

Funding the Future

Article URL

<https://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/2017/07/13/time-to-eat-humble-pie/>

Published: January 12, 2026, 6:23 pm

People keep asking what will happen about Brexit, and that's a wholly reasonable concern.

They also ask what will happen about our lame duck government and what might be done to solve the fact that we now have a minority administration, headed by a prime minister that no one has any confidence in, backed by a party who are very clearly at war with each other still over Europe. That's at least as much of a concern.

Those asking also look at polling figures and see Labour's rise since June 8, but know all too well that such leads can vaporise and that as a result it is quite impossible to forecast a general election result if there were to be one. Which adds to the concern.

And all the time the clock ticks on Article 50 and a cliff edge gets closer. If you're not worried about that, I think you should be.

But the real question is, what happens to solve this almighty mess we have got into to? Of course the Tories could stagger on, although how is not clear; not least to them, I suspect.

Or, as many readers will know I have long supported, there could be a progressive alliance including an agreement on electoral reform and, now, a broad based approach to negotiation to find the best deal for the UK as a whole on Brexit. I still think that the way forward, but the maths does not favour it unless some Tories defect and the DUP abandon their new found riches. And much as I wish it, I can't see that happening.

So a general election is possible, except for the disastrous impact that this would have on the time scale for reaching any EU agreement as many more months are lost.

Or there is option four, and that is a national government. We did, of course, have one in 1931. It was not a happy experience in a great many ways, not least for democracy itself. But is it possible that the combined centre ground (which is, of course, somewhat to the right) could agree to do this cross party lines instead of having a progressive alliance and try to do what might politely be called a 'Macron'? I think the possibility has to be considered. There's a long summer coming and all options and their risks have to

be appraised. But I stress, this one really does not appeal: in the end, as Macron looks likely to do, this will only encourage populism rather than deal with the issues it raises and that would be deeply troubling.

Or to put it another way, I am struggling to see a way out of the mess in any way but one, which is the only other option that I can think of. And that is that there is a cross party agreement on one issue, which is to seek a repeal of Article 50 and that the UK then turn its attention to dealing with our own issues instead of trying to disrupt the EU and world stage instead. Yes we would be a humbled and diminished nation as a result. But better that than a broken one, which is where we are heading.