



Voices

## The Northern Irish abortion issue could topple Theresa May once and for all – here's why

It is fair to say the deal the prime minister made with the DUP wasn't thought through

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fragile state of negotiations. Behind the scenes, the DUP is the link in the chain that is increasingly likely to snap.

Soon after DUP leader Arlene Foster told Sky News that any Brexit deal that treated Northern Ireland differently to the rest of the UK would be her "only red line", a cross-party coalition, including senior Tory MPs, announced that Foster could not have her cake and eat it. If she wanted equal application of Brexit in Northern Ireland, she would also have to accept same sex marriage and abortion.

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The coalition is now calling for a vote in the Commons to repeal parts of a 19th century UK-wide law so that, instead of imposing a new law in Northern Ireland, the move would force the whole country to update its legislation. This strategy could work. As a minority government, she is vulnerable to a rebellion from just seven MPs from her own party. Theresa May granted Northern

Irish women the right to free abortions on the NHS in England last year, but only because Labour MP Stella Creasy wanted to include an amendment on the issue in the Queen's speech, and to prevent embarrassment, she allowed the change in law before being defeated by a vote.

Our prime minister would also be unwise to ignore this issue post-MeToo.

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