

## **The Brexit Trilemma – forced choice between three options**

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House of Commons: 650 MPs minus 7 Sinn Fein, 4 Speaker/deputies, Newport West (vacant) = 638

**No-deal Brexit: 120** – [Con 107](#) (118 who voted against PM's deal on [15 January](#) minus 11 referendumers, below), DUP 10, Labour 3 (Kate Hoey, Kelvin Hopkins,<sup>1</sup> [Graham Stringer](#))

**PM's deal: 236** – Con 198, [Stephen Lloyd](#) (ex-Lib Dem), Sylvia Hermon (independent N Ireland unionist), Labour 4 (Ian Austin,<sup>1</sup> Kevin Barron, Frank Field,<sup>1</sup> John Mann), who voted for it on [15 January](#); plus a possible 32 more Labour MPs (who oppose a referendum or who [voted against the Grieve, Cooper, Reeves or Spelman amendments, or for the Brady amendment on 29 January, or did not vote](#)): Tracy Brabin,<sup>2</sup> Ronnie Campbell, [Sarah Champion](#), [Julie Cooper](#), Rosie Cooper, [Jon Cruddas](#), Judith Cummins,<sup>2</sup> Gloria De Piero,<sup>2</sup> [Jim Fitzpatrick](#), [Caroline Flint](#), Yvonne Fovargue,<sup>2</sup> Roger Godsiff,<sup>3</sup> Stephen Hepburn, Mike Hill,<sup>4</sup> [Kevan Jones](#),<sup>5</sup> Mike Kane,<sup>2</sup> [Stephen Kinnock](#), Emma Lewell-Buck,<sup>2</sup> [Ivan Lewis](#),<sup>1</sup> Jim McMahon, Grahame Morris,<sup>4</sup> [Lisa Nandy](#), [Melanie Onn](#), [Jo Platt](#), [Lucy Powell](#),<sup>5</sup> Dennis Skinner, Ruth Smeeth, Gareth Snell, Laura Smith, John Spellar, Derek Twigg, [Chris Williamson](#)<sup>1</sup> (who speaks for several of them when he insists he won't support the PM's deal either)<sup>5</sup>

**Referendum (=Remain): 282** – the rest, including the rest of Labour MPs,<sup>6</sup> whose [policy](#) is now “in favour of a public vote to prevent a damaging Tory Brexit”, and Con or ex-Con 11: Heidi Allen, Guto Bebb, [Damian Collins](#), Justine Greening, Dominic Grieve, Sam Gyimah, Jo Johnson, Phillip Lee, [Andrew Mitchell](#), Anna Soubry, Sarah Wollaston

## **Narrowing to a forced choice between two options**

Theresa May accepted on [26 February](#) that the House of Commons would decide the next step if it failed to approve a deal by 12 March. A large majority of MPs would vote against no-deal Brexit at this point, in which case the Commons would then vote on seeking an extension to the Article 50 deadline.

MPs would thus be facing a forced choice between the PM's deal and delaying Brexit (which may or may not lead to a new referendum).

The Labour leadership would presumably continue to vote against the PM's deal, but let us assume that 33 of the 39 Labour and ex-Labour MPs listed above under "no-deal Brexit" or "PM's deal" vote for it (and one abstains).

It was established on 15 January that MPs tend not to abstain in a vote on a Brexit treaty. Paul Flynn, the Labour MP who was ill, was the only non-voter in the vote on the Brexit deal. So let us assume there are only 4 abstentions: 3 no-deal Brexit Tory MPs and, for illustrative purposes, [Chris Williamson](#).

The only way I can see a revised deal gaining a majority would be if the DUP support it. If they do, and the Tory no-dealers are reduced to 30 (and 3 abstentions), the result could be a tie:

### **Forced choice between two options<sup>7</sup>**

**PM's deal 315**

**Delay Brexit 315**

<sup>1</sup>Suspended/resigned Labour whip.

<sup>2</sup>Brabin, Cummins, De Piero, Fovargue, Kane and Lewell-Buck did not vote on the Cooper and Reeves amendments on 29 January.

<sup>3</sup>[Godsiff supports a referendum](#), but voted against Grieve, Cooper and Reeves amendments and for Brady amendment on 29 January.

<sup>4</sup>Hill and Morris did not vote on the Reeves and Spelman amendments on 29 January.

<sup>5</sup>Jones, Powell and Williamson voted with the Labour whip on 29 January, but have expressed opposition to a new referendum. Not included here are [David Drew](#), [Angela Rayner](#) and [Jonathan Reynolds](#), frontbenchers who have also expressed opposition. [John Cryer](#) had doubts but now [supports](#) the Peter Kyle/Phil Wilson amendment to approve PM's deal subject to a referendum.

<sup>6</sup>Including Fiona Onasanya, released from jail on 25 February: it is not known if the terms of her parole allow her to vote.

<sup>7</sup>Deducting 2 tellers from each side of the vote.

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16 March section

### **Narrowing to a forced choice between two options**

Theresa May accepted on [26 February](#) that the House of Commons would decide the next step if it failed to approve a deal by 12 March, which it did. It voted against a no-deal Brexit on [13 March](#), and on [14 March](#) voted to [“note”](#) that, if it failed to approve a deal by 20 March, the EU Council might require a long extension to the Article 50 deadline.

Thus MPs now face a forced choice between the PM’s deal (which would require a short delay to Brexit to pass the implementation bill) and a long delay to Brexit (which may or may not lead to a new referendum).

It was established on 15 January and 12 March that MPs tend not to abstain in a vote on a Brexit treaty. Paul Flynn, the Labour MP who was ill, was the only non-voter on 15 January and Douglas Ross, Con, whose wife was having a baby, was the only one on 12 March.

The Labour leadership would continue to vote against the PM’s deal, but let us assume that 18 more Labour and ex-Labour MPs vote for it – that is, half of the 36 of those listed above under “no-deal Brexit” (3) or “PM’s deal” (33 who have not already voted for it).

Then a revised deal could gain a majority only if the DUP support it and the number of Tory no-dealers is reduced from 69 to 22, in which case it would win by 2:

### **Forced choice between two options<sup>9</sup>**

**PM’s deal 318**

**Delay Brexit 316**

<sup>1</sup>Suspended/resigned Labour whip.

<sup>2</sup>Brabin, Cummins, De Piero, Fovargue, Kane and Lewell-Buck did not vote on the Cooper and Reeves amendments on 29 January.

<sup>3</sup>[Godsiff supports a referendum](#), but voted against Grieve, Cooper and Reeves amendments and for Brady amendment on 29 January.

<sup>4</sup>Hill and Morris did not vote on the Reeves and Spelman amendments on 29 January.

<sup>5</sup>Jones and Powell voted with the Labour whip on 29 January, but have expressed opposition to a new referendum. Not included here are [David Drew](#), [Angela Rayner](#)

[and Jonathan Reynolds](#), frontbenchers who have also expressed opposition, and [Chris Williamson](#).<sup>1</sup> Nor [John Grogan](#), who supports a referendum but who says he will support the PM's deal if it's a choice between that and no deal. [John Cryer](#) had doubts but now [supports](#) the Peter Kyle/Phil Wilson plan to approve PM's deal subject to a referendum.

<sup>6</sup>Including Douglas Ross, Con, who did not vote on 12 March because his wife was having a baby.

<sup>7</sup>Voted against a referendum on [14 March](#), including the five frontbenchers who resigned.

<sup>8</sup>Not including [Damian Collins](#), who has called for a referendum but is more of a no-dealer.

<sup>9</sup>Deducting 2 tellers from each side of the vote.

16 March 2019