



Written by [James Murphy](#) on December 10, 2018

Theresa May Calls off Tuesday Brexit Vote

Knowing that a Tuesday vote on her Chequers Plan for Great Britain leaving the European Union was doomed to fail, Prime Minister Theresa May today postponed that vote after a last-minute conference call with cabinet ministers. May and cabinet ministers were insisting last week that the vote would go forward, even though it was a near certainty that the plan would not pass in the House of Commons.



The prime minister formally announced the postponement in Parliament today. “If we went ahead and held the vote tomorrow the deal would be rejected by a significant margin,” May conceded.

“We will therefore defer the vote scheduled for tomorrow and not proceed to divide the House at this time.”

No new vote has been scheduled yet, as May is expected to head to Brussels later this week to demand a better deal from the EU. A new vote could happen as early as next week, or it could be delayed until January, which leaves Parliament with little time for subsequent Brexit legislation to be passed before the U.K. is scheduled to leave the EU.

If no deal is reached, the U.K. faces the possibility of a “no deal” Brexit, a new referendum on the issue, or no Brexit at all. The current deal was reached only after a year-and-a-half of arduous negotiations. And the EU isn’t likely to budge from their positions.

“I cannot see at the moment what could be changed,” said German foreign minister Heiko Maas. “We have an agreement ... supported by both sides.... We want an orderly Brexit.”

The prime minister seeks a better deal on the “Irish Backstop,” which could leave Britain under the EU’s thumb for years to come. “While it will not be directly bound by EU rules, GB [Great Britain] will be obliged to observe a range of regulatory regulations in certain areas, such as environmental, labour, social and competition laws (the ‘level playing field, which reflects varying levels of correspondence to EU standards,” wrote Attorney General Geoffrey Cox in legal advice published last week.

Both the Republic of Ireland (an EU member) and Northern Ireland (a part of the U.K.) seek to retain the “open” border that exists between them. The current deal allows this until a final deal can be worked out, but it also demands that the U.K. continue to follow certain EU laws, essentially binding the U.K. and EU together for the foreseeable future.

May’s decision to cancel the vote came just hours after the EU’s highest court, the [European Court of Justice \(ECJ\)](#), ruled that the U.K. was free to unilaterally cancel its intention to leave the EU, which is scheduled to happen on March 29 of next year.

The ECJ’s decision is ironic in that it is just the kind of EU meddling that caused the British public to vote to leave the EU in the first place.

May’s deal indeed ties the U.K. uncomfortably close to the EU, but she argues that her plan is infinitely better than a “no-deal” Brexit, which supposedly could cause economic chaos with worldwide



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repercussions. On the news of the delayed vote, the pound sterling dropped to its lowest level in 18 months.

Work and Pensions Minister Amber Rudd, one of May's close allies, floated a possible "Plan B" shortly after May announced that the vote was to be cancelled. Rudd agrees that the current plan offers the best option for leaving the EU, but suggested an alternative relationship with the EU, similar to Norway's.

"If it [May's plan] doesn't get through anything could happen: people's vote, Norway Plus, any of these options could come forward," Rudd told BBC radio on Sunday.

The ["Norway Plus"](#) plan obviously echoes Norway's engagement with the EU. Rudd explained to the Times that the Norway Plus option "seems plausible not just in terms of the country but in terms of where the MPs are."

While Norway is not an EU member, it is allowed free access to trade in the EU by virtue of its inclusion in the European Economic Area (EEA). Norway's access to free trade with the EU does hinge on it following certain EU laws. The agreement also allows Norway to participate in certain EU programs but without any voting rights.

But to be treated like Norway is not what the U.K. voted for in 2016. The British people voted to leave the EU so that Great Britain could, again, stand on its own. The U.K. would be better off with a "no deal" Brexit than the current plan or the Norway Plus option. The U.K. is the world's fifth largest economy without the EU. It can surely survive the predicted "economic chaos" that might ensue from an abrupt cessation of EU membership.



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