

The EU Referendum

An essay by Stan YEO

Why, you may well ask, am I writing this essay and putting it on our website, knowing full well that it is not the most appropriate place for such an article. One reason was to clarify my own thoughts on the referendum the other reason is I am more than little concerned by the quality of the debate so far. It has been narrow in its focus, littered by exaggerated claims and the deceitful pursuit of vested interest. In short, detached from life of the ordinary voter.

At heart I am very British and proud of my heritage. I am also a compassionate, pragmatically minded conservative with a social conscience so in the beginning I was open to persuasion by both sides on the EU referendum. Consequently I have spent many hours reading newspapers, listening to the radio / television and trawling the internet. For me the debate centres on the following issues.

1. Sovereignty
2. Security
3. Trade
4. The Euro
5. Immigration
6. Housing
7. The NHS
8. Education
9. Relationships

So far the debate in the audio media has centred around trade and the relationship with our EU partners. Discussion re sovereignty and the impact of uncontrolled immigration etc. has been stifled so I will attempt put forward my thoughts on the issues that have so far been sidestepped.

Sovereignty

I get upset when I read in the papers that a person who has committed a number of serious crimes in their country of origin cannot be denied entry into the UK. Some subsequently go on to engaging in crime in this country and avoid deportation, at the taxpayer's expense, on the grounds they are entitled to a family life. What about the victims of their crime?

Another issue is the number of rules and regulations that we have to adhere to that come down from the EU. Some argue the number of laws passed by the EU Parliament is less than 10% but this does not include the dictats and other regulations we have to adhere to. Include these and it is nearer 60%, some will argue 80%+.

Whilst we are not part of the Shenzhen Agreement we still do not have full control of our borders / coastline. Living in the South West the impact of this has been the decimating of our fishing industry and the plundering of our fish stocks by other member states such that there are now punitive restrictions on catches. This also applies to fleets operating in the North Sea. If we leave the EU we will be able to claim back our 12 mile limit and control our fish stocks.

The European Supreme Court is another thorn in our side re sovereignty. Appeals to the EU Supreme Court regularly overturn judgements made by the highest courts in the UK for the flimsiest of reasons. It is interesting to note that since the referendum debate started these controversial decisions are at a fraction of the normal rate! The UK is a very fair, compassionate, tolerant, democratic country that has no desire to mistreat anyone so it goes without saying that we would welcome our own Bill of Rights as proposed in the Queens Speech. We are one of the few countries that commit the UN recommendation of 0.7% of our GDP to foreign aid.

In joining the EU (Common Market) and signing away some of our sovereignty we kicked our commonwealth friends in the teeth. Causing them hardship as a result of the trading and immigration restrictions placed upon them by the EU. New Zealand lamb imports is one classic example as is the recruitment of skilled staff. Outside the EU we can renew these friendships on a more equitable basis.

Security

Our security in the UK centres around the strength and quality of our armed forces (we have the largest military force in the EU), the effectiveness of our security services (MI5 & MI6), our membership of NATO and our treaties with other like minded nations plus our special relationship with the US none of which are conditional on membership of the EU. We share intelligence information with the US, NATO and other EU countries. This will continue even if we leave as it is in the interest of all concerned. It is my belief that being a member of the EU with it's policy of embracing countries from former soviet union states is antagonistic towards Russia particularly if they then join NATO and is more a threat to our security than leaving the EU i.e. Russia annexing Crimea. Re: The cross border arrest warrant treaties. These will still continue particularly with regards to terrorist intelligence. It is in all our interests!

EU Trade

Our trade with the EU is very one sided. Depending on how the figures are analysed the EU sell nearly twice as much in goods and services to us as we sell to them. A lot of our exports to the rest of the world are exported via Rotterdam and other European ports and therefore counted as EU exports distorting the real figure. Our exports to the US account for almost 20% of our exports. EU exports are just over 40% and falling quarter on quarter. Common sense states that it is not in either party's interest to start a trade war by imposing tariffs on each others imports. If tariffs were imposed the UK taxpayer would be the net benefactor by several billions of pounds due to the imbalance mentioned above. This could be used to promote jobs and manufacturing at home in the UK to offset those lost by leaving the EU.

Yes there will be a period of confusion until the new rules and regulations come into effect but it will not be Armageddon. We were trading with the Europe long before we joined what was the Common Market. We even imported swordsmen from France to behead Anne Bolyn! Leaving the EU will give us a number of trading advantages. We will have more control over who we award contracts to or who buys strategic assets such as our utility companies or builds our warships for example. This does not mean we adopt a little England mentality but we take more control of our own destiny and look at the wider world after all the EU (510 million) accounts for less than 7% of world population whilst the Commonwealth (2.4 billion) represents a third!

The London financial centre is the strongest and held in the highest regard in the EU. Remaining in the EU will undermine this as Germany and France have long coveted London's financial business. There has been talk of a transaction tax and moving some operations to the continent.

A topic frequently mentioned in debates is the free movement of people within the EU and the student exchange scheme. This will continue. We had it in the sixties before the EU. The terms and conditions and title might change but it certainly will not be scrapped in its entirety. Likewise free medical treatment when abroad in the EU. My understanding is visitors are currently entitled to free emergency treatment for health problems that arise whilst away. Not necessarily for on going problems or repatriation if required. If we travel to the continent we always take out additional medical insurance to give us full protection.

The Euro

The Euro is a flawed currency. Initially it was a good idea and I was in favour of it but for it to work the merging economies must be economically compatible. To this end there were a number of economic conditions that had to be met (which initially we did not meet!) before a country could join. Unfortunately, when it came to countries like Greece these conditions were waived with disastrous and predictable results. Even though we were not part of the Euro

zone we were still expected to handover at least £500 million to bail the countries in trouble out. No doubt if we remain we will be expected to contribute should the need arise again (Greece is expected to need another bailout in September).

Immigration

I suspect this will be the most contentious part of this essay so first let me say that I am not racist or a bigot but a pragmatist. I accept and recognise that ALL countries need, indeed want a free flow of people and ideas. The problem is there needs to be controls. We need control over the numbers so that those who come can be properly integrated into our society. We must only take those with the skills we need and of course those with extenuating circumstances. We also need to be able to refuse entry to those with certain criminal convictions. Independent immigration analysis, taking ALL factors into account, suggest that for the year 2014/15 the net cost of migration to the taxpayer was an estimated **£13 billion pound** (Evening Standard 26/5/16). Not the £2 billion surplus claimed by the Government! Of the 280,000 (ONS) EU migrants 72,000 (25%) plus did not have a job when they arrived in the UK. The huge influx of foreign workers *has* lowered wages for unskilled and semi-skilled workers in the UK and added to UK youth unemployment. This leads to resentment and is not conducive to social cohesion and can result in civil disorder.

At the *last* count net migration last year was 330,000 (ONS). This does not include those who managed to enter the country illegally. To accommodate these numbers we need to build a city the size of Bristol (380,000) or Cardiff (310,000) every year. Build 27 secondary schools, 270 primary schools, 21 hospitals and 100,000 new houses (this now an EU directive) every year just to tread water without meeting the needs of those of us already resident in the UK! At the current rate our population is expected to grow by 4 million in the next 8 years. Needless to say this is having a major impact on all our lives.

There are five countries from the former Yugoslavia and Turkey waiting to join the EU. Some as early as 2020. Their average yearly wage of approximately £5,500 is only 20% of the UK minimum wage of just under £15,000 so it stands to reason that when they join, under current arrangements, large numbers are going to seek a more affluent life in the UK. This is not good for both the UK and the countries they are leaving. Mass migration within the EU is currently causing problems in donor countries. Instead of EU membership elevating countries it is slowly reducing them to third world status due devastating skills shortages. Besides, I believe it is morally wrong for us to denude countries, poorer than us, of their skilled talent because we have not trained our own youngsters to meet our needs.

The NHS

Another issue allied to immigration is the NHS. Despite NHS spending increasing year on year and the on-going efficiency drive the NHS is struggling to meet the demands placed on it. Outside of maternity care commitments this is not all attributable to immigration as we are living longer and drugs etc. are more expensive but increasing the number of eligible patients by 330,000 plus a year does not come without extra demand for its services! Added to this is the hundreds of millions of pounds spent treating foreign visitors from outside the EU.

Education

To educate the children of migrants as mentioned above we need to build 27 new secondary schools a year and 270 primary schools as previously mentioned. These schools are not being built at the rate required and parents are having difficulty in finding places at a school close to them. Those that cannot, spend part of their working day ferrying their children across town to school thus restricting the choice of jobs they can apply for. It does not stop there because teaching children with English as a second language is very demanding, requires a multitude of specialist language teachers, other additional resources not mention the impact on attainment levels in schools where English is not primarily the first language.

Summary

In writing this essay it was not my intention to offend or upset anyone. I reiterate I am not a racist, a bigot or anti immigration. Neither am I a politician or a member of a political party. As a member of society if you do not manage your affairs with a degree of pragmatism and take control of events as they occur then at some time in the future, life, outside its normal vagaries, will bite you on the bottom. The EU has lost its way. It has become an undemocratic, unaccountable gravy train for elite, has been, politicians with an out of control budget. There is a £20 billion overspend on last years budget. After the referendum the Government will be presented a £2 billion bill for our share. Also any vetoes we have are due to expire in four years time and all legislation will be determined by majority voting (27-1)!

I will not say the EU is all bad. It has done a lot of good but I am afraid it is past its sell by date. The UK is not alone in the EU saying that it needs to change. Even the EU president has said it needs to change and talks of re-implementing border controls. There are at least five other countries, that are net contributors to the EU budget, where polling has suggested 50% are in favour of having a referendum like the UK and want to renegotiate their terms.

A big play has been made on EU grants that farmers and development agencies etc. receive from the EU. Firstly it is our money that we are being given back and secondly it is the EU that decides on what and how it is spent. Strict criteria is applied and any deviation from this criteria results in funding being withdrawn. These subsidies will continue in some form even if we leave the EU. The CAP (Common Agriculture Policy) was designed to suit French farmers and not British farming methods.

The UK has the 5th largest economy in the world so it is silly to suggest that we cannot survive outside the EU. We did OK before we joined. Yes there is bound to be a period of uncertainty but the gloom and doom predicted before we left the ERM in 1993 did not happen. In fact, the opposite, almost 20 years of continuous growth.

A leave vote on the 23rd June does not necessarily mean we will leave the EU as Article 50 & 51 is only the start of the process. It also requires the other EU countries to decide if they want us to leave or not. If not, they are required to mutually agree on how to proceed with negotiations and offer new terms for staying in which could result in the government changing its mind and the UK remaining in the EU. If we leave, it will not be the end of the EU, it will just accelerate the changes that need to take place to plug the gap we leave behind. If we vote to remain then we will get bullied by other EU members (they already threaten retaliatory action) and be forced to go down the path of even closer political union. We will have played our trump card and nothing will have changed. A remain vote, as a democratic decision will be accepted by the leave campaigners, but the issue will not go away. The Brexiteers will not lie down and die. Nigel Farage and UKIP will continue to beat their drum and there will be even more blood letting in the Labour and Conservative parties so the sooner we take control of the situation and show leadership the sooner the better for both Europe and ourselves.

Thankyou for taking the time to read this essay. This is my personal appraisal of the situation. All the information contained in this essay was derived from sources on the internet. Please do your own research and vote on the 23rdJune.

All the best,
Stan Yeo

Personal Profile

Grew up in Kingsteignton. Went to local schools.
Served 23yrs in RAF as Aircraft Engineer
Engineer at AVX Paignton 7 1/2 yrs
Exeter University B Sc (Hons.)
Technology / IT Teacher 3yrs. Comprehensive School.
Designer / Manufacturer of R/C Model Aircraft

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