

Let Theresa May get on with it or risk no deal

The Prime Minister has one of the most unenviable tasks imaginable and sadly, she's all we've got



By [Oscar Bentley](#), Editor (2018)

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I'm going to say something I never thought I'd say: everybody needs to back off Theresa May a little. I am a long way from her biggest fan, a long way from liking her, and longer away still in liking Brexit. But, not to sound like a broken record in repeating everything she's been saying for months, she needs to be allowed to get on with the job at hand.

The UK is set to leave the EU on the 29 March. That leaves just five months to get a deal, write the legislation, and get it through both the European Parliament, as well as Westminster. The deal was originally meant to be done and agreed on by the EU27 leaders at a summit on the 17 and 18 October in Brussels. That went out the window when it was concluded that not enough progress has been made. Our Prime Minister's "Chequers proposal" was rejected, she was humiliated, and she was carted off before dinner had even started. Then there was supposed to be an emergency EU summit in November to pass any deal - but again, it's expected that not enough progress will have been made for that to be possible. An EU summit on the 13 and 14 December is reportedly the last resort. BBC Political Editor, Laura Kuenssberg, floated on 5live's Brexitcast (which is excellent by the way, check it out) podcast, however, an emergency summit could even be called in January.

Basically, she hasn't exactly got it easy on the EU side. The Irish border remains the crucial sticking point, and despite May saying that a deal is 95 per cent done, EU Parliament Brexit head, Guy Verhofstadt, said that until this problem is solved, effectively zero per cent of the deal is done. The EU are pushing her to give more and more ground.

She hasn't got it easy on the home side either, with the Brexiteers within her own party pushing her to not give a single extra milli-metre. She's being held to ransom by the DUP, despite Arlene Foster's proclamation that they are doing no such thing, who are threatening to break off their confidence and supply deal with the Tories. Even her own cabinet still won't say explicitly that they support her plans, see Ester McVey, Penny Mordaunt et al.

Again, I'm not trying to praise her or say she's even a little bit competent, or that it's not all her fault, (to be fair, it's mostly Davey C's.)

May's been backed into the smallest corner possible, with killer sharks everywhere she looks. In office but not in power. But, at the moment, she's the best we've got.

If Labour were to take over and try and negotiate a softer Brexit, then yes I'm down. Even better, if Labour wanted to come out against Brexit and say they'd keep us in the EU, then I'm quadruple down. If another Tory voice could offer something other than hard-crash-ing-out-with-no-deal-Brexit, then I'm also down. But no one is really offering an alternative.

I'm no fan of May and would have been fully behind ousting her before, providing she were replaced with

a Greening, Rudd, and Soubry cabal rather than one of Boris, Da-vis, and Mogg.

If the Tories wanted to oust her, however, they should have done it immediately after the Chequers summit at the beginning of summer, rather than messing about with it now. There just isn't the time. There is no time to replace her and conduct a protracted leadership battle. There is no time to come up with a new plan, without extending the Article 50 process. I'd be more than happy to see happen, but the strongest Brexiteer voices that are against her in her own party and millions of Brexit voters naturally recoil at the suggestion, for fear it endangers delivering on the result of the referendum. If Brexit is determined to go ahead – and again, I'd support stopping it and staying in the EU in a heartbeat – there is no time left to do anything other than support the Primer Minister in getting a deal.

The alternative is crashing out, and not even on WTO terms as the Brexiteers have waxed lyrical for months would be acceptable or even rosy. Several WTO members last week moved to block Britain's fast-track WTO membership bid. No deal isn't a pie-in-the-sky fantasy any more, it's a very real danger.

The government has released reams of notices about how to cope with no deal. The Transport Secretary is actively planning to turn the M20 and M26 into a lorry park. Plans are being drawn up to charter ships to bring in essential food, medicine, and supplies. This is all fucking nuts.

Brexit is the biggest act of national self-harm in post-war history. So, can you imagine all of that amplified by crashing out without an exit deal in place? And remember, this is just the exit – none of the future relationship deal has been done yet, all that is waiting in line, ready for the 21-month transition period – and that's assuming there is an exit deal and no crashing out is done.

The Tories, the DUP, everyone just needs to let her get on with the task at hand. And, unless the exit deal contains something that is so blindsidingly unacceptable, the whole House – Labour included – must vote it through. Theresa May might be one of the worst Prime Ministers we've had in decades. But, for now, she's all we've got.



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