

Brexit Could Fail Even If EU Agree to British Demands

Ivana Popovic December 05, 2018



If they ultimately concluded in failure because the UK Government

Time is ticking away towards the deadline for an agreement between Britain and the European Union over Brexit.

(Newswire.net -- December 5, 2018) -- Time is ticking away towards the deadline for an agreement between Britain and the European

Union over Brexit. Worryingly, there's a growing possibility within Britain that even if a deal can be reached, it may all be for nothing. The members of Britain's Parliament - including many of British Prime Minister Theresa May's own party - may decide to vote against the deal and prevent it from being approved. At that point, Britain and the EU will be left facing the prospect of the former departing the group on a 'no deal' basis, with major trade and legal implications for both.

What's The Issue?

Within Britain, the proposed deal that Prime Minister May is trying to get EU negotiator Michel Barnier to agree to is [known as the 'Chequers Agreement'](#) - so titled because the plan was drawn up at the Prime Minister's country residence, Chequers, in a meeting with her entire cabinet in July of this year. The morning after the twelve hour long cabinet meeting, May hailed it as a success, and that the cabinet had collectively agreed that the plan was the best way for Britain to approach the exit negotiations. Despite that claim, a mere 48 hours later she was hit by the resignation of both Boris Johnson and David Davis. Both men were senior ministers serving in important roles. Both men were also very much in favour of leaving the European Union, and felt that what was agreed at Chequers was a watered down form of leaving that would leave Britain subject to too many EU regulations and restrictions, without any say in how they were written.

That feeling is echoed by many within May's party - an idea that the Chequers plan is weak, leaves Britain vulnerable, doesn't truly result in Britain leaving the EU at all, and as such is a betrayal of the 52% of the British public who voted to leave in the 2016 referendum. They would rather leave with no deal in place at all than leave with what they consider to be a bad deal.

The problem facing May is that there may well be enough of these defectors within her own party, coupled with opposition MPs who will vote against her proposal because they're trying to stop Brexit at any cost, to see the Chequers plan rejected by Parliament even if the EU are agreeable to it. That would plunge Brexit into question, leave May with no authority and surely in an untenable position, and both sides of the debate facing a nightmare without end. And that's without even discussing the Irish problem.

What Is The Irish Problem?

This can be a little hard to get a grasp on for those who aren't familiar with British geography and history. To the west of the British mainland is an island named Ireland. It's divided into two halves; the Catholic and independent Republic of Ireland in the south, and the largely protestant and British-owned Northern Ireland above it. The British claim over Northern Ireland has been fiercely debated and contested for decades, and led to near civil war on several occasions, including the campaign of the terrorist group known as the IRA.

Many years of strife and battle were ended by the [Good Friday Agreement of 1997](#); one of former Prime Minister Tony Blair's flagship achievements. Under the terms of that agreement, there can never be a hard border between the two halves of Ireland; movement from one side to the other must be fluid and unchallenged, with no passport or security checks. The island must be allowed to 'feel' like one unit.

The issue posed by Brexit is that Northern Ireland leaves the EU along with the rest of the UK when it happens. The Republic of Ireland, which is a proud EU member and has no intention of changing that fact, will not. The border

between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland then becomes an external border of the EU itself, which the EU requires to be a hard border.

Allowing there to be a hard border breaks the terms of the Good Friday Agreement and puts the peace at risk. Refusing the hard border would seem to make leaving the European Union impossible. Prime Minister May is caught between a rock and a hard place. And then there's the DUP to think about.

Who Are The DUP?

The DUP are the Democratic Unionist Party. They're a Northern Ireland based political party who are in favour of British rule in Northern Ireland, and until recently they haven't had much influence over mainstream British politics. That all changed after the 2017 General Election, which was an enormous political miscalculation by Prime Minister May.

Knowing that a large political majority would be needed in order to pass her Brexit bills and hold a strong negotiating position with the EU, and believing she was significantly more popular than her main opposition in the Labour Party and its leader Jeremy Corbyn, May decided to shore up her position by calling a General Election even though there wasn't one due until 2020. She behaved like a gambler, in front of a slot machine. She thought all of her symbols were lined up, pressed the button and expected to receive the jackpot. Instead of playing politics, she must have believed she was playing the [Vegas-Slots](#). It backfired on her dramatically. Not only did she fail to get the increased majority she was expecting, she actually lost the one she already had. Labour were more popular than the polls had predicted. May's Conservative Party were still the largest party overall, but lacked the seats needed to form a majority Government. They needed allies to back them in order to pass legislation, and so they entered a pact with the DUP, whose ten seats in Parliament were enough to provide a majority.

The issue now is that the DUP will not back a hard border in Ireland under any circumstances, and so would withdraw their support the moment that the prospect came to the voting table. Even if all of her own MPs voted for her proposals - which seems unlikely - May still wouldn't have the majority she'd need to get her plans through Parliament, and she'd be back to square one and facing a no-deal Brexit yet again.

The negotiations between the UK and the EU have been protracted, fraught, and at times, farcical. If they ultimately concluded in failure because the UK Government won't back its own proposal, it might serve as a fitting final twist in this tragicomedy.



Source: <http://newswire.net/newsroom/blog-post/00106283-brexit-could-fail-even-if-eu-agree-to-british-demands.html>