

Brexit: Three modest proposals

After last Thursday's EU summit, which resulted in a double-barreled "flexextension" of the date for Brexit, all cards are on the table again. Insofar, it is worth noticing that the German journalist *Harald Martenstein*, in his weekly column for the Berlin-based "Tagesspiegel", has recently offered three innovative solutions for the Brexit dilemma:

The first one may be called the "one island, two countries" proposal: Great Britain would be split into two parts, one leaving the EU, the other remaining. All Britons would then be granted double citizenship and be free to make up their minds according to their preferences.

The second solution that the columnist proposes takes up the frequently raised demand for a second referendum that should overturn the first Brexit vote. Well, if there is going to be a second referendum, why not a third or even a fourth one? Thus, *Martenstein* suggests that, in the future, a referendum should be held every year on 2 January; for the remaining part of the year, the United Kingdom would then be either in or out of the EU.

Thirdly and finally, if all else fails, *Martenstein* argues that the UK might simply turn the tables and offer the other Member States the possibility of leaving the EU as well and joining the UK instead, which would then change its name to "Greatest Britain Ever".

Obviously, the proposals made by the columnist are meant as a satirical comment. Yet, there are some elements of reality contained in his mockery: who knows whether, in case of a hard Brexit, Scotland (or Northern Ireland) would stay a part of the UK or whether a new referendum on seceding from the UK - and re-joining the EU - would be organized? And already today, numerous Britons are applying for a double citizenship in order to keep a foothold in the EU. Who knows whether a second referendum on Brexit will take place and whether it will actually settle the matter once and for all? And wasn't the EU summit an attempt by the EU-27 to avoid the Brexit populist contagion from spreading to the continent via the impending EU parliamentary elections? In sum, the situation is increasingly reminiscent of a book title by *Paul Watzlawick*: hopeless, but not serious...