



The NATIONAL INTEREST

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[A Looming Deadline and Still No Brexit Deal](#)

The end of this month, October 31st, 2019, is the current deadline for the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union. Tensions in Parliament are running high as no deal with the E.U. has been reached and U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson is remaining committed to an October 31st Brexit, with or without a deal in place. A law passed in September, however, will require the Prime Minister to ask for a third extension on October 19th if no deal is reached with the E.U. before then, effectively moving the Brexit deadline to January 31st, 2020.

Brexit's current deadline is fast approaching at 11pm on October 31st, 2019 and there is still a much-heated debate in the U.K. over a deal. The issue of Brexit has been an all-consuming task for the British Parliament since a referendum in 2016, where 52% of voters elected to leave the European Union. The transition out of the E.U. has been a long-extended process that required two previous extensions of the deadline. There have been previous deals negotiated with the E.U., however, the U.K. Parliament has rejected them over disagreements in the specifics of the clauses. The previous deal had provisions for E.U. citizens wanting to work in the U.K. and vice versa, how much money the U.K. would pay the E.U., and a backstop for the Irish border.

U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson is determined to remaining steadfast in leaving the E.U. on October 31st, however, the Benn Act (a law passed in September 2019) prohibits Johnson from a no-deal Brexit. This leaves him needing to guarantee a deal by October 19th, otherwise he would need to ask for an additional extension. As a result, there is much anticipation for Prime Minister Johnson to secure a deal with the E.U. at the final Council Summit on October 17th. The deal currently proposed includes most of the main clauses that the original deal contained save for Johnson removing the backstop from it. Under the deal that Johnson proposed, Northern Ireland would stay in the European single market but would be removed from the customs union, resulting in new customs checks at the Irish border. The Prime Minister insists that these checks can be done electronically far from the physical borders, however, the E.U. has previously rejected deals with a technology-led approach to customs.

While the Benn Act prohibits a no-deal Brexit, Prime Minister Johnson's rhetoric has many worried that he will break rank and not send the required letter requesting an extension. Concerned citizens and Scottish National Party MPs filed a motion in the Scottish courts that would force Johnson to comply with the Benn Act. Lord Pentland, a Court of Session Judge, dismissed the case on the basis that there was no need for "coercive orders" against the Prime Minister or the U.K. government stating it would be a breach of trust with the government. However, many are still wary that the government will not fulfill the duties outlined in the law and are therefore pushing to appeal the decision.

Uncertainty still lies ahead for both the E.U. and the U.K. as they go into the final week of negotiations before the October 19th deadline that requires Johnson to ask for an extension if no deal is reached. The Prime Minister sent new proposals for a Brexit deal to the E.U. last week, but there has been little sign of progress in talks between the two. If no deal is reached and Johnson asks for the extension, Brexit will be dragged out to a new leave date of 11pm on January 31st, 2020.