

What if the post-Covid euphoria is already over as the ...

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I think I have said this before, but I am going to say it again anyway. That is because some things are worth repeating. Others are also worth preparing for. The possibility that support for this government might collapse quite soon is one that fits both categories.

The idea that the Conservatives are one united happy family is being laid bare, often, at present. The various 'reform groups' (European, Northern and now Covid) are very clearly determined to push through policies that are little short of insane.

Brexit is already a disaster that is, to Johnson's enormous relief, temporarily hidden behind Covid and the EU's apparent failure to roll out vaccines as fast as the UK. That, though, is a temporary phenomenon. The crisis over Northern Ireland is not. Nor are the long term trading implications. The failure of this policy is going to become apparent.

The Northern issue is being kept quiet, squashed by Covid. But Covid might, in any event, be enough to put paid to Johnson. The bleatings of the largely overlapping memberships of these Groups make clear where they stand. For the Covid denying wing of the Tories there is no data that can over-rule dates on ending Covid lockdown. There are only dates that, in their opinion, need to be brought forward.

Their claims are intensely simplistic. Covid has been beaten, they say, by the vaccination programme. Covid does not like the summer, they add. And international travel is fine if people have a lateral flow test. Anyway, track and trace works because any private sector activity that has that much money thrown at it must work. Meanwhile don't cause transmissions and children can't take Covid home to their parents. The list goes on, and on. All such statements are followed by the call to 'reopen sooner'.

That appetite for reopening is enormous, I am aware. I had a coffee and cake out at a fairly remote bird reserve not far from my home yesterday, and it felt like an enormous treat. Of course we are frustrated. Johnson knows that, but he might also have made a very big mistake. He has over-egged expectation. Worse, he may not be able to deliver.

If he fails the sense of disappointment will turn to anger.

There are good reasons to think he has got his policy wrong, again. Case numbers are up this weekend. School reopening has almost certainly significantly increased R. The evidence is already clear in Scotland. Children are transmitting the virus.

The idea that the virus has been beaten is also wrong. A different virus is being tackled now. If the French variant, which does not show up in testing, becomes commonplace there are even more problems.

And summer does not stop the virus. Brazil provides horrid evidence of that, with the healthcare system there now in a state of collapse.

With many foreign holiday destinations now heading back for lockdown the chance that reopening for summer holidays in the sun will happen is very remote indeed. Which, in my opinion, and quite bizarrely, will be the real tipping point. The sense that almost any liberty can be taken away but the one that gives the 'right' to time in the sun is hard to fathom so I just take it as likely to be a fact.

In all this our so-called 'great' vaccination programme is also beginning to stall. If there isn't enough vaccine to supply second doses a half vaccinated population is a breeding ground for new, vaccine resistant, variants that may turn this supposed success into the groundwork for something much more serious.

Add it all together and there are more than enough possibilities to suggest that if data is really going to drive what happens then the chance of full reopening is very small.

My current suspicion is that the likelihood that schools will stay open is not that high.

As for foreign holidays, and maybe even staycations, they may not be too likely either.

And if any of those things happen the apparent vaccine euphoria of the last few weeks may wear off very quickly indeed.

Could Johnson survive a failed reopening? Would school closures (and some are already happening, of course) tip the balance? Or will it be cancelled holidays? Might that 'coiled spring' of the pent up desire to spend, spend, spend that Andy Haldane at the Bank of England thinks exists be released in drunken anger and not euphoric revelling? I think it at least possible that it might be.

And what then? Has a supine Opposition a better plan? Is the SNP ready to exploit this (although it is likely to come just a little too late to help it in May)? Could we see an emergent political alternative, born of both necessity in the face of anger at the failure of a government that had yet again got Covid wrong, and a complete loss of confidence in all its promises? And what might that political alternative offer?

Surely not more of the same? That, surely, would not be possible given that any non-Tory alternative is impossible without the SNP? So if its inclusion in any alternative (and Sturgeon remains a rare winner on Covid) guarantees that fundamental constitutional reform would be on the table would Labour agree? Or would it rather, Ramsay MacDonald like, prefer a Unionist national government that would in reality perpetuate Tory power?

Effort expended on such speculation may be wasted, of course. Covid might really have been beaten. But I think the likelihood of that very small. In that case I sincerely hope that some thinking is being done. This year has a long way to go as yet. I fear that there will be many more unnecessary deaths before it is over. But if that is going to be the case surely a plan is required, and it cannot be yet more Johnson. What is it to be?