

Government hopes to enshrine Brexit date in law

By [Alexander Woodward](#)

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The Government seeks to make Brexit unstoppable by enshrining the UK's leave date in law [Image: The British Parliament and Big Ben]

The British government set out plans to enshrine the date that Britain leaves the European Union into law. Theresa May has stated that the EU Withdrawal Bill will be amended to completely commit Britain to leaving the European Union at 11pm on Friday 29th March 2019, suggesting that this would be regardless of circumstance.

The Prime Minister wrote in the Daily Telegraph "Let no-one doubt our determination or question our resolve, Brexit is happening, it will be there in black and white on the front page of this historic piece of legislation: The United Kingdom will be leaving the EU on March 29, 2019 at 11pm GMT".

The Labour Party have called the move a "gimmick" and have stated that they plan to vote against the motion in Parliament. Some Conservative MPs have joined the Labour Party in condemning the move, former Chancellor Ken Clarke called the move "silly". He could be joined by another fourteen Conservative MPs in voting against the government on the matter.

This led to the Daily Telegraph on Wednesday publishing these fifteen MPs on the front page under the title "The Brexit Mutineers", criticising them for going against the government on the matter. Anna Soubry, one of the MPs mentioned in the article went onto Twitter to call it "bullying" whilst Clarke called it "positively harmful to the national interest".

This is not the first time that the press has attacked people who are seen to be 'opposed to Brexit', in November 2016 the Daily Mail ran a front page with the pictures of three judges on, calling them "Enemies of the People" for ruling that Parliament should have had a vote on the triggering of Article 50.

The plan for an enshrined end date is part of a wider EU bill that was had its first round of debate in the House of Commons on Tuesday with eight hours of discussion over EU laws and their role after Britain leaves the EU and some of the 470 amendments proposed by MPs to the bill, this being the first of eight days in the run up to Christmas that MPs will be able to scrutinise the bill.

The start of Parliament's debates on the bill comes just days after Lord Kerr, a former diplomat responsible for drafting Article 50 said that Article 50 can be reversed right up to the moment that Britain formally leaves the European Union, even if a specific end date has been listed and put into law.

Kerr, who is now a crossbench peer in the House of Lords stated that "Brexiters create the impression that is because of the way Article 50 is written that having sent in a letter on 29 March 2017 we must leave automatically on 29 March 2019 at the latest. That is not true. It is misleading to suggest that a decision that we are taking autonomously in this country about the timing of our departure, we are required to take by a provision of EU treaty law".

Kerr also replied to Brexit Minister David Davis' claim that Brexit was an "irrevocable moment" by replying with a quote from Davis in 2012 when he said, "A democracy that has lost the right to change its mind has ceased to be a democracy". This quote was given when Davis was supporting the idea of holding a referendum on membership of the European Union at a time when the idea was being considered by then Prime Minister David Cameron.

The fracturing of the right and left of the Conservative Party is further bad news for Theresa May, who last week received a letter from Environment Minister Michael Gove and Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson who demanded that the Prime Minister push for what is being called a 'Hard Brexit' (which would involve leaving the Single Market and Customs Union) as well as limiting the influence MPs who support remaining in the EU.

The Prime Minister's weakening position within her own party has spread rumours of a potential challenge for the leadership of the party, according to leaks from within the party, 40 MPs are interested in backing a motion of no confidence against the Prime Minister, this would be eight short of the 48 required for a leadership election to be triggered.

Brexit has been shown in recent weeks to be front and centre in British politics, with clear divisions within the Conservative Party over the issue. The massively different demands from each side of the party could create a catch-22 situation for May, with no clear solution seemingly in the pipelines that could be supported from each side of the party, with the situation surrounding the Brexit end date being one of endless examples surrounding Britain leaving the European Union.



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