



Boris Johnson's Brexit: The Six Tests He Has Set Himself



1. A comprehensive deal on trade and security

What he promised

- **Since becoming a key figure in the 2016 referendum campaign, Boris Johnson consistently promised that Brexit would mean leaving with a deal.**

"It doesn't seem to me it would be very hard to strike, to do a free trade deal very rapidly indeed."

Boris Johnson, Treasury Committee, 23 March 2016¹

"They believe the other EU countries would rapidly do a free trade deal, and an unshackled British business sector would probably export more to the rest of Europe than it does today."

Boris Johnson, The Telegraph, 15 May 2016²

"[T]he heart of the new relationship should not be Chequers, but a free trade agreement at least as deep as the one the EU has recently concluded with Canada."

Boris Johnson, 27 September 2018³

- **He has promised a comprehensive deal, covering trade in goods and services, and cooperation on security, foreign policy and counter-terrorism.**

"[A] new relationship was rapidly forged based on free trade and with traditional British leadership on foreign policy, crime-fighting, intelligence-sharing and other intergovernmental cooperation."

Boris Johnson, 22 May 2016⁴

"Of course, we need a proper deal for our financial services industries."

Boris Johnson, 22 September 2016⁵

"It goes without saying that a SuperCanada deal would also comprise extensive and intimate intergovernmental cooperation between the UK and our EU friends on many other matters of mutual interest: security, counter-terrorism, foreign policy and defence cooperation."

Boris Johnson, 27 September 2018⁶

- **He used to insist that there was no chance of crashing out of the EU with No Deal, and therefore "no plan" for it.**

"There is no plan for no deal because we are going to get a great deal."

Boris Johnson, Hansard, 11 July 2017

Why he can't deliver it

- **He has unequivocally ruled out trying to pass the Withdrawal Agreement, saying "I do think this deal is dead, and I think it's very important that is recognised."⁷**



- He has ruled out any deal that includes the Northern Ireland backstop saying we “need basically to remit it, to remove it, to delete it.”⁸
- EU leaders have repeatedly made it completely clear that the backstop cannot be removed.⁹

2. No new trade barriers between the UK and Europe

What he promised

- **Johnson has promised that, deal or no deal, businesses will face no new barriers to trade with the EU, and that there will continue to be “zero tariffs and zero quotas”.**

“[T]here will continue to be free trade, and access to the single market”
*Boris Johnson, The Telegraph, 26 June 2016*¹⁰

“It would be only logical and to be expected that this would involve – as now – zero tariffs and zero quotas on all imports and exports between the UK and the 27.”
*Boris Johnson, 27 September 2018*¹¹

“There will be no tariffs and there will be no quotas, because what we want to do is to get a standstill in our current arrangements.”
*Boris Johnson, 2019*¹²

“It’s overwhelmingly in their interests. Not only do we buy more German cars than anybody else, we drink more Italian wine than any other country in Europe – 300m litres of prosecco every year. They’re not going to put that at risk.”
*Boris Johnson, 22 September 2016*¹³

- **More recently he has said that, if the UK leaves with No Deal we will be able to continue trading tariff-free anyway through recourse to Article 24 of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.**

“There will be no tariffs, there will be no quotas because what we want to do is to get a standstill in our current arrangements under GATT 24, or whatever it happens to be, until such a time as we have negotiated the [free trade agreement].”
*Boris Johnson, 18 June 2019*¹⁴

Why he will struggle to deliver it

- **There are only two ways to achieve this: leave with a deal in place, or stay in the EU. If we leave with No Deal, the EU’s common external tariff will apply to us from day one. And under WTO rules, on 31 October we would either have to build a tariff wall against imports from our largest trade partner or remove all our tariffs**

against all our trade partners.¹⁵

- Article 24 of the GATT requires both parties to agree, and to agree the shape of a future trade agreement. The EU has made crystal clear that it will not agree to anything until the issues of Northern Ireland, citizens' rights and the divorce bill have been settled. Michel Barnier has said: "let me be very, very clear. We would not discuss anything with the UK until there is an agreement for Ireland, for Northern Ireland as well as for citizens' rights and the financial settlement."¹⁶

3. No hard border on the island of Ireland, and no backstop

What he promised

- **Boris Johnson has repeatedly promised there will be no hard border on the island of Ireland.**

"We will not have under any circumstances a hard border in Northern Ireland. We will not have checks at that border."

Boris Johnson, 28 June 2019¹⁷

"Let me tell you, there are abundant, abundant technical fixes that can be introduced to make sure that you don't have to have checks at the border."

Boris Johnson, 24 June 2019¹⁸

- **But he has also pledged to remove the backstop entirely.**

"We need to junk the backstop and agree that neither side will introduce a hard border in Northern Ireland."

Boris Johnson, 24 November 2018¹⁹

"They need to take the 175 pages of the Irish backstop and they need basically to remit it, to remove it, to delete it and to put the solution to all the issues of frictionless trade across the Irish border and indeed elsewhere and resolve them in the context of the FTA, the Free Trade Agreement."

Boris Johnson, 12 July 2019²⁰

Why he will struggle to deliver it

- **Leaving the Single Market and Customs Union, without an alternative arrangement in place, means the UK will become a 'third country' to the EU, and there would be a legal obligation on both sides to impose the standard checks they have at their border with any third country.²¹**



- In a recent report the Irish government has confirmed that if the UK leaves the EU the backstop is the *only* way to avoid a hard border: “The backstop is the only viable solution on the table that avoids a hard border, including physical infrastructure and related checks and controls, preserves the all-island economy and fully protects the Good Friday Agreement, as well the integrity of the EU Single Market and Ireland’s place in it.”²²



4. Brexit will make the country richer and improve our NHS

What he promised

- Throughout the 2016 referendum, Boris Johnson – and the Vote Leave campaign that he led – promised Brexit would result in a £350m dividend for the British economy which could be spent on all manner of things including the NHS.

"The UK's gross budget contribution is currently over £19 billion or £350 million per week... we would then be able to spend all of our net EU contribution of £10.6 billion on our priorities like the NHS and cutting VAT on fuel."

Statement by Michael Gove, Boris Johnson and Gisela Stuart, 3 June 2016²³

- Since then, he has not only doubled down on this claim, he has said it was an underestimate.

"There was an error on the side of the bus. We grossly underestimated the sum over which we would be able to take back control... As and when the cash becomes available – and it won't until we leave – the NHS should be at the very top of the list."

Boris Johnson, 15 January 2018²⁴

- He has said the UK shouldn't pay the divorce bill to the EU.

"The sums I have seen that they propose to demand from this country seem to me to be extortionate and I think that 'go whistle' is an entirely appropriate expression."

Boris Johnson, 11 July 2017²⁵

Why he will struggle to deliver it

- Brexit has already cost the UK economy £550m a week since the referendum, according to a recent study by Standard and Poor's.²⁶
- Nearly every study, including the Treasury's own forecast, shows that every form of Brexit will leave the UK significantly worse off.²⁷
- The independent Office for Budget Responsibility has said that a No Deal Brexit could throw the UK economy into recession.²⁸

5. New trade deals from day one, with no lowering of UK standards

What he's promised

- **He has consistently said that under his Brexit plan Britain could easily secure a “huge number” of free trade agreements around the world “at great speed”.**

“If the Leave side wins, it will indeed be necessary to negotiate a large number of trade deals at great speed. But why should that be impossible? We will have at least two years in which the existing treaties will be in force.”

Boris Johnson, The Telegraph, March 2016²⁹

- **In particular he and those close to him have focused on securing a trade deal with the United States, “the moment we leave” the EU.**

“There is no question that the moment we leave on the 31st we should be in a position to get some kind of arrangement with the US.”

Source close to Boris Johnson, 15 July 2019³⁰

- **He has further claimed that such a deal would not involve any lowering of UK standards and that instead the US would have to raise their standards.**

“We can use the leverage of a trade deal to get the USA to raise their own standards (on animal welfare).”

Boris Johnson, 15 July 2019³¹

Why he will struggle to deliver it

- **Trade negotiations usually take many years and usually involve significant concessions, particularly for the country that is most in need of a deal.**
- **There is no chance whatsoever that the US will agree to raise their standards in line with EU standards after Brexit.**
- **If we leave with No Deal, the UK will lose access to the vast majority of the trade deals we currently have with more than 70 countries around the world.**

6. Full clarity about the future relationship on the day we leave

What he's promised

- **Boris Johnson has said the UK must not embark on a “blind Brexit” where we leave with no idea about our future economic relationship with the EU.**

“It makes no sense whatever to embark on a so-called Blind Brexit, whereby we sign a withdrawal agreement, but without specifying (yet again) what kind of future economic relationship we want.”
Boris Johnson, 27 September 2018³²

- **The Vote Leave campaign of which he was a key spokesman said that the UK wouldn't begin the process of leaving the EU until “a new deal” had been agreed.**

“Taking back control is a careful change, not a sudden step – we will negotiate the terms of a new deal before we start any legal process to leave.”
Vote Leave, June 2016³³

Why he will struggle to deliver it

- **Any Brexit ‘deal’ would be a blind Brexit because the withdrawal agreement and political declaration don't specify anything legally binding about the future relationship.**
- **Leaving with No Deal would be the ultimate ‘blind Brexit’, with no idea whatsoever about where we will end up. As well as trade, No Deal means no deals on anything, from counterterrorism and policing to aviation and imports of medical supplies.**



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- ¹ <https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/66ab01e2-3d9b-4eb9-9186-2a669355c082?in=10:09:15>
 - ² <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/15/of-course-our-city-fat-cats-love-the-eu--its-why-they-earn-so-mu/>
 - ³ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2018/09/27/boris-johnson-plan-better-brexite/>
 - ⁴ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/22/future-britons-will-find-it-hard-to-believe-that-anyone-voted-to/>
 - ⁵ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/09/22/theresa-may-to-decide-over-brexite-talks-no-10-says-after-boris-b/>
 - ⁶ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2018/09/27/boris-johnson-plan-better-brexite/>
 - ⁷ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-politics-46881524/boris-johnson-on-brexite-vote-and-theresa-may-s-future>
 - ⁸ <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/uk/brexite-boris-johnson-says-backstop-must-be-removed-from-withdrawal-agreement-1.3955250>
 - ⁹ <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/17560718.michel-barnier-the-withdrawal-agreement-is-not-going-to-be-reopened/>
 - ¹⁰ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/26/i-cannot-stress-too-much-that-britain-is-part-of-europe--and-alw/>
 - ¹¹ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2018/09/27/boris-johnson-plan-better-brexite/>
 - ¹² <https://twitter.com/ScotNational/status/1149048646266003456>
 - ¹³ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/09/22/theresa-may-to-decide-over-brexite-talks-no-10-says-after-boris-b/>
 - ¹⁴ <https://fullfact.org/europe/boris-johnson-gatt-article-24/>
 - ¹⁵ https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/tif_e/fact2_e.htm
 - ¹⁶ <https://www.ft.com/content/f9af6b90-5a15-11e9-939a-341f5ada9d40>
 - ¹⁷ <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1146586/Brexite-News-Boris-Johnson-Exeter-Jeremy-Hunt-update-latest-irish-backstop-Leo-Varadkar>
 - ¹⁸ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-48752222>
 - ¹⁹ <https://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2018/11/boris-johnsons-speech-to-dup-conference-we-are-on-the-verge-of-making-a-historic-mistake/>
 - ²⁰ <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/uk/brexite-boris-johnson-says-backstop-must-be-removed-from-withdrawal-agreement-1.3955250>
 - ²¹ <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/irish-border-after-brexite-final.pdf>
 - ²² <https://merrionstreet.ie/MerrionStreet/en/News-Room/News/Brexite Contingency Plan July 2019.pdf>
 - ²³ <http://www.voteleavetakecontrol.org/statement-by-michael-gove-boris-johnson-and-gisela-stuart-on-nhs-funding.html>
 - ²⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/jan/15/leave-campaigns-350m-claim-was-too-low-says-boris-johnson>
 - ²⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/jul/11/european-leaders-can-go-whistle-over-eu-divorce-bill-says-boris-johnson>
 - ²⁶ <https://www.allnews.ch/sites/default/files/files/Countdown%20to%20Brexite What%20Might%20Have%20Been%20For%20The%20UK %20Economy 04%20April%202019.pdf>
 - ²⁷ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/760484/28_November_EU_Exit_-_Long-term_economic_analysis_1_.pdf
 - ²⁸ https://obr.uk/docs/dlm_uploads/Fiscalrisksreport2019.pdf
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 - ³⁰ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/johnson-to-seek-trump-deal-in-first-move-as-prime-minister-7nx7kn8pd>
 - ³¹ <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/boris-johnson-jeremy-hunt-leadership-debate-week-to-go-a9006126.html>
 - ³² <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2018/09/27/boris-johnson-plan-better-brexite/>



³³http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/themes/55fd82d8ebad646cec000001/attachments/original/1463496002/Why_Vote_Leave.pdf?1463496002