

Boris Johnson: UK wants to rewrite Brexit Withdrawal Agreement to stop EU being 'abusive'



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson | Tolga Akmen/AFP via Getty Images

France's Europe Minister Clément Beaune accuses British PM of adopting 'the madman's strategy.'

The U.K. wants to rewrite elements of the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement to prevent the EU from being "abusive" to Britain, the country's Prime Minister Boris Johnson said.

"We assumed our EU friends and partners would want to negotiate in good faith," Johnson told the Sun in an interview published late Wednesday, adding: "We've been paid-up members for 45 years." Asked whether Brussels was acting in good faith, Johnson replied: "I don't believe they are."

The prime minister said the controversial Internal Market Bill, which the government has admitted would break international law, would "ring-fence" the Withdrawal Agreement, struck by Johnson himself last year, "to put in watertight bulkheads that will stop friends and partners making abusive or extreme interpretations of the provisions." Johnson has previously said the EU is threatening to "blockade" Northern Ireland by stopping exports from Great Britain.

In the Sun interview, Johnson claimed he had asked during negotiations for the withdrawal deal, "You're not actually going to blockade our food, are you?" The paper said Johnson then appeared to mock EU chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier's accent, saying: "And they say, 'Oh, no, no, we must see what your regulatory framework is going to be.' It's complete nonsense because our

regulatory framework is going to be identical to the EU's."

In a separate interview with France Inter Thursday morning, France's Europe Minister Clément Beaune said Johnson had adopted "what's known as the madman's strategy — throwing everything at the other [side] to scare them," adding, "it won't work."

"If it's a tactic it needs to stop, if it's a desire to leave without a deal, then tell us and we'll get organized," Beaune said. Nonetheless, he added: "I am worried but I think a deal is still possible."

Rym Momtaz contributed reporting.

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