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WHY BREXIT WILL NOT HAPPEN

The EU is facing enormous challenges. After the refugee crisis, the current topic is Britain's decision to withdraw from the EU. But it will not come to that, says Dr. Klemens Joos.

Dr. Joos, we are looking back at an eventful year 2016. The US elected Donald Trump as their next president, while right-wing populist forces are gaining strength in Germany and other EU states. From the European perspective, the greatest shock of the year was certainly the Brexit vote. How do you view the European Union's current state?

If we look back to 1990 – the founding year of EUTOP – an entirely different image emerges. In an auspicious moment in history, German Unity was followed by the Maastricht Treaty and thus the reunification of Europe (1993). Europe, and with it the project of the European Union, was perceived as a place for the future. Currently, we do not feel much of that any more. If you follow the political discourse, you get the impression that European integration is about to implode. Yet, this apocalyptic vision underestimates the EU's massive foundation. That is why I am sure that Brexit will not happen.

Please explain further.

Since the Treaty of Lisbon, we have practically had the United States of Europe. Obviously, according to Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), every member state can request to withdraw from the EU. But in reality, the European states are so closely intertwined, both economically and politically – even pre-politically – that a withdrawal is de facto impossible at this point without severely harming the respective countries. The uncertainty alone, which reigns for many years during exit negotiations, will make sure of that.

The British appear to be serious though.

British Brexit Secretary David Davis is already talking about the most complicated negotiations of all time. And the negotiations have not even really started yet. This uncertainty over such a long period of time will cause massive harm to the British. In the end, no politician in London will be able or willing to account >

for such immense damage to his or her own country. The first indication for this was former Prime Minister David Cameron's conduct. Despite announcements to the contrary, he did not trigger Article 50 to withdraw from the EU the day after the vote. Instead, he resigned in order to leave his successor to deal with the mess.

How will the negotiations continue?

Regardless of the content of the negotiations, many steps are yet to be taken at the procedural level. So, there are still several points that may cause the exit to fail. Due to the Supreme Court's decision – which went against the government's wishes – the British Parliament had to give its consent to leave the EU. After the negotiations, there will probably be another vote, whether it be in the British Parliament or through another referendum. In the end, the remaining 27 member states will have to make a decision about Brexit as well.

So, Brexit will fail procedurally?

If you understand the complexity and the reality of the European Union, the institutions and the upcoming negotiations, this is the only possible conclusion. By the way, I am not alone with this assumption. At the beginning of the year, the director of the Cologne Institute of Economic Research said something very similar.

And what if, against all odds, there is a separation after all?

We cannot rule it out entirely, of course. Ever since Fukushima, we know that even events with extraordinarily bad odds have a chance of happening. In that case,

the remaining 27 member states will close ranks even more tightly. After all, the British have always hesitated when it comes to projects to consolidate the community, especially when it was about the common foreign and security policy.

At the end of 2016, your standard book "Convincing Political Stakeholders" was published in English as well. In what sense does it relate to Brexit?

A main claim of my book is that procedural competences in a complex system like the EU are more important than the content. In case of Brexit, the question is: can the political intention to withdraw from the EU, which represents a snapshot following a questionable campaign, be rectified through procedural aspects.

What would Brexit mean for the business model of EUTOP?

In complex systems, our services are more important than ever – regardless of whether there are 27 or 28 member states in the EU. Furthermore, EUTOP is becoming increasingly international. The focus of

our business will remain on the EU – that is our core competence. Yet, the importance of EU politics is growing worldwide. In addition to various approaches within the EU and the European Economic Area (EEA), we have very promising ones in China and Turkey as well. Therefore, I am sure that 2017 will be the most successful year in the history of EUTOP.

Dr. Joos, thank you very much for this interview!

PROFILE DR. KLEMENS JOOS

Born in 1969 in Nonnenhorn on Lake Constance (in the district of Lindau), married, father of three children. Studied Business Administration at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, obtained his **doctorate** on "Representing the Interests of German Companies vis-à-vis the Institutions of the European Union" in **1998**.

Founded **EUTOP International GmbH** in **1990** during his studies, after he had worked as a personal assistant to a Member of the European Parliament.

Since 2013, he has been visiting **lecturer** in the field of "Convincing Political Stakeholders" at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich.

Author of the standard book "Convincing Political Stakeholders".