

The pragmatic Johnson agenda

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I have been in discussion with a number of people about the election result.

Many I spoke to are deeply despondent. There has been a common line that we will be heading for hard Brexit / hard austerity / pro-US policy / aggression with Scotland / hard constitutional reform. Britannia will be Unchained.

I agree on hard constitutional reform. The five-year parliament act will go. So will many rights to judicial review. It will be made much harder to vote. There will be boundary reform / gerrymandering, and more. That's because Johnson's game from day one will be winning the next election. It is all he cares about.

But for precisely the same reason he may well not do the rest. Johnson has no political backbone. He has no principles at all. He is just in this for him.

So he will not hard Brexit. Getting a deal done by 31/12/2020 is all that matters to him. So he will do whatever the EU asks. If that upsets Trump, so be it. He can live with that. No one will notice.

And he will let Scotland go, because he sees no way of winning it again, and so it helps his majority when the SNP will never align with him but it might with Labour.

And as for austerity, I have no doubt there will be a lot of it. But he will do vote-winning stuff that might look like a Green Deal (or some term like it). This will be flood defences in Doncaster, for example.

And there will be hospital spending in the ex-Red Wall to make sure it stays Blue.

He can do this because he has a majority. Watch the ERG fade - and expect Rees Mogg to have a decidedly low profile from now on. He'll be kept in Cabinet, but well out of sight.

The point is - and he gets this in a way few other politicians do - winning matters. Government can do a lot or little. But even when it does a little - his inclination - it stops

someone else - Labour in this case - doing anything. And that is his long term goal. So he will do enough to prevent Labour from getting back.

And such is his pragmatism - as seen in October - he won't care who he offends to achieve that, and in how own party the chance of opposition right now is low.

I do not change my mind on how bad things will be. But will it be economically as far right as we might expect? I doubt it.

That said, there will be no Green New Deal.

Public services will suffer.

And many people will not have the support they need.

But every element of the media will be aligned to say he is doing all he can.

That will not be true. But if I was Cummings that is what I would do now. And Cummings, like Johnson, is all about winning. And this is how they will win the next one.