



“Boris” will try to DUPE everyone, but MPs need to level with the public

*The “MayMinusMinus” Deal does not #GetBrexitDone:
electorate will punish #AnyDeal MPs*

By Martin Smith

“#GetBrexitDone”. Get it over with. We are tired. We are fed up. We voted three and a half years ago. This is what the politicians tell us people are saying. Of course, it’s understandable to want to bring Brexit to a close – even if the “close” favoured by many is actually to cancel the whole thing. The electorate, though, is sure to punish MPs who assure them now that Brexit is done, only for it to dominate the agenda again. Here we set out the ticking time bombs that the deal creates.

- **Northern Ireland:**

- Under the “front-stop” that replaces the backstop, there will be a hard border between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The UK is effectively broken up until further notice.....
 -Which is when? Every 4 years, when Northern Ireland’s assembly gets a vote on the border arrangements.
 - Only a simple majority is required to keep or ditch them, meaning that one community can impose a border solution on the other, effectively turning every set of Assembly elections into a border poll and hence sectarian headcount. As well as [being the exact opposite](#) of the principle of cross-community consent that drove the Good Friday Agreement, this stores up enormous trouble for Ulster;
 - Stormont is not currently sitting. If it is not sitting when the arrangements are up for review, they will have to be subject to a referendum, which will also be Northern Ireland’s first (then second, third...) sectarian headcount since 1973.
 - If Northern Ireland, through whatever mechanism, votes to end the arrangements, there is no clarity on what happens next. We are straight back to the “what do you do about the border?” question that has dominated the debate for 3 years.
- **Possibility of No Deal:** ERG MPs are [celebrating](#) that if a trade agreement is not reached by the end of the transition period in 14 months – and very few ever are – there is no way for Parliament to block crashing out of EU trading arrangements without a deal. We will be trading on WTO terms and [sacrificing](#) a quarter of our foreign trade. The fight over No Deal in Parliament will then dominate the agenda as it has done for months since summer 2019. Whether it is prevented or not – and who knows what Parliament will look like by then – the public will angrily turn on the MPs who assured them that Brexit was “done”.
- **Trade agreement:** The future trade agreement was always going to be in the next phase, but the moving of the level playing field provisions to the political declaration means that the type of trade deal – more alignment and more access or less of each – is a bunfight still to be had. This sounds technical, but the less alignment the longer the deal will take. PLUS....



- **Protections for workers' rights, consumers, and the environment:** With the level playing field provisions moved, we have to assume that the Prime Minister has [told](#) Tory MPs that he will bring forward legislation very soon after Brexit to eliminate many EU regulations. This will start a massive fight in Parliament over whether Brexit was supposed to mean deviating from EU standards and will cause Labour Leave voters and the Labour MPs representing them who voted for the deal to feel incredibly betrayed. Alternatively, it won't happen and swathes of the Conservative Party will feel that Brexit has been pointless. It is worth noting that workers' rights are one of the few areas of EU regulation likely to be addressable: business – which is supposed to benefit from deregulation - will [lobby for alignment](#) on *product standards* in order to maintain market access.

Northern Ireland's place in the Union is hanging on the edge of a cliff and the DUP is being run over by the bus under which it was thrown. The Prime Minister lied to them as he has done to so many others, but MPs now have a responsibility to override his bluster and level with the public.

There are only two reasons why MPs should vote for this Deal:

- It is a good Deal;
- It is a bad deal but voters in 2016 **knew** that Brexit would lead to the breakup of the UK and a No Deal Brexit for Great Britain – and to whatever happens to workers' rights - and decided that Brexit was worth it; their wishes to proceed with Brexit despite it breaking up the country must be honoured. MPs must openly say that that is what they are doing.

MPs cannot keep misleading the public that Brexit is simple enough to be “done”.

This deal in particular leaves cans open, worms everywhere, and bombs ticking under every nook and cranny of UK public life.

Sleepwalking through utter exhaustion into this dangerous exercise in can-kicking simply to “Get Brexit Done” will lead to an even more angry electorate.

Martin Smith is a member of the CGE's executive committee. He works as a strategic consultant for Fortune 500 and Private Equity owned firms and was previously a lobbyist in Westminster and Brussels for UK small business organisations as well as a researcher in a think tank.