

The strange assumption that we'll just put up with it

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We're in election year, and the lack of excitement is already telling. If neither Labour or the Conservatives up their game the sense of relief when we reach May will be real. Except, that is, for the fact that we may not get a stable government as a result.

There has been talk of Grand Coalitions between Labour and Conservatives to keep out UKIP, or other minority parties.

The idea that there will be a second election is often mooted, although the Fixed Term Parliament Act appears to make the prospect of that remote.

Minority government is a possibility - and happened, of course, in the late 70s, which some of us recall.

Coalition prospects are the subject of all sorts of speculation.

And yet what is not discussed is the possibility that this might give rise to change in the electoral system. I have yet to see anyone say that the Commons might just vote to repeal the Fixed Term Parliament Act. Or that serious proposals for electoral reform might emerge if first past the post finally reveals all its inherent weaknesses. And it is widely assumed that the country will accept, without any form of protest or consequence the failure of the political class to deliver government in a form that reflects the will of the people.

For reasons that baffle me it seems to be simply assumed that this is a game that will only be played out at Westminster. And that baffles me. History makes clear that people want democracy and they like leadership and they want government - even when they are not that keen on who is in it. The chance that people will be happy with perpetual coalition from a voting system not designed to support it and so delivering unrepresentative membership of such alliances seems to me to be remote.

The possibility that a failure to deliver a recognisably representative government in 2015 that seeks to exist within a constitutional bodge of fixed term parliaments that is wholly unsuited to the needs of this country will be accepted without enormous demand

for change that will have serious ramifications for politics in this country that may well involve rejection of the two main political parties for having failed to meet public need seems very high to me.

I'm not sure that 2015 will just produce a period of uncertain government in this country. I think 2015 may be the last gasp of a system that is failing and could herald major change. Whether I will like the outcome or not is not the issue: the vacuum the existing system may create will demand change and if that happens the unpredictability of whether or not we're in the EU may seem like small change for a while. We may (and I stress the may) be in for a period of very radical political change in the UK, and the assumption that this could not happen, which appears widespread and is based on the idea of a supine populace, appears to me to be misplaced. If Scotland proved anything it suggested people can, when the need arises, still be motivated by the political process, but only when change is in the offing,