

Sharing my personal views on the EU Referendum with you

I spent 90% of my professional life on the Continent before retiring recently in England. I am the son of a CIE (Commander of the Indian Empire) father and a wartime MBE mother and was brought up to venerate all the attributes that make Great Britain great. So I believe my judgment is balanced in this Referendum, which is a historical decision being discussed against short-term criteria.

I feel very strongly that the UK enjoys the **best of both worlds** by remaining in the EU, a phenomenal long-term **SUCCESS**, on its own exceptional negotiated **opt-out terms**: budget rebate, non Eurozone, non Schengen open border group and, significantly, **opt out from ever closer union**. The rest of the EU cannot be expected to understand that, in spite of having conceded these exceptions to the UK, the latter should slam the door in its face: expect natural resentment and negotiating intransigence resulting in economic hardship for the UK. The EU's weaknesses need to be remedied by a much stronger British participation rather than accentuated by our leaving.

The success of the EU has been distorted in the UK by eurosceptic media, often controlled by foreigners with a vested anti EU agenda (Rupert Murdoch and the successive Canadian owners of The Daily Telegraph). The British public has been systematically disinformed for decades about the benefits of the EU, such as its role in the redevelopment of depressed areas in the UK – The Clyde, the NE of England, Northern Ireland and Wales – funding for education and research (1.4 billion pa at the last count), environmental protection, participation in the European Space Agency etc

Security Success: we have benefited from a **70 year long Peace Dividend** among the members of the EU, **unprecedented in Europe**. The EU was fostered after WWII, notably by Jean Monnet, not as many believe with the objective of creating a large trading area, but to prevent the repetition of wars between the nation states of Europe by integrating their economies. This idea was first implemented by the Coal and Steel Community in 1951. Recent wars outside its borders, such as the war in ex-Yugoslavia (which NATO did not prevent, but duly fought), demonstrate that peace, even in Europe, cannot be taken for granted: unwinding the EU increases the risks of war for future generations. This is fundamental. Visit the cemeteries of the Somme and Srebrenica and meditate about the future security of our children in or out of the EU.

Economic Success: the EU was the stepping stone for the UK to turn around its basket case economy of the seventies characterised by record business closures, unemployment, strikes, electricity cuts, a marginal income tax of 99p in the £, and violence. The foreign direct investment in this country is not only due to the British spirit of enterprise and liberal climate, but primarily to its access to the n° 1 free trade market in the world without the costly obstacles of regulatory constraints and tariffs. Check the rebirth of the UK motor industry through foreign investment in depressed regions. Check the presence of foreign banks in the City. Do we really want to put those hard gained strengths and so many jobs at risk? The cost will be many, many times the UK's contribution to the EU budget, which is less than 1% of the UK's Gross National Income (0.7%). Are we really naive enough to believe that the UK's economic bargaining power (the EU economy is 5 times bigger than the UK's) is sufficient to overcome the barriers, which the spurned EU will put up, in part as a deterrent to other countries which might be tempted to leave, in part to attract those very investments and jobs, which flow to the UK from non EU countries? For the gain of potential bilateral trade agreements in 5 to 10 years' time with countries, such as the USA, which are already in advanced negotiations with the EU? Or protectionist India? Or the 50 + countries with existing EU trade agreements, with which the UK will have to renegotiate bi-lateral agreements...?

Immigration and Free Movement Success: the economic success of the UK depends on immigrant workers, currently coming from the EU, who mostly share our European culture, ethnic and Christian backgrounds. Indeed EU workers put in more than they take out. David Cameron has ensured that EU immigrants cannot free ride on our social benefits with a 4 year residency requirement. This contrasts with past immigration from non EU countries, encouraged by the British government (not the EU!), which created so many poorly integrated communities inside the UK, from which stems extremist muslim violence, such as the London Transport bombings. Up to 2 million Brits successfully work and live in Europe, which is our geographical and cultural homeland. If our economy is mismanaged, as it was in the seventies, our children or grandchildren may be thankful to move freely to work on the Continent. Sadly, this Referendum of monumental long-term significance for the UK was called for the wrong short-term reason - to pacify Tory Party eurosceptics and stem the feared exodus of extremists to UKIP, which has gained voters thanks to a xenophobic and isolationist ideology. The real scare mongering is the cynical amalgamation of the free movement of European nationals with the surge of migrants from the Middle Eastern and other tragically deprived countries, who do not have legal access to the UK through the EU. Voting to leave is in effect a vote in favour of the extremist and nationalist movement, which, inspired by UKIP, is growing in this country as elsewhere in Europe (NB: the British media, in an incredibly biased manner, cite rising extremism in Austria, France and the Netherlands, but never mention the UK!).

Success in the Preservation of our Sovereignty: all the major decisions affecting the UK (Treaty of Lisbon, Social Chapter...) have been validated by successive British governments democratically elected by the British people. The Council of Ministers, including our democratically elected ministers, takes all major decisions, which are reached by consensus in almost all cases. And the UK retains its right of veto. For instance on the accession of new countries to the EU. The EU offers the UK a platform to project its influence worldwide by belonging to the n°1 free trade area in the world. Shared sovereignty we accept in NATO (including British military personnel being commanded by foreign officers) and other international organisations, why not in the EU? The probability, if we leave the EU, is that we will suffer a much greater loss of sovereignty by having rules imposed upon us, which we have not participated in shaping and will be unable to change going forward, notably in order to do business with the EU – paradoxically the free flow of EU citizens and a contribution to the EU budget (without any benefit from the latter)...! And our loss of status and bargaining power will be compounded by the potential breakup of the Union and a risk of resumed troubles in Northern Ireland, where the absence of border is very much a part of the peace process. Finally, the UK retains its right to leave the EU now and at any time in the future!

Future Success of and in the EU: it is predicated on proactive engagement by the British people and reform, both of which have been in short supply in recent years, through lack of government leadership, fearfulness of trading on eurosceptic toes, and lack of belief in Team Europe – for instance by raising the numbers of British participants in European institutions, instead of letting them dwindle. Reforms are needed to ensure the principle of subsidiarity, included in the Lisbon Treaty at the insistence of Britain, is implemented and not largely ignored as it is today. Reforms are needed to tackle the difficult challenge of making the EU democratic process more inclusive at grassroots level, which is a problem keenly felt all over Europe. Immigration has to have curbs on relative numbers, which other countries in the EU are also in favour of (the way of achieving this, is not by blackmail: either I get what I want or get lost!). Running away from these problems at the risk of unknown economic hardship and, paradoxically, less sovereignty, is not the right approach.

The Right Approach to the EU is commitment, enthusiasm, participation and belief in sharing our future with our neighbours of common cultural heritage and values, to better include the rest of the world.

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19th June, 2016.
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