Johnson has already said he has no intention of imposing trade barriers in the Irish Sea even though this withdrawal agreement will clearly require them. I can only suggest that the EU negotiators look very hard at just what sanction clauses they can include in any agreement. They are going to need them.

So, I do expect divergence, albeit it not as much as some might fear

I do expect friction in trade.

I do expect job losses, even with a deal.

I do expect lower consumer standards.

And I am not expecting that to result in lower prices. The pound will fall as trade gets harder.

Of course, all that can be described as project fear. Or expert opinion, which is as bad to some. But rationally, it's also likely. So I don't really care how it's described.

And it will deliver an economic downturn. I won't predict the scale, but I do think a downturn is likely. And the Tories have suggested that they will fix tax rates for all the big revenue generators. This means that unless they are willing to borrow heavily, and I doubt that they are, even for investment, then austerity will be back, in a big way.

We already face gross inequality. And real poverty. Children are being hit hard. And that will get worse. As will all the public services that support those with needs. And this is not by chance. It is part of the Britannia Unchained philosophy of those who now have control of the Tories. It is their belief that tough justice is what is required to make

people work; the natural predisposition of people in the UK being, in their opinion, to avoid all forms of responsibility, including any obligation to work. So there will be no sympathy for those who their policies prejudice. There will instead be little short of contempt: the game will be to play off the remaining 'haves' against the 'have nots' and presume that the haves will still vote Tory, not least because the Britannia Unchained crowd will believe that by breaking the EU deal, and suffering sanctions, they will reinforce their populist support base. Again, I stress, that antagonism to the EU will be policy.

So what will a Tory government be like? The most divisive that we can recall, I suggest. And deliberately so. The policy will be overtly one of divide and rule. And it will all be based on fear. There will be the fear of the 'other' in Europe. And the fear that, but for grateful compliance a person will end up one of the 'unfortunate others' the state refuses to support.

And that's how they intend to win in 2024, by dividing this country even more than it is already. It's a grim prospect. But I can see no other strategy that they could pursue and have any hope of winning again.