

Johnson's real Brexit plan

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Boris Johnson is planning urgent reform to the law on leaving the EU to ensure that there [can be no extension to the 31 December 2020 transition period for doing so](#).

Superficially this appears to be a move undertaken to suggest that he is serious about his election promises.

It may also be that he (or rather, Dominic Cummings) really does have a domestic agenda that he wants to get on with.

Some suggest that it is because he wants to engineer a Hard Brexit.

My opinion remains that it is actually something else. What he wants to do is get 'a deal'. He does not much care what deal. All that matters is 'a deal'. So, spending time on detail is not, in his opinion, going to make much difference to the outcome. Instead he knows three things.

The first is that he will compromise, quite heavily, to get any deal, as he did in October, whatever the consequences.

Second, he knows that the EU will offer a deal that could be done by 31 December, subject to minor concessions that they will have allowed for from the outset.

Third, he knows that the public will laud him whatever deal he gets by 31 December 2020 because none of them will pay the slightest attention to what the deal actually says.

And fourth, if that deal creates the minimum possible disruption, which any deal aligned with the EU's demands will, then he wins the electoral bonus from appearing to deliver on the promise whilst saying none of the downsides occurred - making him the apparent genius who proved all those Remainers wrong.

Of course, I could be wrong.

But as a plan this is easily the best one he can have.

And the enforced deadline is there for a reason - and that is to say to Mark Francois & Co that they need to shut up and back his deal, because there is no other electorally attractive option available to them.

My suggestion is then that the deadline is not for EU consumption. It's wholly for domestic consumption. And what we're actually going to get is very close EU alignment come 31 December 2020.

Whether that is what is delivered afterwards will be another issue. I have my doubts there. But the ink on the paper will say we will. And it's an annoyingly good plan if it's what he's setting out to do.