

Boris Johnson's prevailing philosophy of 'whatever' wil...

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One of the deeply annoying phrases that has entered popular culture is 'whatever'. It seems to suggest that generic indifference does not matter when quite often it very clearly does. It is not in common use by me.

Despite that, I think I have finally realised that the use now given to that word does have a particular political meaning. It would seem to be an apt description of the politics of Boris Johnson.

I am quite sure [John Crace is right](#) to note that for Johnson being PM is now downhill all the way. It's just a grind that has to be done, and the thrill was all about securing the post. I suspect philandering will resume its appeal for him quite soon when he realises just how tedious is the job he has committed himself to for years to come.

I am also sure that [Larry Elliott is right](#) to note that the Johnson government may lack a firm economic creed. That, almost necessarily, has to be true. When Sajid Javid did, for example, extol policy little over three years ago that now flatly contradicts those he is now pursuing this has, by necessity, to be a government without a philosophy.

Excepting the pursuit of power, that is.

Or 'whatever', in the sense that 'whatever it takes to keep us popular is what we'll do.'

Hence Flybe.

Hence Northern Rail.

Both of which are going to be much harder to resolve than ministers imagine.

But 'whatever'.

Which reminds me of the person I once knew who told me whatever was necessary to keep me happy in the short term. Their claim might be rumbled as false within hours. Often they were caught out within days. But they persisted with the ploy. It ended in

tears, of course. Mine of frustration. Theirs of failure. "Whatever" did not keep me happy.

I very strongly suspect that as a ploy it will fail for this government. But it looks like they will try it anyway. In the absence of any ideas - and their manifesto was accurate in revealing they have none - it's all they can do.

Which does not prevent me predicting the tears. I think they are on the cards. Indeed, self destruction seems to be the certain outcome for this government right now. 'Whatever' can be acceptable. Being indifferent to some outcomes is permissible. But it's quite emphatically not a basis for governing.