Deconstructing the case for staying in the EU

We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow. (Lord Palmerston)

Responding to arguments for staying IN the European Union in the forthcoming referendum will be difficult given the 'YES' campaign's overwhelming 'firepower'. It is likely that any direct rebuttal of YES claims, however weak and/or disingenuous these IN claims are, will go largely unheard; shut down immediately by much of the media or drowned out by noisy, on-message repetitions from YES supporters. Can anything be done by the OUT of the EU (NO) campaign to effectively expose and disabuse the weaknesses, inconsistencies, contradictions or duplicity of the YES case?

Any attempts to examine YES arguments need to include honest, precise, perceptive analysis and logical conclusions. These efforts should also present a better alternative and realistic implementation plan, and if possible, use the firepower of the YES campaign to validate this dissection. Obviously, just referring to a different politician, expert, news report or study etc. is inviting the YES campaign to respond in kind with their own of these and pile on more of the same using their vastly superior resources. Any examination that stands a chance of helping the electorate reach an informed judgement and further democracy needs to hit the YES arguments where they have difficulty arguing back directly, and if they, do it undermines their overall case.

Expose the missing elements – The YES campaign is likely to present arguments with important elements missing; they are being selective and the items missing are needed to complete the 'Big Picture'. So, for example, the superficial sound-bite

‘at the heart of Europe’ (and development of this theme) is missing clarity as to what it actually means, why it is important and how best to achieve it compared with alternatives. Also claims that the EU has maintained peace in Europe are unlikely to explain how the EU’s bureaucracy deterred Soviet aggression or a prevented militaristic dictatorship in Germany.

‘Every silver lining has a cloud’ could also potentially be true. So, for example, the full story and downside may be missing as part of manipulating and deceiving the electorate, or through following secret agendas. The ultimate truth is admitted only as actions on the ground become visible and irreversible.

Find, understand and challenge underlying paradigms – A paradigm or conceptual framework, in this context, is the collection of ideology, aspirations, knowledge and assumptions that are present and influence a relevant analysis, action, opinion, policy and priorities, etc.. (The terms ‘paradigm’ and ‘paradigm shift’ were used by Thomas Kuhn in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, to explain how dramatic changes occur in science.) Highly influential paradigms relate to this country, the EU and the future.

One major UK focused paradigm predicating the YES case can be characterised by the decline, humiliation and failure of our country as a sovereign and trading nation – consequently we need membership of the EU whatever its shortcomings in order to stop or delay our national and economic decline, accept whatever humiliation the EU inflicts on us, and recognise we’d be failures (at almost everything) without subservience to the ‘benign’ EU. Unfortunately this paradigm is self-fulfilling when the Establishment manages this country in accordance with it, which is what they are actively doing.

One major EU focused paradigm predicating the YES case can be characterised by the More EU the Better (perhaps with some

minor fine-tuning or renegotiation). Consequently, acceptable, or even desirable, are: more EU integration and homogenisation; EU expansion into different areas of centralised top-down control; loss of individuality and freedom; omission of democratic accountability and transparency; increase of injustice and redistribution of jobs/people; high levels of taxation, corruption and waste; implementing destructive EU favoured ideologies without compassion.

A YES campaign's paradigm of the future is very much steady state – the future needs the slow moving, orthodox, grandiose and regimented solutions of the past (such as the EU) to fix its problems or create opportunities. Consequently, acceptable are fixing the wrong problems or ones that no longer exist; losing competitiveness, missing fast moving opportunities and being left behind; discouraging spontaneous, informal, voluntary initiatives and collaborations (outside official channels); creating unintended or unwanted societal and economic side effects.

There are major problems in the EU, not least political, economic and demographic. It is difficult to see how being a part of this grandiose and costly experiment to create a European Superstate is in our interests. Rudyard Kipling in *The Elephant's Child* has given us the succinct questions to deconstruct the YES/IN campaign:

I keep six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.

Photo by Horia Varlan