

Resignation

Published: January 13, 2026, 5:15 pm

It is hard not to feel resigned to our fate today. Like millions of others I am bored to my back teeth and beyond by Brexit. And I know that whatever happens in this supposedly momentous week no one will be happy, and a mess that guarantees we will be worse off than need have been the case is assured. In that situation resignation seems to be almost acceptable.

And I do not have a problem with resignation. At a micro level there are occasions when getting out is the right thing to do. I have left jobs and a marriage, and considered it the right thing to do at the time and in retrospect. The chance to move on has made the pain worthwhile.

The difficulty with Brexit is twofold. This is not a micro issue. It is a macro one. And if there was a chance to move on that still might not matter, but what that chance is, and who might supply it in a world that is finite and the possibilities are decidedly limited, and when none are readily apparent or on offer, is hard to tell. I could leave jobs and a marriage without knowing what was next, confident options were available. Brexit has no such expectation attached to it. Instead it feels like, as Cardiff City football manager Neil Warnock said at the weekend, a chance to say 'to hell with the rest of the world' without once considering the consequences. Or the responsibilities we have.

So my sense of resignation is inappropriate and I want to chastise myself for it and yet I still cannot. After all, I must have some responsibility for this.

Was I, and others like me, irresponsible for turning my back on party politics as a much younger man in pursuit of career and single issue campaigning?

Was I also, again as a conscious act, irresponsible to stand by and see neoliberalism tear our society to pieces and tut tut but not actually do more to prevent it at the time?

And could it be that the fact that we have such dire politicians, when the generation of which I am a part is overall able, through our collective fault for failing to value government, politics and the processes that drive it enough?

Am I actually, therefore, resigned to my own failure and accepting that I have a part in the collective act of harm that is, inevitably, befalling the country?

My guess is that I do accept that blame. I do think my generation failed the country. Coming of age, in effect, in the era of Thatcher, we let politics be crowded out by the lure of the private sector; the satisfaction of single issue campaigning and the comfort of not having to do the dirty work required to get elected to ensure political sanity prevailed. That is my fault. And, of course, that of many others as well. I am not in this single-handed.

So what to do about it? That is the only really interesting question.

First, we have no choice but recognise Brexit will blight us for a long time to come. Those who think Brexit is over by 29 March are deeply mistaken.

Second, we need to appreciate that whatever happens there will need to be a significant change in the UK. And that change requires rejection of the model that created the demand for Brexit. The perversity that Brexit has been run by the very interests that divided Britain and which would seek to keep it divided, is one of the paradoxes of Brexit that is particularly hard to accept.

Third, this means that whatever happens fundamental economic and social reform reflecting wholly different economic attitudes of inclusiveness and sustainability are required now. And this, I suggest is possible whatever happens. It is nonsense, in my opinion, to suggest otherwise.

Fourth, we have also to accept that this will require change to the UK political process, or at least that part of it run from London. Whether London is the capital of four, three or two nations in the future is not the issue. The fact is that its instruments of government have to change. So, first past the post has to go. And House of Lords reform is essential. As is state funding of political parties. And strict election regulation has to be enforced. Whilst politicians have to be appropriately funded. As do opposition parties to ensure the government is held to account.

And fifth, we need to change our attitude to politics. We get the politicians we deserve, overall. We got the leadership we have as a result. That's because politics was continually undermined and demeaned. That has to change.

It requires hope to think all that is possible.

I cannot be wholly resigned in that case. But I am pushing the boundaries of my optimism.