



Written by [James Murphy](#) on September 5, 2019

As the U.K. Turns: More Brexit Drama, Delay, and Dithering in British Parliament

More than three years after voters in the U.K. decided to leave the European Union, ham-handed legislators in the country can still not figure out just how to do so. Days after new Prime Minister Boris Johnson asked the Queen to [prorogue Parliament](#) for five weeks in the lead-up to the October 31 leave deadline, Parliament has struck back, passing legislation that essentially takes a no-deal Brexit off the table, severely hampering Johnson's ability to garner a better deal for Great Britain in its divorce from the European Union.



The no-deal or “surrender” bill, as Johnson refers to it, is now in the hands of the House of Lords, where some Brexiteers had hoped it could be held up until Parliament is prorogued next week. But it now appears that the legislation will be done on Friday in the House of Lords and be sent on for royal assent.

The Benn Bill, named after Labour MP Hillary Benn, ties Johnson's hands in negotiations and virtually assures that he will need to go and ask the EU for yet another delay, this time probably until January 31 of 2020.

After the 327-299 vote, Johnson immediately called for a general snap election, something the opposition Labour Party has been harping about for two years. But Johnson failed to get the two-thirds majority needed to trigger a new election as Labour, apparently, has changed its mind on new elections.

Johnson accused Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn of “a cowardly insult to democracy” in choosing not to back a new election, which has been a priority of the Labour Party up until now. According to Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer John McDonnell, a Labour MP from Hayes and Harlington, the Labour Party still desires a new election but its priority, for now, is stopping a no-deal Brexit at all costs.

McDonnell told the BBC that the Labour Party was “consulting” with other opposition parties in order “to determine the date” of a general election but, at present, would prefer a date “later rather than sooner.”

“The problem that we’ve got is that we cannot at the moment have any confidence in Boris Johnson abiding by any commitment or deal that we could construct,” McDonnell said. “So, we are now consulting on whether it’s better to go long, therefore, rather than go short.”

The [government has announced](#) that MPs will get another chance to vote on whether to hold a new election next week, before Parliament is suspended, possibly as early as Monday.

Other parties in the U.K. are split on whether elections should be held and when they should occur. Liberal Democrat leader Jo Swinson is concerned that Johnson may try to force through a no-deal Brexit despite the legislation passed on Wednesday.



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“In the current circumstances where we find ourselves, where we’ve got a prime minister seemingly prepared to do anything to rip up the traditions of parliamentary democracy, then I also think that we need to be very aware of the risks.”

Meanwhile, Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage is warning Johnson that he “cannot win an election, whenever it comes, if the Brexit Party stands against him.”

But Farage also offered a carrot along with the stick, saying that if the Conservatives were to align with the Brexit Party during a general election, “with a clear policy, we’d be unstoppable.”

Johnson, who suffered the defection of twenty-one Conservatives in a Tuesday vote to take control of Parliamentary business, today also suffered the loss of his own brother as MP Jo Johnson, an MP from Orpington, resigned from Parliament on Thursday.

In a [Twitter post](#), Jo Johnson wrote, “In recent weeks I’ve been torn between family loyalty and the national interest — it’s an unresolvable tension and time for others to take on my roles as MP and Minister.” Jo Johnson also opposed his brother during the 2016 referendum by backing Remain.

Boris Johnson, who was elected by Conservatives to replace Theresa May in July, has begun his run as prime minister by losing the first four parliamentary votes of his tenure. It’s an inauspicious beginning for sure, but he’s been put in a no-win situation, especially with the defections from inside his own party.

Meanwhile, Johnson’s opposition has made its own strategy clear. Delay, delay, delay until the British populace finally gives up on the idea that their nation should govern itself again.

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