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Does Europe care about Brexit?

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You ask me whether we care about Brexit. The answer is very simple. Yes, we do care about Brexit. It feels like if a part of the family was about to leave. And not just for a while. This will be a decision for generations. The Brits cannot assume that when positive sentiments will be back they might join again. The train will not stop on this station any time soon.

But our duty as Europeans is to care not only about UK but also about the rest of Europe. Brexit would mean replacing a win win situation with a lose lose one. There is no obvious winner in this situation. EU will be smaller but UK will be also smaller. It will lose this part of sovereignty which has been provided by the EU. Part of the sovereignty you put as EU member into a common pool, gets bigger. EU is not a simple sum of twenty eight national sovereignties. We all get stronger sovereignty wise because the part of sovereignty we share comes on the top of national sovereignties.

There is this question coming back and forth in our debates about potential Brexit on the UK contribution to the European integration process. I cannot say that all UK has brought into the process of European integration has been negative. I would, however, take the risk of saying that the net impact has been positive.

There have been endless volumes of studies on the consequences of the Brexit for the British economy. It is the second largest EU economy, it is the most important global financial center, it is a major actor in EU trade. On all those accounts Brexit means a loss. And first of all huge and far reaching uncertainty. Markets had started getting nervous ahead of referendum. This can only get worse after potential Brexit decision is made by the Brits. But UK will also lose Europe as a platform for their global role. End of their political impact on Europe will reduce their global role. In short, UK will reduce its voice in the global world, it will not be as loud as it had been up to now.

Let us be clear, a painless Brexit is impossible

I do not believe that Brexit would launch further disengagement of other member states or set a cycle of disintegration across the Union. Actually, I believe it will be the contrary. It will produce a wave of pro reform mobilization. It will lead to speeding up reforms. It can bring back the idea of core Europe. I also think that what has been a positive role of UK will be picked up by others. Life hates vacuum, UK-less Europe will fill this post-UK gap.

One of my worries is that Europe has entered the referendum trap. There are issues in the parliamentary democracies that are not tailored for referendum type of decision making. We need an honest debate on this issue.