

The Times

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Driven to despair

● Britain in crisis as May plan crushed again ● MPs vote today on no-deal Brexit ● Prime minister may face resignation calls

Francis Elliott Political Editor
Oliver Wright, Sam Coates
Bruno Waterfield Brussels

Britain was plunged into political crisis last night as Theresa May all but lost control of Brexit after a second huge Commons defeat for her deal.

The prime minister will confront MPs today with the consequences of leaving the EU without a deal, including new tariffs and plans for the border in Ireland. Parliament will then vote on whether the country should leave without an agreement on March 29.

If MPs block no-deal they will be asked tomorrow whether Britain should seek an Article 50 extension from the EU, for how long and for what purpose.

The cabinet is meeting early today amid speculation that a delegation of senior Tories may ask Mrs May to resign this week, raising the prospect of another election to break the impasse.

Downing Street is also ready for another attempt by a cross-party group of MPs led by Yvette Cooper to seize control of the Brexit timetable. The

How the Commons voted

Yes 242

No 391

move, which could allow MPs to dictate government business to soften or even halt Brexit, could deliver a terminal blow to Mrs May's authority.

A group of Tory MPs is also preparing to revive the so-called Malthouse plan for Britain to offer an extended transition followed by a no-deal Brexit. Figures such as Damian Green and Nicky Morgan from the Remain wing of the party and the Brexiters Steve Baker and Jacob Rees-Mogg put down the amendment outlining the plan last night, with ministers understood to be indicating backing. It requires new negotiations with the EU because it does not involve passing the withdrawal agreement, something both Brussels and No 10 are likely to resist.

Mrs May, her voice failing, told MPs, who had rejected her deal by a margin of 149 votes, that they now faced a series of unenviable choices, including whether to cancel Brexit. The prime



Theresa May leaving parliament last night after her heavy defeat. She told MPs that they had to face unenviable choices

minister announced she would grant a free vote to MPs on no-deal today and heavily hinted that she would oppose leaving without an agreement. No 10 was unable to say what would happen if MPs voted to take no-deal off the table but also voted against an extension.

Business leaders called on parliament to 'end the circus'. Carolyn Fairbairn, the CBI director-general, said: "Enough is enough. This must be the last day of failed politics. A new approach is needed by all parties. Jobs and livelihoods depend on it."

Sterling fell against the euro and dollar. Today the markets will examine previously secret no-deal tariffs, which place tens of thousands of jobs at risk. The government will also publish sensitive plans for the Irish border in a no-deal exit. The disclosure of both is likely to weaken Britain's position in any further negotiations.

The fate of Mrs May's second attempt to pass the deal was sealed when Geoffrey Cox's legal advice was published. The attorney-general ruled that changes to her Brexit deal had left the legal risk of Britain being stuck in the backstop unchanged. This contradicted Mrs May, who claimed to have secured changes that ensured Britain could not be trapped in it.

Matt Hancock, the health secretary, criticised Mr Cox at cabinet for undermining her, and other cabinet ministers were privately withering.

The DUP again opposed the deal and the scale of the defeat — the fourth largest by a sitting government — led many in the EU to conclude that the agreement negotiated over two years was dead. Mrs May warned MPs that the EU would demand to "know what use we mean to make of such an extension". "Does it wish to revoke Article 50? Does it want to hold a second referendum? Or does it want to leave with a deal but not this deal? These are unenviable choices, but thanks to the decision the House has made this evening they must now be faced."

The rejection darkened the mood of EU leaders before a summit next week at which they will have to agree unanimously to any request for a delay. One diplomat warned that some were prepared to cut Britain loose. "Behind the scenes people are increasingly saying that it is better to call it quits, to have a clean break and start again," the diplomat said.

Full reports and analysis, pages 6-9
Daniel Finkelstein, page 25
Leading article, page 29

IN THE NEWS

Boeings grounded

The Boeing 737 Max has been banned in Europe and many other countries worldwide after the crash in Ethiopia on Sunday. More British victims have been named. Pages 14-15

Lethal air pollution

Air pollution causes more deaths globally than smoking, a study has found. There were 8.8 million deaths a year from pollution, including 64,000 in Britain, researchers said. Page 4

Maduro rallies thugs

President Maduro has called on pro-government gangs to begin "the resistance" as he blamed the US for blackouts that have threatened to plunge Venezuela into chaos. Page 30

Bank 'must do better'

The Bank of England is "years out of date" in how it works and its credibility is at risk, the public accounts committee has said in a blow for Mark Carney, the governor. Page 37



Cheltenham Festival
8-page pullout

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A Level Component 1: Media products, industries and audiences.

Focus areas:
Media language
Representation
Media industries
Audiences
Media contexts

PRODUCT CONTEXT

- The Times newspaper is a British national ‘**quality**’ newspaper first published in 1785. The Times has been published by Times Newspapers since 1981, a subsidiary of News UK, wholly owned by News Corp, Rupert Murdoch’s company.
- This edition was published on March 13th, 2019, after Theresa May had encountered another Commons defeat over her Brexit proposals.
- The Times is famous for having a range of journalists with varied political viewpoints which allows the newspaper to offer a more neutral political stance on Brexit negotiations.

PART 1: STARTING POINTS – Media language and representation

Media Language

Political context

On 23rd June 2016, citizens of the UK voted to leave the European Union (EU). This was nicknamed ‘**Brexit**’. The vote was very close with 51.9% voting leave and 48.1% voting remain. The controversies from the campaign continued even after the vote. Remainers accused leave voters of xenophobia and racism; leavers accused remainers of being unpatriotic and un-democratic. The period since the referendum has been one of political turmoil. Following the resignation of David Cameron shortly after the vote, Theresa May has faced regular leadership challenges from within her own party, and a snap general election in 2017 in

which her party suffered heavy losses. Meanwhile, she had been regularly visiting Brussels and other EU countries in an effort to create a **Brexit deal** that will satisfy both the EU and the UK parliament. On the date this edition of the *Mirror* was published, MPs had **voted against** the deal she had negotiated with the EU. This was very serious as the UK was scheduled to be leaving the EU in just ten days. Withdrawing from the EU with ‘**no deal**’ could have catastrophic consequences on trade, immigration, healthcare etc., affecting all UK citizens.

Cultural context

Horse racing meets like Ascot and Cheltenham are an **iconic** part of British culture, often associated with the upper classes.

The contemporary audience can be assumed to be familiar with the **codes and conventions** of newspaper front pages and the **mode of address** that these newspapers present to their readers. The layout of the **broadsheet** newspaper usually has one main story, with lots of details, then smaller headlines at the bottom.

Front page:

- The central image is a **close-up** photograph of Theresa May looking distraught. She has a pained facial expression and dark rings under her eyes which **denote** high emotions and possible lack of sleep.
- The headline **anchors** this by making the defeat of her Brexit proposals into something more personal and emotional than political and factual. This is an attempt to narrate what is a quite ‘dry’ story. It fulfils the **news value** of ‘**personalisation**’ where politicians become **characters** we may empathise with (even if we don’t agree with their politics).
- Though the smaller headlines above the main offer a bigger picture, the last still focuses on May as an individual.
- The ‘In the news’ stories at the bottom of the page also supply some **global context** for the main story: financial,

environmental and travel news are topics *The Times*' audience is interested in.

- Most of the print is black on white, which **connotes** the seriousness of the content. The fashion feature 'puff box' at the top of the page is in a paler, pastel colour that is more feminine and also less serious.
- The strapline 'Britain's Most Trusted Newspaper' draws on *the Times*' long history and reputation as a quality brand that will give readers a range of viewpoints on serious issues. The heraldic style logo reinforces this.

Theoretical perspectives:

Semiotics – Saussure

The photograph appears to be taken through a car window (there is a shadow of a rearview mirror in the foreground and the 'Driven To Despair' is a pun). The connotation of this kind of shot is that they are un-posed and often private situations that the photographer has managed to capture. The framing suggests a candor to the photo. This emphasises the emotional and personalised framing for the story.

Narrative - Propp

This style takes a complex political debate (described in factual detail in the body of the text) and turns into a dramatic incident, an emotional incident for a 'character' (May). Candidates could look at Vladimir Propp's 32 'narratemes' and select those which this story seem to be playing out.

Starting Points: representation

Consider how representations are constructed through a process of selection and combination

- The photograph could be interpreted as representing May as a **stereotypical**
- **woman**: emotional, vulnerable and easily upset. However, the 'candid' (almost invasive) framing of the photo also suggests she is allowing her feelings to show in private, whereas in public she is more controlled.
- Female politicians often find it challenging to show they are both strong, capable leaders and caring and warm human beings. One rival MP said May wouldn't make a good Prime Minister because she doesn't have children! If they come across as too 'masculine' female politicians can lose supporters, something male politicians don't seem to worry about.
- The language of the headline also focuses on May's emotions rather than her political

achievements. However, the tone suggests that she is justified in feeling this way.

- Learners might want to look at photos of male politicians - how many show them expressing emotions? How many are constructed to show strength, confidence, defiance and other stereotypically 'masculine' traits?

Theoretical perspectives: Feminist theory - Van Zoonen

Van Zoonen suggested that women are often portrayed as sexualised, weak or vulnerable in the media. Though Theresa May is shown as vulnerable, the image used also suggests defiance in the face of adversity; she is not sexualised (compare to the infamous *Daily Mail* 'legs-it' headline).

Also, even though the reader may not agree with her political actions, May is a high profile, very powerful woman who is often portrayed battling against privileged male politicians. This kind of woman is rarely seen in the media, especially within current affairs, and Van Zoonen would suggest that despite her politics many women would aspire to her status. The personal tone of the headline and photo build this sense of intimacy.

PART 2: UNDERSTANDING MEDIA INDUSTRIES AND AUDIENCES

Industry context

The Times was first published in 1785 and is part of the Times newspaper group which is a subsidiary of News UK. News UK is a British-based, American-owned newspaper publisher, and a subsidiary of the American **mass media conglomerate** News Corp.

News Corp is a newly formed company, which concentrates on newspapers and publishing. The company formed following a split from News Corporation, a powerful conglomerate with interests in film and broadcasting in addition to newspapers and publishing.

The company also produces *The Sun* newspaper and previously the *News of the World*, which ceased production following the **phone hacking scandal** of 2011.

The company has demonstrated a predominantly **right wing** political allegiance with *The Sun* newspaper backing the conservative government in recent elections. However, *The Times* has maintained a more **neutral** stance.

The group was one of the first companies in the UK to introduce an **online** newspaper but also **paywalls** which required readers to pay for use of the site. This was introduced in response

to the fall in print sales within the group. However, The Times is the only national **quality** newspaper to show year-on-year growth for **print sales** (407, 566 daily average).

The Times is part of the **Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO)** - an independent body which is not backed by the Government and is fully funded by the industry itself. This is a regulatory body that maintains press standards but is anti-Leveson in its approach.

Theoretical approaches: Power and media industries – Curran and Seaton

The Times is part of a horizontally *and* vertically integrated company and subsequently a large conglomerate. Being part of a huge press organisation could limit or inhibit creativity and journalists' freedom. Rupert Murdoch is often accused of controlling his newspaper content and editorial teams which would support this point. However, it could also be suggested that by having a more diverse pattern of ownership, a more pluralistic approach could create conditions for more varied and adventurous media productions.

Regulation – Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt

The Times Newspaper Group and News Corp are facing increased pressure alongside the rest of the UK press industry to adhere to strict rules and regulations on industry practice. This has arisen after the phone hacking scandal and subsequent Leveson enquiry into the industry. There is an underlying issue of protecting citizens from harmful material while ensuring choice and press freedom. The increasing power of companies like News Corp and their expansion into digital media has also placed traditional approaches to media at risk.

Cultural industries – David Hesmondhalgh

The Times Newspaper group is part of a vertically and horizontally integrated company with a wide range of titles on offer in order to maximise audiences and minimise risks. Rather than seeing digital media as a threat, the company has embraced its digital expansion and introduced paywalls to allow for online content to be viewed while still generating income. As part of News Corp, the company finds itself part of a wide organisation responsible for different cultural industries. This can benefit the newspaper

greatly in terms of production and promotion.

The Times' target audience, according to NRS and ABC data, is predominantly ABC1, over 35 and has a liberal/right-wing political stance.

Starting points: Audience

How are audiences grouped and categorised?

The Times' target audience, according to NRS and ABC data is predominantly ABC1, over 35 and has a **liberal/right** wing political stance. This **well-educated** and **middle class** audience take an interest in global affairs and can understand detailed political reporting

How do audiences interpret the product?

The Brexit chaos edition will target this group as it takes a fairly **neutral** approach which will allow readers to construct their own opinion and negotiate their own response to the Outcome of the Commons vote. The close-up photo of May's despairing face may build empathy and a sense of **identification**: the audience feels similar to May about the tedious Brexit process.

Theoretical approaches:

Cultivation theory – Gerbner

Exposure to repeated patterns of representation (of May struggling to reach a deal, of Brexit chaos generally) by newspapers can shape and influence an audience's views and opinions. Gerbner went on to say that this is not like 'hypodermic model' but rather depends on what the audience already believes. The messages (e.g. politicians are ineffectual) need to resonate with an established belief (e.g. Brexit is a chaotic mess) in the audience (e.g. middle class, middle-right wing).

Reception theory – Stuart Hall

The Times has portrayed May and the vote in a way that encourages a negotiated reading. By focusing on the emotional state of May and the general despair at the progress of negotiations, it is asking readers to reflect on their own emotional response to the situation.

End of audience – Clay Shirky

The concept of audience members as passive consumers is no longer tenable in the age of the internet with the rise of the prosumer who can create their own content such as submitting

stories and being part of forums. Many broadsheet newspapers like *The Times* have embraced this, taking popular **'below-the-line'** (i.e. non-professional) commentators and offering them **'above-the-line'** columns in their on-line editions.