

Theresa May's EU Brexit deal rejected by Parliament a third time

LONDON - British lawmakers on Friday rejected Prime Minister Theresa May's European Union divorce deal for a third time, a defeat that adds further uncertainty and confusion over the country's the efforts to leave the bloc.

Britain now has until April 12 to announce a new plan, or leave the bloc without a deal and risk a disorderly exit that could substantially damage Britain's economy.

It could also mean an extended delay to Britain's departure from the EU, known as Brexit, or no Brexit at all. May said the "implications are grave" and EU leaders immediately announced an emergency summit on Brussels for April 10.

The House of Commons voted 344-286 against May's withdrawal agreement, a narrower margin of loss than in previous parliamentary votes on Brexit.

Lawmakers had already rejected May's EU exit deal twice before and earlier this week she promised to quit as Britain's leader if the deal is approved.

Lawmakers plan to hold a series of votes Monday in an attempt to find a new plan.

Friday's vote was on the withdrawal agreement that sets out the terms of Britain's departure from the bloc - but not a shorter declaration on future ties.

Almost three years after Britain voted to leave the EU, Brexit has brought the country's political system to a standstill and May's agreement still faces substantial opposition because hard-line lawmakers from her ruling Conservative Party don't feel the deal she negotiated with the EU sufficiently disentangles Britain from the EU. Many opposition Labour Party lawmakers, meanwhile, are in favor of closer ties with the EU.

Asked Thursday about May's offer to resign if her Brexit deal is passed, President Donald Trump said he wished "the Brexit movement" well.

Of May, Trump said: “She’s strong, she’s tough and she’s in there fighting.”

The vote came on the day that Britain was originally scheduled to leave the EU and the result raises the possibility that the nation may need to hold a second national referendum on Brexit or call a general election to solve the impasse.

Ahead of the vote, May had appealed Friday to lawmakers “to put aside self and party ... accept the responsibility given to us by the British people.”

After the vote, she said the outcome was a “matter of profound regret.”

The European Commission, the bloc’s executive branch, said that the result meant that a chaotic EU exit – a “no-deal” Brexit – for Britain was now “a likely scenario.”

Food shortages, skyrocketing cheese prices, grounded airplanes, traffic jams, riots and even a repurposed Cold War-era emergency exit route for Britain’s Queen Elizabeth II are just some of the warnings being sounded in Britain if the nation leaves the bloc it joined 46 years ago without securing a withdrawal deal with the EU that’s also acceptable to lawmakers. That’s because many of Britain’s laws from security policy to public health for decades have been formed in cooperation with the EU.

Much of this legislation, under a “no-deal” Brexit, would effectively evaporate overnight.

The British pound fell sharply against the U.S. dollar after the vote. In recent trading, it was 0.5 percent lower at \$1.2995. Britain’s currency rose modestly ahead of the vote.

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A 'Stop Brexit' campaigner protests outside of the Houses of Parliament in London, on March 28, 2019. (Photo: EPA-EFE)

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