

Increased prospect of no-deal Brexit or no Brexit at all amid Westminster 'chaos', says Nicola Sturgeon

Written by Lorna Hutchinson on 11 June 2019 in News
News

Scotland's First Minister believes that there is all to play for in the Brexit "horror show" as blinkered Britain careers towards a no-deal Brexit while the possibility of no Brexit at all gathers momentum.



Nicola Sturgeon | *Photo credit: Brian Johnson*

In the couple of months since the UK House of Commons indicative votes on Brexit, chaos reigns supreme in Westminster with the chances of compromise all but gone.

This was the message delivered by Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon at a briefing in Brussels on Tuesday.

"There's not much that's very clear in the UK right now. But I think one thing that is clear is that very

few people voted for the current position of chaos.”

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“The specific details of what Brexit involves were not really known in 2016 - they are much better known and much better understood now. So in these circumstances, checking whether people across the UK still want to go ahead with Brexit is the obvious democratic course of action.”

“While the opportunity to avert Brexit may have increased, so too has the risk of a no-deal Brexit at the end of October, and that is something that deeply concerns me and my Government.”

Sturgeon, who is leader of the Scottish National Party, pointed out that her party not only voted to revoke Article 50, but also voted in favour of holding a second referendum on EU membership, adding, “that reflects our strong preference to remain in the EU.”

“But we also voted for the proposal that - should remaining not prove possible - that the UK should stay in the single market and in the customs unions.”

“Increasingly the likeliest way of avoiding a hard Brexit or a no-deal Brexit, is for the UK to avoid Brexit altogether”

She said that although this was not her “preferred outcome”, this was in many ways the “logical compromise solution”, given the narrowness of the Leave majority across the whole of the UK.

She added, “It’s also, worryingly, unlike much of what is being put forward by the current candidates to be [the next British] Prime Minister. It is a compromise which at least has some basis in reality.”

Referring to the current Conservative Party leadership contest triggered by the resignation of Prime Minister Theresa May, Sturgeon said, “Nobody who wants to be leader of the Conservative Party is proposing that as an option, and so increasingly the likeliest way of avoiding a hard Brexit or a no-deal Brexit, is for the UK to avoid Brexit altogether.”

“Perhaps the likelier route to avoiding Brexit - particularly if we can persuade the Labour opposition in the House of commons to get off the fence and endorse this unequivocally - is a second referendum.”

Sturgeon expressed dismay at Labour’s inability to take a strong position on Brexit, adding “I think there’s huge pressure on Jeremy Corbyn - if he was to take that position I think it would make it, not absolutely guaranteed, but it would give us a real fighting chance of winning a second referendum.”

On the increasing prospect of a no-deal Brexit at the end of October, Sturgeon said that the principle

responsibility for that will lie with the UK Government and those who advocated an “unrealistic approach to Brexit.”

She added, however, that closely behind will be the Labour Party in its current position, “because it is largely Labour’s failure to get off the fence that has made it impossible to build an alternative coalition in the House of Commons – either for stopping Brexit or having a less damaging form of Brexit.”

“While the opportunity to avert Brexit may have increased, so too has the risk of a no-deal Brexit at the end of October”

“I personally had discussions with Jeremy Corbyn and it’s been very difficult. Sometimes it felt like banging my head off a brick wall in getting them [Labour] to take a position.”

“I thought the pasting they took in the European Parliament elections would hasten a change in position – which incidentally has happened in the Scottish Labour Party.”

“There’s no getting away from the fact that Labour is a significant roadblock to finding a way out of this mess at the moment. I deeply regret that.”

Sturgeon added, “The onus really is on them [Labour] to stop prevaricating and get off the fence.”

About the author

Lorna Hutchinson is a reporter and sub-editor at The Parliament Magazine

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