



2010 no.3 £3.00 (free to members)

# INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



**1 DOWN, 2,202 TO GO**

Aung San Suu Kyi was released (again) on 13th November, but Liberals everywhere must keep up the pressure on Burma

## EVENTS

2010

6th December LIBG Forum – Sudan Becky Tinsley,  
Waging Peace. 7.00pm NLC

2011

15th February Diplomatic Reception. 6.30 – 9.00pm NLC

4th-5th March Scottish Liberal Democrats Conference, Perth.  
LIBG

Scotland fringe meeting – Saturday, March 5th  
at 5pm in the Royal George Hotel - a tribute  
to Ronnie Fraser

11th -13th Liberal Democrats Spring Conference, Sheffield  
March

5th May Referendum on Alternative Vote  
& local elections, UK

17th -19th June LI Congress, Manila.

23rd June Tim Garden Memorial Lecture – Peter  
Hennessey. 6.00 – 8.00pm Chatham House.

17th – 21st Liberal Democrats Autumn Conference,  
September Brighton

For bookings & other information please contact the Treasurer  
below.

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Underground: Embankment

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## CONTENTS

Letter from the Chairman	3
Aung Sun Suu Kyi Freed	4
Moldova Free and fair	5
Sudan – the west must not screw up (again)	7
Nick Clegg's Speech at Liverpool; the International bits	8
Lib Dem Friends of Palestine on the Mersey	10
Democracy and Human Rights in the Developing World -	
LIBG conference fringe	
Pakistan Floods	11
Standing room only as Clegg and Chazan address Friends of	
Israel Fringe	
LI Cape Town executive meeting report	12
African Liberal Network AGM – CAPE TOWN	13
Cameron bottles out on Tibet	
review The Politics of ELECTORAL REFORM,	14
British author jailed in Singapore for defamation	
REVIEW The political thought of the Liberals and Liberal	
Democrats since 1945,	
Human Rights under threat in North Caucasus	16
ALDE reacts on tensions between two Koreas	
News from Scotland	
Violence Marks Serbia's Gay Pride Parade	

# Looking back and looking forward.

**T**here was a good LIBG showing at Federal Conference in Liverpool. Our stall, which was heroically manned by Eileen Smith (my mother) throughout, highlighted key international issues on the Pakistan floods, which was the subject of an Emergency Motion (see below), and, Burma, which will be the topic of a Forum in the New Year. Several people joined LIBG at Conference and I look forward to welcoming them to events and in some cases to working with newcomers to hold events outside of London. Thanks go to Eileen and to Wendy Kyrle-Pope for designing the stall.

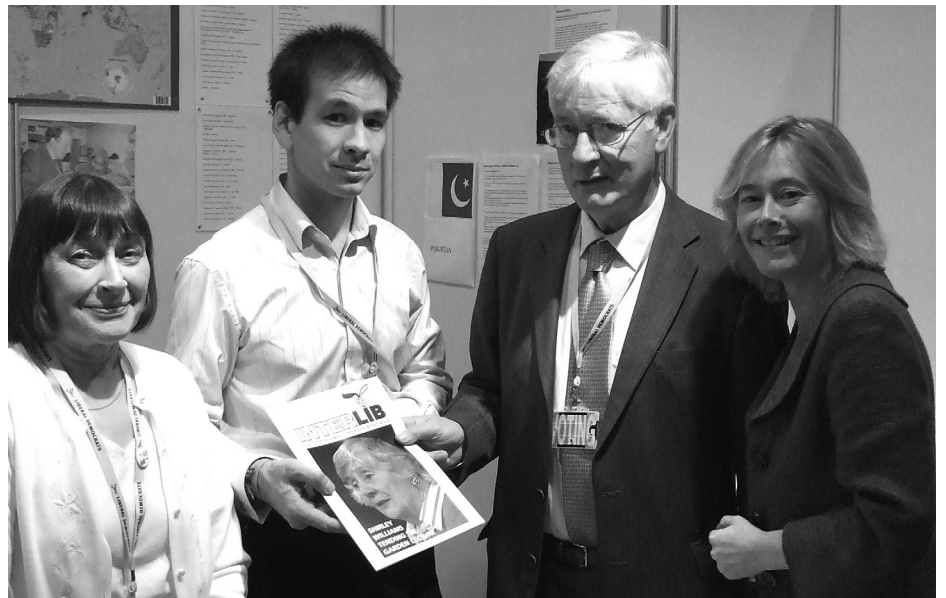
Lord Alderdice as immediate past President of Liberal International and Gordon Lishman, Chair of the LI Human Rights Committee spoke Democracy and Human Rights at the LIBG fringe (see elsewhere in this edition for more details) and Jeremy Browne gave an off-the-record briefing to a joint meeting with the

Parliamentary Candidates' Association and the Liberal Democrat European Group.

We very much up to follow up this sort of collaborative event with a series of joint meetings in 2011. In particular, Martin Jacques has agreed to talk at a joint meeting with Chinese Lib Dems in the spring and we are working with the Lib Dem Friends of India to hold a meeting on the Commonwealth. If anyone has further suggestions either for partner groups or for particular themes that we might put on the agenda for future events, please get in touch (email: [chair@libg.co.uk](mailto:chair@libg.co.uk)). Meanwhile we will be holding our traditional Diplomats' Reception a little earlier than normal, on Tuesday 15th February 2011; Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg will be in attendance. Please don't forget to purchase your tickets for this event.

With all good wishes for Christmas; I look forward to seeing many of you in the New Year.

*Julie Smith*



Liberal Democrat Conference

Julie Smith summing up the emergency motion on Pakistan

LI Fringe Stall

Chinese Lib Dem anniversary dinner

Gordon Lishman and John Alderdice speaking at fringe meeting.





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# AUNG SAN SUU KYI FREED, BUT THE FIGHT GOES ON

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**13**th November 2010 is a day to remember as the day that the Burmese government released Aung San Suu Kyi. This is not the first, but the third time that Aung San Suu Kyi has been released by the Burmese dictatorship and Liberals worldwide must sadly not rest, as it may not be the last. Neither is Aung San Suu Kyi's release necessarily the beginning of the end of the suffering of the Burmese people. According to the Burma Campaign UK there are 2,202 political prisoners in detention in Burma.

The Burmese army continues to harass and attack civilians living in the Karen state while calling for armed ethnic groups to extend their ceasefire and fall under the command of the Burmese army, without offering any of the rights these groups are seeking. Needless to say these offers have been declined and have led to further suffering with the Burmese army shelling a Karen village on Saturday 27th November this year. More than 200 villagers had to run for their lives into safety in Thailand when the Burmese Army opened fire into Palu village without any warning ii. Until the rights of minority ethnic groups within Burma can be secured the suffering of refugees on the Thai-Burmese border and Internally displaced people will continue.

The recent faux-elections in Burma won by the pro-military, Union Solidarity and Development Party, were an election in which no international election monitors were permitted. The BBC suggests that over 1.5 million people were disenfranchised because they live in areas considered too dangerous for the elections to take place. The National League for Democracy declined to take part due laws preventing Aung San Suu Kyi from participating. As a result the National League for Democracy has been forced to disband. It is not yet clear how free Aung San Suu Kyi will be to continue her political activities following her release, but the disbanding of the party she leads is likely to prove a source of some difficulties ahead.

Nick Clegg speaking at the EU-Asia summit in October, ahead of the elections made it clear that he considered the political situation in Burma a complete disgrace, with the international community holding out little hope for a democratic process from the elections in Burma. He further called for all political prisoners in Burma to be released, making it clear that until democracy is secured for the Burmese people we must not let up.

There is action we can all take to further support Aung San Suu Kyi, from ensuring that the Liberal Democrats in government continue to campaign for Burma, as Nick Clegg has done; to writing to our MPs and Councillors to ensure that Burma and human rights more generally are spoken up for by our representatives in office.

In 2008 as part of a campaign to support the people of Zimbabwe the Liberal Democrat group within Woking Borough Council managed to gain sufficient cross party support to pass a motion calling for the council to actively support and promote human rights. Part of this motion called on the Council to write to the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government requesting enablement through statutory instrument to permit a preference for doing business with companies that have no involve-



ment with the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe. While these letters in themselves did not achieve the legislative changes that were desired, the process was a useful tool for the future. In 2009 when the international campaign '64 for Suu' called on people to leave messages of support for Aung San Suu Kyi on her 64th birthday. The Liberal Democrat group in Woking Borough Council were able to use the human rights clause in the previous motion to successfully call for the Woking standard to be lowered to half-mast to promote this campaign, action that attracted local media attention, further promoting the cause of Burma, if not causing a minor political storm within the Conservative group with a disgruntled Conservative councillor objecting to the flag being lowered.

One way in which I hope that Liberals will continue to support human rights is by campaign to allow local councils to make decisions not only on financial best value, but also to consider ethical and environmental dimensions when making procurement decisions, as it is through powerful financial grass roots pressure that we can really make our views felt in this interconnected globalised world.

*Olly Wells is a councillor in Woking & campaigns on Burma*  
i Burma Campaign UK (2010)  
ii Burma Campaign UK (2010)

# Moldova Free and fair (Early Parliamentary Elections, 28 November 2010).

There were free and fair elections in this former Soviet Union state but the political parties need to work together to deliver improvements in standards of living for ordinary people. This means the Communists (the largest party) working with the majority coalition of parties called Liberal or Liberal Democrat. The former will have to accept change and diversity, the latter have to accept that free market economics have to be tamed to assist the poorest, that corruption is visibly cracked down on, and that cooperation with Russia, CIS and the EU is necessary. In particular young people may believe that joining the EU will be a panacea but as in the Balkans this will not quickly or without pain solve people's problems. The political programmes of all the main parties, and the great enthusiastic diversity of smaller ones, were not on paper hugely different. Most seem to have the good sense, despite varying nationalist rhetoric, to realise that Moldova (at times the Romanian province of Bessarabia; at times a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire, at times part of Russia, sometimes a principality) is part of Europe but needs a good relationship with the Ukraine and Russia. The EU should realise this too and avoid insensitive actions.

'Moldovan parliamentary elections met most international standards' the OSCE and Council of Europe said in their joint statement with the European Parliament. There were some controversies. "[T]he introduction of a new mandate allocation system – shortly before the elections and without public consultations – was problematic." This allocated the votes of parties that did not meet the 4% threshold to all parties who did equally rather than in proportion to the votes and potentially denied the largest party, the Communists, extra seats.

The key problem was highlighted that this was the third set of Parliamentary elections in two years. "When elections are held every year, it is politics in crisis and not politics as usual" said Monica Macovei, Head of the delegation of the European Parliament. Two consecutive parliaments (elected in April and July

2009) were unable to elect the president of the republic (requiring 61 of 101 MPs in favour) and a subsequent referendum in September 2010 that would have allowed for direct presidential elections failed due to low turnout. The Communists lost 10% of their vote and 18 seats over three elections (starting with 49.5%), mostly to a breakaway Democratic Party of Moldova. The Liberal Democrat Party gained 17% and 17 seats (ending with 29%), largely at the expense of smaller parties, and the Liberal Party dipped slightly to 10%. The Liberal International observer member, Aliantă

Moldova Noastră (Alliance Our Moldova, apparently a social liberal party) fell from 10% and 11 seats at first to not cross the threshold. They gained only 2% but presumably voters switched to the biggest of the Liberal parties. None of the three parties called liberal and that are classified as such (in OSCE's informal assessment) are LI members.

One local police officer said he lived in Bessarabia but most people said they spoke Romanian and lived in Moldova (they also spoke Russian mostly) or said they were

Russian. Voting did not take place on the territory under the de facto control of the Transnistrian authorities. The parties did split in their policies towards Transnistria (the d is silent) on political and national grounds, but I noticed local people happily drinking the fine local brandy from Transnistria, Kvint, that said it was made in Moldova. No sectarianism in brandy sales it seemed – it reminded me of Bushmills the finest of Irish whiskeys made in the most

Loyalist of picture postcard towns. (Yes Kvint really was good, a French colleague, Emmanuelle, introduced me to it. The wines were mostly just as good as everyone said).

I was an observer with the British contingent of the OSCE mission recruited for the Foreign Office by SOLACE Enterprises. The British team were led by David Kidger and British long term observers (LTOs) deployed were Paul Wesson and Andy McEntee. The British Ambassador, Keith Shannon, and staff took a close interest in the election and observation mission. Among the weighty





history and British sporting books he had "Playing the Moldovans at Tennis" on his shelf of course.

As well as David Kidger's, the OSCE Short-Term Observer Guide and the briefings from the Foreign Office, British Long Term Observers and the Embassy I had a little background information. This was from the Lonely Planet Romania guide (which previously covered Moldova in a chapter) and the US Peace Corps guide (both found electronically for me by Nicholas Willmott, bookdealer of Cardiff, and father-in-law). If anything I was surprised when conditions in some places (basically outside of town centres) were as basic as described in the Peace Corps guide. The Lonely Planet accurately highlighted the contrasts, and great disparity in the capital, but - probably being written by seasoned travellers - did not clearly state how basic conditions were. The conditions were probably overall somewhat better in Communist

times than now, certainly outside of the cities. Street lights used to work then and pavements and roads may have been repaired systematically. The Moldovans of course are much better prepared to cope with bad weather but the roads were the most terrifying I have ever travelled on. The main highways were fine in construction in most stretches but not for quality of driving. The other roads were not fine in any way. There was more mud than I have ever seen. In the country about one third of the traffic were horse drawn carts that had no kind of lights or reflectors at all.

The elections were free and fair and met most of the requirements of international standards. They were probably better than here! Certainly more modern (stamps not pencils) and high tech (UV ink), as I had seen in Macedonia, and many parts of the process more efficient. Quality of voter lists and counting were the exceptions; the former probably about as bad as in England. There were 2,037 polling stations compared with the 40,000 in GB (Moldova is about the size of Wales). The British Electoral Commission found problems at 27 polling stations across 16 constituencies in our May General Election. That is problems in 2.5% of constituencies but mostly important marginal seats. Their assessment of Returning Officers meeting competency standards at approximately 94 - 98% is similar to the positive reports on 98% of polling stations observed in Moldova, with some problems at up to 10% of them. The main problem must have been due to a single country constituency necessitating a 1 metre long ballot paper and making it very difficult for independents or regional based parties to get elected. My team (partner Gregor, a German lecturer for DAAD in Romania) and most OSCE teams met domestic observers in nearly every polling station. We were impressed by the bright young observers from PROMO-Lex, and also by the enthusiastic election



education campaign that we saw going on at one night club in the western city of Ungheni. I have never seen young people in a nightclub here promoting voter participation (though did before the 2001 General Election commander heartthrob singer Matt McManaman of pop group the Dead 60s to give out Lib Dem student leaflets in Liverpool's Zanzibar Club).

I remembered the news accusations from April 2009 of Communist vote rigging v Romanian agitation, and student protesters in Chisinau threatening an Orange Revolution. By that time the Orange revolution had long gone sour and with Thai and other apparent tit for tat permanent peaceful revolutions I'd begun to think that maybe Conrad Russell was right and direct action could descend to 'my mob is bigger than your mob'. In 2010 there was no sign of any trouble or agitation. However another parallel with Britain was obviously apparent as student protests in England unheard of for

twenty years had broken out across the country. Likewise the media, some in Government and the usual suspects talked up the trouble and down the huge scale of the peaceful protests. British LTO Andy McEntee had observed the protests in Moldova 18 months before. There the Parliament was burnt down, not just a few windows smashed in the Governing Party HQ. Overall though the protests had been very good natured, there was no apparent organisation, and the police reaction was surprisingly calm and limited as the exuberant students' action escalated. In London it appears that the Metropolitan Police quite reasonably expected no trouble at a student demonstration - I'd seen none at many attended in 18 years. Maybe in Moldova there was some conspiracy but it was a very polite one.

Now the country's politicians must work together, and young and old must work together, to ensure they are not pawns in anyone's game.

*Kiron Reid is a lecturer in law at the University of Liverpool and was on his third OSCE election observation mission with SOLACE on behalf of the Foreign Office.*

# Sudan – the west must not screw up (again)

Rebecca Tinsley



Brian Steidle

On January 9th 2011 a referendum will determine if Sudan becomes two countries. For the people of South Sudan, it is an historic chance to break free of the ethnic Arab groups, based in Khartoum, that have brutally oppressed them for centuries.

For the marginalised western region of Darfur, however, the outlook is less encouraging: the international community is in the process of sacrificing Darfur to appease the totalitarian Khartoum regime. The recent behaviour of 'the West,' for want of a better term, tells us as much about our attention deficit disorder as it does about Africa's largest nation.

But first, a little background: since a coup brought him to power in 1989, Field Marshall Omar Bashir has manipulated and armed poor Arab nomads to dispose of those Sudanese who disagree with his Islamist ideology. Bashir, who sheltered Osama bin Laden during the 1990's, is still using proxies to terrorise the mainly ethnically African people of South Sudan and Darfur, causing the death of more than two million people and the displacement of many more.

The international community became engaged in Sudan's misery when the Christians who backed George W Bush demanded action to help their co-religionists in South Sudan. The same activists pressed Washington to describe the ethnic cleansing in Darfur as genocide. Given that Khartoum's Arab proxies have destroyed 90% of its black African villages since 2003, genocide is an accurate description.

The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, brokered by Norway, the US and the UK, delivered a cease-fire after decades of war, and the promise of self-determination to the long-suffering South Sudanese. Fatefully, Darfur and Sudan's other impoverished regions were not included in the deal because diplomats feared it would delay an already tedious saga. This was a miscalculation: the Sudanese military machine was in a weakened state, and the West had enormous leverage over Khartoum, if they had chosen to use it.

Under the Bush administration, human rights advocates succeeded in linking the state-sponsored violence in Darfur to the regime's pattern of behaviour in South Sudan. However, in the last twelve months Darfur has been 'de-coupled' from the South. The Obama administration's envoy, Scott Gration, insists the war in Darfur is over, despite Sudanese Armed Forces' continuing aerial bombardment of villages as

recently as November 26th. What America once called genocide is now euphemistically known as 'events.'

Richard Williamson, a former US special envoy, recently revealed that for the past two years official US government reports on conditions in Darfur have been 'buried' to save embarrassing President Bashir. The UN in Sudan submits its press releases to Khartoum, fearful of offending the architects of the genocide, and UN agencies no longer publish their assessment of humanitarian conditions in the region for the same reason. The joint UN and African Union peacekeepers ask the regime's permission to investigate incidents, which they are usually forbidden to do, in direct contravention of Sudan's obligations under numerous UN resolutions.

Amnesty International reports that the Sudanese security services have recently arrested dozens of journalists and human rights activists, and closed down independent media and civil society. Local chiefs in Darfur's camps, and staff at humanitarian agencies, are too terrified to talk about what they witness daily. On a recent visit to Darfur, UN Security Council representatives saw fifteen Russian attack jets and other bombers at an airfield, in open breach of UNSC resolutions.

As a result of Obama's de-coupling policy, Sudan now flaunts its contempt for the international conventions and peace agreements it has signed. Khartoum has faced no consequences for its failure to abide by its commitments, including those under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. In this way the international community has consistently signalled its lack of seriousness about 'events' in Sudan.

What can explain this policy? It seems that diplomats are so keen to get Sudan out of its 'in-basket' that they allow Khartoum to behave with impunity, just so long as the January 2011 referendum goes ahead. But if we believe we can tick the box on Sudan once the votes are counted, we have failed to understand Bashir's regime.

At the core of the international community's relations with Sudan are 490,000 barrels of oil a day, of which China takes 80% of production. Oil is driving an economic boom that benefits only the Khartoum area. In a highly centralised and corrupt state, the regions remain shockingly poor and undeveloped: a fifteen-year-old girl in South Sudan is statistically more likely to die in childbirth than she is to complete primary school.



France, India and Malaysia also have oil interests in Sudan; China and Russia sell arms to Sudan, and are keen not to set a precedent for breaching state sovereignty in light of their behaviour in Tibet and Chechnya.

Incredibly, the US and the UK believe Bashir and his Islamist colleagues are on their side in the war on terror, even though the regime boasts that its best friends are Ahmadinejad, Hamas and Hezbollah. That anyone in the CIA or MI6 believes that Khartoum will genuinely spy on and betray their ideological brothers and fellow Arabs in terrorist cells in nearby Somalia and Yemen should prompt American and British taxpayers to revolt.

Sudan-watchers agree that if the forthcoming Southern referendum is free and fair, it will produce a massive majority in favour of independence. But 80% of Sudan's oils lie beneath what will be the new South Sudan. Southern political, civil society and religious leaders interviewed by Waging Peace in November are convinced Khartoum will not surrender these revenues without a fight, which is why thousands of Southerners are already fleeing to neighbouring countries.

Due to the international community's inattention to detail, little has been done to prepare for the January poll. As of late November, there is still no agreement on the exact border between north and south, how oil revenues will be shared, what rights citizens will have, and who, in the volatile and oil-rich area of Abyei, can vote.

Inexplicably, diplomats also allowed Khartoum to impose a 60% turnout quorum on the referendum, making it easy for Bashir's regime to sabotage the poll by intimidating voters, which it is, predictably, doing.

Khartoum officials have warned the millions of Southerners who have fled to the North over the years to avoid the war that if they vote for independence, they will lose any rights and may face public violence. Consequently, Southerners living in the North are too terrified to register to vote in the north. Many of them have been there for twenty years, and the prospect of losing their homes and employment to move to a refugee camp and no job in the South is unappealing. At the same time they fear that if the South secedes there will be popular anger towards them among Northerners. Black Africans living in Khartoum already face open racism on a daily basis from Arabs who consider themselves superior and who habitually call black Africans 'abid' (slave) to their faces.

The Sudanese Armed Forces have twice bombed voter registration centres in the South in November, making it clear that they can disrupt polling if they wish, and making it more difficult to reach the turnout quorum. Turnout is already an issue in a region the size of



France with only 38 kilometres of paved road, and almost no public transportation.

There are also reports of an armed build up along what will be the border, stoking Southerners' fears. In addition, the regime is arming Arab nomad groups who are demanding citizenship rights in the oil rich Abyei region on the border. Southern leaders interviewed by Waging Peace believe that if Khartoum can find a reason to dismiss the referendum on technical grounds, it can then occupy the oil-producing areas.

Many fear that Bashir is deliberately creating a situation in which the South must declare unilateral independence, thereby giving Khartoum a pretext to take possession of the oil fields. Bashir's team have clearly made a careful study of how Slobodan Milosevic ran rings around European Union negotiators: they have reopened debate on aspects of the peace agreement, wearing down all those involved in negotiations, and putting procedural obstacles in the way of a peaceful referendum. In this way they are demanding and getting concessions, such as a higher percentage of oil revenues.

Like Milosevic, Bashir senses and exploits the international community's desperation to be done with his nation's serial problems. Sadly the international community has played along, appeasing the architect of the genocide, just as they did in Bosnia, mistakenly believing he is their partner in the search for peace.

There is still time to find some diplomatic backbone and hold Khartoum to its commitments. Bashir wants Sudan removed from the US's list of state sponsors of terror; he needs IMF and World Bank help with Sudan's £35 billion debt; he wants an end to economic sanctions, and the ICC indictment restricts his ability to go on shopping trips to Paris or to hobnob with fellow world leaders (both of which matter greatly to the Field Marshall).

But concessions should only be given when previous promises under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement have been fulfilled. Unwisely, Washington has already said it will take Sudan off its terror-sponsoring list. This misstep is part of a pattern of wasted leverage points.

As Amir Osman from the campaign group Save Darfur points out, "We could lose our leverage over Sudan after January, so now is the moment to be pushing for human rights, democracy and free speech."

According to Osman, the chance to negotiate a genuine political settlement in Darfur also depends on the West using its influence now. "Rebel leaders won't sign peace deals when they see what's become of the fledgling opposition groups in Khartoum."

Louise Roland-Gosselin of Waging Peace, also cautions against embracing the new North Sudan as a trading partner, not least because of growing internal insecurity.

"Many brave Sudanese are literally risking their lives to create a pluralist society. But while the international community preaches about human rights, moderate Islam and democracy, we decline to use our leverage for positive change."

Roland-Gosselin warns the West risks 'blowback' of the type encountered in Afghanistan in the 1980s, when America backed the anti-Soviet forces that went on to become Al-Qaeda.

"Sudan's version of political Islam despises free speech, independent thought, Jews, women, gays and, most of all, mainstream, moderate Islam. But evidently we will work with Islamists if they restrict themselves to killing their own people, rather than ours."

*Rebecca Tinsley visited Darfur in 2004 at the height of the violence. She founded the human rights group Waging Peace to pressure UK and EU decision-makers on Sudan. A Waging Peace team was most recently in South Sudan in November 2010.*



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# NICK CLEGG'S SPEECH AT LIVERPOOL

## the International bits

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*Nick Clegg's message to the faithful at the Liverpool Lib Dem Autumn Conference didn't break down into 'national-international' bites as easily as some, partly because international issues, especially climate change and the global recession, respect no boundaries. However, as Deputy Prime Minister he had substantive things to say about Afghanistan and Climate Change. Read the full monty on the LD's website.*

In the last eight weeks, 28 British soldiers and Royal Marines have been killed in Afghanistan. However easy it may be to forget, we are a nation at war. Already more than 75,000 British men and women have done tours of duty in Afghanistan.

Thousands upon thousands of our compatriots, putting their lives on the line in the burning heat and the frozen winters of a country on the other side of the world. I want to pay tribute, on behalf of all of us, to the tenacity, bravery and extraordinary professionalism of every one of them. Their families, too, have borne with incredible fortitude the separation, the fear, and the anguish of bereavement. We salute them.

I'm afraid the hardship has been deepened, for all of them, by the enormous difficulties of this war. After nearly 8 years, victory not only seems more distant than ever, failure seems inevitable unless we change course.

I know some of you believe we should call for British troops to withdraw now. If things continue on the present disastrous course, then sooner or later that is a judgement which we may need to make. That is why we must change course. We have one more chance, one only, to turn things around.

Success cannot be secured through military means alone. Development assistance must be bigger and faster. Talks with moderate elements of the Taliban network must commence. The international community must at last agree to a single plan in place of the present patchwork of duplication, disunity and muddle.

The threadbare legitimacy of the government in Kabul must be strengthened by reaching out across ethnic and tribal divisions. And here at home Gordon Brown must change gear, too. He must now show the leadership and conviction that has so far been so disastrously lacking in making the case to the British people.

You cannot win a war on half horse power. We owe it to the young men and women serving in Helmand to give them all the political leadership and all the resources they need to do the job. We should either do this properly or we shouldn't do it at all. So I say to the Prime Minister: time is running out.

Unless you change course, there will be no choice but to withdraw, and that would be a betrayal of the servicemen and women who have already made such enormous sacrifices on our behalf. I do not want British troops to come home defeated by political failure. I want them to come home, mission successfully completed, with their heads held high...

People are turning to the Liberal Democrats. Because they see there's something different about us. It's our pioneering spirit.

It was a liberal, Gladstone, who helped develop the concept of universal human rights. It was a liberal, Lloyd George, who introduced the world's first universal state pension. It was a liberal, Beveridge, who invented the NHS.

Ours is the party of Paddy Ashdown, the first person to put climate change on the national agenda. Ours is the party of Charles Kennedy. Of Ming Campbell. Who used all the courage of their convictions to oppose the illegal invasion of Iraq. Ours is the party of Vince Cable, the first to see problems brewing in our economy, the first with a vision of how to take us to recovery.

It's because Liberal Democrats are different that, when Gordon Brown let casino investment banking loose on our economy. The Conservatives said yes, and only Liberal Democrats said no.

When Gordon Brown let house prices rocket and personal borrowing get out of control, the Conservatives said yes, and only Liberal Democrats said no. When the contracts were being drawn up for new polluting runways. When our civil liberties were being torn up. When our troops were massing on the borders of Iraq. The Conservatives cheered from the sidelines, and only Liberal Democrats said no.

We are the only party that offers real change at the next election. Labour is dying on its feet. We are replacing them as the dominant force of progressive politics. We are the alternative to a hollow Conservative party that offers just an illusion of change.

Make no mistake. There is only one party that will bring real change to Britain. The Liberal Democrats...

### **The Beginning of Real Change for Britain**

Climate change is the greatest challenge of our age, no doubt about it. But it's also, very much, a challenge of our age. Like so many of the problems governments have to deal with. From financial regulation to terrorism and internet crime. It crosses borders.

You can't stop the weather at the cliffs of Dover. That's why the big deals, the ones that matter, are struck at international forums – like Copenhagen this December. A summit that must, must agree an international plan of action to keep global warming not just below 2 degrees, but below 1.7 degrees. Because that's what the best science tells us is now needed to prevent catastrophic climate change.

Who do you want representing Britain at a crucial summit like that? Labour? They have let us down internationally. It wasn't just Iraq. It was their disregard for European colleagues, refusing to attend summits, grandstanding about how superior they were. It was their disregard for international law. Their backroom deals with

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Saudi Arabia over BAE, with Libya over Lockerbie, with America over torture. Labour has undermined Britain in the world.

But what's the alternative? William Hague? David Cameron and William Hague think the nineteenth century state still makes sense in a twenty-first century world. They simply do not understand that in an age of globalization power must be exercised by nations together, not squandered by nations going it alone.

William Hague gives speeches about the enduring importance of the English speaking world. When everyone knows the new power centres are China, India and Brazil. A Cameron-Hague foreign policy would be the most insular and self defeating in modern times. How much influence would they have in Berlin, in Paris, in Brussels? Not a gram. Or even an ounce. And because they wouldn't stand tall in Europe, they would count for little in Washington too.

But there is a third option. Imagine Liberal Democrats around the negotiating table.

Ed Davey, our outstanding shadow foreign secretary. Drawing on the wisdom of Shirley Williams. Paddy Ashdown. Ming Campbell. We would secure Britain a stronger role in the world. By putting us at the heart of the European Union and committing us to abide fully by international law. The beginning of real change for Britain.

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## LIB DEM FRIENDS OF PALESTINE ON THE MERSEY

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**A**t the party's annual conference in Liverpool this September, LDFP organised two fringe meetings. The first jointly with ALDE and the second jointly with CAABU.

We are very grateful to Chris Davies MEP for arranging the first meeting which was entitled "The Strangling of Bethlehem: is it time for sanctions?" Chris chaired it, and we were honoured to have three excellent speakers: H.E. Professor Manuel Hassassian, the Palestinian ambassador who is a former head of Bethlehem University, Ann Farr of Pax Christi and Baroness Jenny Tonge. It was harrowing to learn what the occupation has done to Bethlehem, and how the case for sanctions is becoming ever stronger, as was demonstrated by the dignified and measured call from the Palestinian churches in their Kairos Palestine document entitled "a moment of truth" ([www.kairopalestine.ps](http://www.kairopalestine.ps)). This has inspired us to develop our own principles for an ethical boycott of Israel.

The second meeting was chaired by Alastair Carmichael MP, deputy chief whip for the Liberal Democrats and followed the theme of our fringe meeting in Birmingham with the title "Accountability for War Crimes". There were two speakers. The first was Sarah Colborne, the campaigns director of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, who spoke movingly about her experiences on board the Mevi Marmara when it was boarded by Israeli commandos. Sarah had been profoundly shaken by the experience, but still managed to speak with the calmness and attention to detail of a credible witness. Let us hope she is given the opportunity one day to present her testimony before a tribunal which has jurisdiction. One detail that emerged, and which has perhaps not been focussed on adequately by the media, was the fact that the boarding was deliberately carried out in darkness although there was no military need for this. A retired naval officer in the audience told us from personal experience how boarding at night is always the last choice

for competent naval personnel since it increases the risks for all involved. This was yet another straw in the wind about how the main objective of the Israeli attackers had been to control the publicity battle, rather than to safeguard the lives, well being and property of those they attacked (as was their duty).

Our other speaker was Carla Ferstman, the director of REDRESS, which fights for justice for victims of torture all over the world. Her take on the need for universal jurisdiction for war crimes and her own experiences in Rwanda and elsewhere drew attention to the very important point that the battle over arrest warrants for war crimes under the Geneva Conventions Act is not something specific to the Palestinian issue but is a matter with a truly global reach.

### Universal Jurisdiction

A major focus of LDFP since the election has been on universal jurisdiction. We have produced our own briefing on the topic, and have become part of the Universal Jurisdiction Group, which includes Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights as well as other NGOs which campaign on human rights issues all over the world, including Amnesty International, Justice and Redress. Labour Friends of Palestine are also members and it is facilitated by PSC. We have also been in correspondence with Lord McNally, the minister of state in the Ministry of Justice and deputy leader of the House of Lords, and will be in touch with him if or when any legislation on this issue is published. We also have an invitation from Jeremy Browne MP, the minister of state in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with responsibility for human rights. We shall be following this up.

*John McHugo*

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## Democracy and Human Rights in the Developing World - LIBG conference fringe

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**S**peaking at the LIBG fringe, which looked at the role of think tanks and party foundations in securing democracy and human rights in the Developing World, former LI President and current Lib Dem Convenor in the House of Lords, Lord Alderdice argued that the US and European models of think tank differ in their approaches. The American foundations, the National Republican Institute (NRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI), assumed that it was possible to create tolerant liberal societies, and that they would be self-sustaining. The problem is that this approach does not necessarily work in practice. By contrast the German Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF) sought to develop opposition in South Africa, for example, supported the Democratic Alliance of Helen Zille against the African National Congress when it was suppressing the free press.

As Lord Alderdice pointed out, if you insist on democratic elections you are bound by the outcome of them, however unpalatable! Elections are necessary but not sufficient; you need also to create a culture of toleration. It would be helpful to translate liberal works into local languages to help get our messages across. For example, the classic liberal works are not available in Arabic.

Concluding, Lord Alderdice stressed that while Liberals are tolerant we must not be tolerant of intolerance. Rather we must be will-

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ing to argue passionately for liberal values.

Gordon Lishman, current Chair of the LI Human Rights Commission, reminded the audience that there was a proposal to translate John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* into Arabic. Subject to funding both the Network of Arab Liberals and the FNF would be willing to distribute the book when available. Picking up on another of Lord Alderdice's remarks, that think tanks in the UK, unlike in other states, are typically expected to be apolitical, Mr Lishman argued that this reflects an attitude in the UK that political philosophy is not a good thing. The danger of ensuing moral relativism is ultimately that we do not deal with human rights abuses.

What is the relationship between democracy and human rights? Democracy is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for human rights. Consider two post-conflict situations: Iraq and Afghanistan over the past few years. In both cases an obsession with formal democracy has prevented the emergence of real democracy and human rights. Elsewhere the new electoral laws in Burma/Myanmar made it impossible for Aung Sang Suu Kyi to stand for election, while the cover of law has been used to attack gay rights in Uganda.

We should challenge such abuses of human rights in parliaments and elsewhere, whether via Young Parliamentarians delegations, as Gordon Lishman himself had done in Sri Lanka (despite not being a parliamentarian), helping secure a temporary ceasefire at that time. Dialogue and/or conflict resolution may need to come before

human rights develop, and there is a need to consider the role of citizens as liberals and as individuals. Thus, a vital issue is how to maintain our focus on the crucial indivisibility of human rights.

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## Pakistan Floods

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Conference overwhelmingly endorsed an emergence motion on the Pakistan Floods. Summing up the debate, Julie Smith argued that apart from the serious humanitarian issues in Pakistan itself there were three major issues at stake: first, that of climate change and the associated long-run crises that we can expect to see increasing in future; second, the potential dangers of political instability arising at a time of major domestic crisis; and thirdly, the role of international community. One of the most moving aspects of the passionate debate was the fact that so many speakers from Pakistan spoke and expressed their profound gratitude to the UK, whose citizens had been so much more forthcoming in private donations than other countries. While this was apparently a great testament to strong, integrated communities in the UK, it is a facet of British life that should continue to be nurtured. *Julie Smith*  
Full text of the motion can be found at [http://www.libdems.org.uk/latest\\_news\\_detail.aspx?title=Emergency\\_Motion:\\_Pakistan\\_Floods\\_-\\_carried&pPK=9796f229-9afd-44b7-af2a-7bb233558d7e](http://www.libdems.org.uk/latest_news_detail.aspx?title=Emergency_Motion:_Pakistan_Floods_-_carried&pPK=9796f229-9afd-44b7-af2a-7bb233558d7e)

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# STANDING ROOM ONLY AS CLEGG AND CHAZAN ADDRESS FRIENDS OF ISRAEL FRINGE

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Professor Naomi Chazan, Deputy Ambassador Alon Roth-Snir, Monroe Palmer, Nick Clegg and Sir Alan Beith MP.

Deputy Prime Minister and Liberal Democrat Leader Nick Clegg gave the opening speech at the packed fringe meeting of Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel (LDFI) at the Lib Dem Conference in Liverpool in September 2010. The guest speaker at the event was Professor Naomi Chazan (President of the New Israel Fund (NIF) and former Deputy Speaker of the Knesset), with Alon

Roth-Snir (Israel's Deputy Ambassador to the UK) also speaking.

Mr Clegg told the meeting that Liberal Democrats are "real admirers of Israel's democratic tradition and liberal ethos". Referring to ongoing Israeli/Palestinian peace talks, Mr Clegg said: "We meet here at a time of delicacy and importance for the Israeli government. All we can do is try and create conditions for talks genuinely supported by both peoples. So much hinges on those talks, with Israel having been under constant threat for far too long and with the situation acting as a rallying call for extremism, bloodshed and violence in other parts of the world."

Noting that Liberal Democrats have sometimes had "pinch points with Israeli governments over time", Mr Clegg said that he and party colleagues would continue to address such differences "with candour, but always with respect." A video of Mr Clegg's speech to this meeting can be found at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A37wHggCKeo>.

Professor Chazan, a leading Israeli human rights campaigner and former Member of the Knesset for Meretz, told the meeting: "Those who deny Israel the right to exist are not doing the Palestinians a favour, and those who deny the Palestinians the right to exist are not doing the Israelis a favour. Any solution has to respect the humanity and the human rights of the other. The fundamental reason for Israel's security is its democracy, its decency and its humanity."

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Deputy Ambassador Alon Roth-Snir gave an assessment of the situation from his government's point of view, before he and Professor Chazan took questions from the floor. Cllr Monroe Palmer OBE (Chair, LDFI), chaired the meeting, which was also addressed by Sir Alan Beith MP (President, LDFI). The meeting was entitled: "Israel/Palestine: is peace possible?"

Readers of InterLib will also be interested to know that Nick Clegg spoke at a lunch organised by LDFI on 10 November 2010; and a video of this speech is at: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-AZ\\_pdhBMY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-AZ_pdhBMY). Among other highlights, Mr Clegg told this meeting: "Liberal Democrats have always supported a two-state solution that would bring peace, justice and security to Israelis and Palestinians alike. The quest for international justice is close to the heart of all Liberal Democrats. This sense of justice has led many Liberal Democrats, myself included, to campaign hard for the rights of the Palestinian victims of the Israeli/Arab conflict."

"That campaigning for justice for the Palestinian people has been heard loud and clear from the Liberal Democrats. It should always have been accompanied, equally loudly and equally clearly, by an awareness of the security challenges faced by Israel and of the right of Israel to defend itself against the threats that it continually faces."

"However, I'm not certain that we Liberal Democrats have always made ourselves clearly heard on this, so let me say it again now: Israel's right to thrive in peace and security is non-negotiable for Liberal Democrats. No other country so continually has its right to exist called into question as does Israel, and that is intolerable. There can be no solution to the problems of the Middle East that does not include a full and proper recognition of Israel by all the parties to the conflict."

For further information on LDFI, please visit our website at: <http://ldfi.org.uk/>.

*Matthew Harris, Joint Vice-Chairman, LDFI*

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## LI Cape Town executive meeting report

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Africa Liberal Network delegates

**H**elen Zille, leader of the Democratic Alliance, the official opposition in South Africa, former mayor of Cape Town and current premier of the Western Cape, welcomed over 110 liberals from all over the world to the 185th Executive Committee of Liberal International.

Colin Eglin, a veteran with the late Helen Suzman of the campaign against apartheid, and a patron of LI, chaired a meeting addressed by black and white parliamentarians from the national parliament and the Western Cape parliament in the Old Assembly Chambers of the South African Parliament.

These are infamous as the place of the murder in 1966 of premier Henrik Verwoerd, and the passing of apartheid legislation over several decades. There were descriptions of the changes being made to improve the lives of people in the DA controlled areas, in the teeth of fierce opposition from the African National Congress, which believes it has have a divine right to rule.

In an echo of the expenses row in the UK, Lindiwe Mazibuko

MP published a daily running total of ministerial expenditure on top-of-the-range cars, posh houses (with or without duck houses) to the delight of the South African media and the fury of the ANC, over a period of a year.

Helen chaired sessions on the liberal philosophy of devolution of power, with LI President Hans van Baalen MEP, Lamine Ba, president of the African Liberal Network and DA international officer Tim Harris MP.

Overseas speakers were Flo Clucas, chair of the ALDE Group in the EU Committee of the Regions, Senator Art Eggleton, former mayor of Toronto and Fu-Mei Chang from Taiwan.

Helen noted the presence of delegates from the 27 African liberal parties who are members of the African Liberal Network.

"The Democratic Alliance is a party of all of the races in South Africa and we welcome the chance to work with our fellow African parties in the cause of replacing the mistaken philosophy of socialism, embraced at independence in most countries, with liberalism, the philosophy of the 21st century which Africa so sorely needs".

At the administrative session, the UK delegation (representing the party and Liberal International, British Group) was led by myself as international relations committee chair - I had earlier represented the Lib Dems on the LI Bureau - supported by LI Patron Richard Moore, Phil Bennion, Jonathan Fryer and Peter Bancroft.

A resolution was passed on localism, proposed by the Lib Dems and based on the resolution passed in Liverpool, adapted to the situation in other countries.

Other resolutions dealt with media freedom, citing South Africa and Italy, and the protection of individual rights in so many countries where these are abused. Presidential statements were made concerning the situations in Madagascar and Congo and it was agreed that a delegation should be sent to Ivory Coast in advance

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of the second round of the presidential elections, which are likely to see the election of a liberal president, Alassane Ouattara, a former prime minister.

The next executive meeting is likely to be in Ottawa, with a congress later in 2011 in Philippines, at the invitation of their new president Benign Aquino.

Delegates the following day toured housing projects and the shanty towns surrounding Cape Town, learning of the improvements made to the infrastructure by the DA government, and of the efforts to combat the sort of criminality illustrated by the murder the previous day of a British tourist.

We were told that the offer of free abortion to those wanting it had, 16 years later, resulted in a 70% drop in gang crime both in South Africa.

Some 12,000 new housing units are built each year, and 18,000 new requests come in. Our colleagues have their hands very full, but are aiming to set an example for other South African provinces to follow.

*Robert Woodthorpe-Browne*

have the largest membership by numbers of any of the affiliated regional groupings of Liberal International.

The meeting attracted a lot of media attention, with Helen Zille, leader of the Democratic Alliance, which is a founding member of ALN, and also Premier of the Western Cape, welcoming President Dr Lamine Ba, a Senegalese cabinet minister together with the other delegates. She stated that “the 21st century will be a liberal century for Africa too. Liberalism is necessary to free African peoples from failed socialist economics, and the despotism which exists in too many African countries”. The Democratic Alliance is having great success in recruiting black members from all over South Africa. As the ANC loses splinter groups, our sister party is looking to form alliances to take over government in the foreseeable future.

Robert Woodthorpe Browne attended, representing the WFD as well as the Liberal Democrats and the LI Bureau. The head of the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung’s international affairs also attended some of the sessions.

The ALN re-elected Dr Lamine Ba and chose Vice Presidents from each of the 5 regions of Africa, including Alice Nzomukunda, a former Vice President of Burundi, who stepped down in protest at the rampant corruption in her country. They agreed to retain the Secretariat in London as intra-African communications are expensive and problematic. Also, Nick Branson was widely praised for the quality of his work.

There were harrowing stories of persecution and manipulation of elections, and the meeting allowed members to provide moral support and offers of tangible help, notably to the Ivory Coast where Alassane Ouattara, leader of the liberal RDR Party, may well win the run-off presidential elections on 28th November.

*Robert Woodthorpe-Browne*

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## AFRICAN LIBERAL NETWORK AGM – CAPE TOWN – 11-13 NOVEMBER 2010

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**A**frica is not usually seen as fertile ground for Liberalism. At independence over half a century ago, it was fashionable to be socialist, and the Soviet Union was only too happy to woo the new countries, with disastrous economic results for many. Added to this was the attraction to those in power of having a one party state without checks and balances.

Liberalism is a challenge to the economic ruin and despotism found in so many African states. The Liberal Democrats, having worked on behalf of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) with a few African parties, who eventually achieved success, including the Presidencies of Senegal and Malawi, helped to set up the African Liberal Network (ALN). Its Secretariat is run from Cowley Street by Nick Branson, using funding from WFD.

ALN’s Annual General Meeting held in Cape Town saw the admission of 3 new parties to the Network making a total of 27 from 23 countries, most of which sent delegates. The spread of liberalism to new countries is set to continue and the ALN may one day

Africa Liberal Network delegates with Colin Eglin



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## Cameron bottles out on Tibet

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**P**rim Minister David Cameron let down his electorate when he failed to speak up for human rights during his recent trip to China. The week before his trip an ICM poll commissioned by Free Tibet revealed that three out of four British adults believe that protecting human rights in Tibet is at least as important as good trade relations with China.

As an excuse for his silence the Prime Minister referred to the UK-China Human Rights Dialogue as the appropriate forum for addressing Britain’s human rights concerns. However, the dialogue that Cameron used to excuse his silence has completely failed and has become a tick-boxing exercise aimed at deflecting criticism of the government’s silence on human rights.

If the government’s only method of raising human rights with China is the dialogue, they must revise this defunct process in order to improve human rights for the Tibetan people and all other victims of Communist Imperialism under China.

Free Tibet has raised its concerns about the failure of the dialogue with the Foreign and Commonwealth office for several years. A review of the dialogue process is taking place at this moment. Please urge your MP to communicate your concerns to Jeremy Browne MP, the Lib Dem Minister responsible for the UK-China Human Rights Dialogue. His email address is [office@tauntondanelibdems.org.uk](mailto:office@tauntondanelibdems.org.uk) should you wish to contact him directly – tell him to give the ‘dialogue’ some teeth.

## The Politics of ELECTORAL REFORM, Michael Meadowcroft.

3rd. ed. (Beecroft Publications, Leeds, 2010). Available from  
Waterloo Lodge, 72 Waterloo Lane, Leeds LS13  
[www.bramley.demon.co.uk](http://www.bramley.demon.co.uk)

Meadowcroft's pamphlet is well timed for the resurgent interest in electoral reform and clearly and succinctly puts the arguments in favour of reform and evaluates the different systems on offer. Most importantly it explains why all the systems have advantages and disadvantages and compellingly puts the case to explain why the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system is the best of those on offer. He also explains why the Alternative Vote is a poor alternative, which puts the Liberal Democrats in the coalition in a difficult position. Will they support the Alternative Vote (AV) which will only slightly redress imbalance or seek more radical change. Many may be unhappy with the crumbs on offer which Meadowcroft argues could ironically favour the Lib Dems (as they'll pick up second preferences from both sides and could come out top) but will probably in fact just reinforce support for the big parties piling up votes in safe seats. Under STV voters rank a range of candidates in order of preference in much larger multi-member constituencies. This gives voters a choice of different candidates and a range of elected representatives, albeit over a larger area. I'd like 'The Politics of Electoral Reform' to contain more references, statistics and sources but that would extend the length (50pp.). He also takes some background knowledge for granted – for example frequently referring to the Jenkins Commission but never quite explaining it.

Meadowcroft demolishes party list systems as keeping power with the parties and is critical of the top up or additional member type systems. These do appear to have led to improvements in governance in Scotland and Wales, albeit they have not stopped the excesses by politicians. By contrast some outspoken and radical MEPs, like Chris Davies, have been elected under the list systems – it is notable that Liberal Democrats are not very good at campaigning and winning in PR elections. This is a key problem for the party. The successful limits of Rennardism and targetting have long been explored by *Liberator*. Taking advantage of the Clegg effect the party tried unsuccessfully to break through that to some extent this time, albeit latterly. The party cannot take it for granted that they can win in STV and should take lessons from the experience of our colleagues like David Ford and Naomi Long in the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland.

Michael Meadowcroft was the premier pamphleteer of Liberalism throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s. It is good to see him still in the fray. The first two editions were published by the Electoral Reform Society. It seems difficult to understand why they are not publishing this pamphlet at this time unless they are also doing this work? Meadowcroft loyally promotes the Society. This reviewer is not convinced by the arguments in favour of supporting the Alternative Vote. It seems a very minor improvement but maybe some improvement is better than none. I was impressed by the ERS

co-hosted Yes to Fairer Votes rally at the Liberal Democrat's Liverpool conference in September. The line up included: actor Art Malik (mc), Leader Nick Clegg, MPs Tim Farron and Jo Swinson, Martin Bell, Pam Giddy and Keith Sharp. I was particularly impressed by Art Malik, and am also persuaded by veteran left wing and reform campaigner Billy Bragg's support. Keith Sharp, Vice Chair of the ERS, spoke well explaining the Society's support for this meagre reform. I'm not convinced yet; I'm not convinced the UK referendum in May 2011 can be won; I'm not convinced that the Liberal Democrats and progressive parties will benefit. Meadowcroft shows that other systems can be much better. As a campaigner though the enthusiasm of the pro-AV team cannot be ignored (many non-party political and young) and I will probably join the fray.

*Kiron Reid*

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## British author jailed in Singapore for defamation

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British author, Alan Shadrake, was sentenced to six weeks in jail in Singapore and fined £9,450 for contempt of court over his book "Once a Jolly Hangman: Singapore Justice in the Dock" on 16th November. The book has been perceived as critical of the city-state's Courts take on the death penalty. Shadrake's arrest



demonstrates the deterioration of Singapore's human rights record which has increasingly come under fire from human rights activists' worldwide. Singapore has been criticized for bringing defamation suits against anyone who voices opposition to the government in an effort to silence them. Earlier this year, LI with Folkpartiet Liberalerna (LI full member) and the Swedish

International Liberal Centre (SILC) visited Singapore and met with human rights organizations to discuss human rights violations in the country. LI Secretary General Emil Kirjas said: "We expected the Singaporean authorities to improve the human rights conditions after being criticized by the UN. Instead of a developing modern society, we see implementation of draconian and discriminatory laws from colonial times. Article 377A must become a part of history in Singapore and everywhere else."

## The political thought of the Liberals and Liberal Democrats since 1945, edited by Kevin Hickson

Manchester UP 2009

By accident rather than design, *interLib* reviews this book after the Liberal Democrats have become members of a coalition government. It thus (almost) encapsulates a distinct period in party Liberalism in the United Kingdom. Archie Sinclair had sat in Churchill's war cabinet (and indeed the National Liberals had been



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part of coalitions for much longer, though in the main they would be absorbed into the Conservative party in the early decades of this book. The party emerged from the war at rock bottom, so the only way was up.

If there is a criticism of the book it is in seeking divisions within the parties – chiefly economic vs. social. Now it might be the case that within the international Liberal family the Liberal party and the Liberal Democrats have been closer to D66 than the VVD for example, but within the local arena, disappointing as the press may find it, we all get along very well together. There are one or two sources that I thought might have been referred to – Ralf Dahrendorf's 1974 Reith lecture gave a theoretical base to much current Liberal thinking of the time for example.

'The classical liberal is usually internationalist in outlook.' So states Roy Douglas in the second paragraph of the first chapter of this book, a collection of essays, which are 'what it says on the packet'. Douglas expands on this, 'The notion that some people are superior or inferior to others because they happen to have been born in a different country, or to have skin of a different colour, or adhere to a different religion, is seen to be not just wicked but absurd'. Well put Roy, and this sets the tone for the book nicely. International affairs will pop up throughout the book because Liberals have taken (often potentially unpopular) stands on these issues over the past 65 years, as before.

Douglas's essay covers Classical Liberalism, in a period, which for most, the parties in question would be most characterised by Social Liberalism, certainly from Grimond onwards, but he demonstrates the interplay and necessary relationship between the two strands of Liberal thought. Most usefully he reminds us of the centrality of the doctrine of Free Trade. Under attack from the shallow critique of the Fair Trade lobby, Free Trade seems less easy to defend at times.

This perhaps reflects the situation, particularly in the western democracies where much of liberalism has become orthodox and the term is used loosely to describe actions with which Liberals would hardly associate, at least in the philosophical sense. Liberal interventionism, or gunboat diplomacy, may have precedents with Palmerston amongst others, as Butt Philip points out, but we would choose the latter rather than the former to describe the actions of Bush and Blair, who chose to ignore an international mandate.

Returning to Free Trade, Douglas says '... the term free trade is widely used today in a highly pejorative way, to mean, in effect, the power of strong commercial interests, actively backed by governments, to ride roughshod over the rest of mankind. That is completely different from the way the words were used in the past... Free trade always meant the right of people to buy and sell as they wished, without interference by governments'. He adds that 'This right was never understood in an absolute sense', giving various qualifications – tobacco for instance over recent years.

Perhaps because of the period with which he is dealing, Douglas doesn't expand on the Cobdenite principle of Free Trade contributing to world peace (the century of its decline was most notably characterized by war). The nature of Free Trade obviously changes over time – as Douglas states Classical Liberalism could argue both for and against membership of what was then the Common Market. The underlying principle remains sound, and Liberals should not shirk from defending and promoting it as a core value and policy area.

This undercurrent of internationalism thus laid down, it can be said to pervade the other essays in this book. There is then, nothing controversial about Alan Butt Philip's entry on Internationalism. By this time, the tensions between a strand of economic Liberals around Smedley and others and Grimond's adoption of Europeanism as a

central strand of party policy are well rehearsed in the book. These policies and our involvement in 1975 Referendum on membership of the European Community laid the basis for the Alliance and subsequent merger with the SDP.

My recollections of the 1984 Euro elections are that conflicts were more over how candidates should be selected than who should fight. The SDP followed its usual centralist notions in negotiation, although, as was pointed out at the time, in the small number of seats where there was open joint selection, by members of both parties, a Social Democrat was selected. Thus in North East Essex, since a former Liberal – Andrew Philips, was selected by SDP members only, many of the numerically stronger Liberals voted with their feet and worked in the adjacent South West Essex.

Since Philips was already well known from the earlier Saffron Walden parliamentary by-election, I don't doubt that he would have been adopted had the SDP allowed open joint selection, which he supported.

Butt Philip rightly draws attention the Liberal dilemma over Europe. The EU is far from the democratic institution we would have it be. Indeed the Liberal party (as opposed to the Liberal Democrats) has called for its replacement with a more confederal arrangement in the 2004 Euro-elections, and I believe this remains their party policy. Avoiding the issue won't work in the long term, and Liberals should have no fear of a referendum around the on-going debates of the EU constitution or adoption of the Euro, despite the fact that they would probably be on the losing side in the current climate. It would enable them to rehearse and advance the arguments for major democratic reform of the EU which are long overdue.

Since the fortunes of the party left much to be desired, it is not surprising to find Liberals active in campaigns around decolonisation, nor to find their leaders, Thorpe, Steel, Ashdown, Kennedy and Campbell all having impressive track records in this respect.

Just as Gladstone's MidLothian Campaign of 1876 or Campbell Bannerman's opposition to the 3rd Boer War galvanised radical opinion in the vanguard of Liberal advances in the past, international affairs have drawn in and held activists through out the period of Hickson's study. To identify the rival camps at the turn of the last century as Imperialist (the Limps) and pro-Boer is superficial. Whilst some Liberals undoubtedly held the view that the Boers should not be forced into a British South Africa, others remained sceptical of their ability to govern the other native peoples of the country – hence what became Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland were deliberately excluded from South Africa. The old Cobdenite tradition prevailed.

South Africa and Rhodesia have continued to be important rallying points for Liberals since 1945; it should be said that the Hain's on exile from the Rand gravitated to the Liberal party because of its support for them in their home country – hence Peter into the Young Liberals and his emergence in the limelight when, challenged by the press that 'what did they know about South Africa', Dougie Marchant pushed him forward because he came from that country. Today you'll find Liberals actively involved in campaigns about Burma, Diego Garcia, Tibet, to name a few. The Lib Dems have strong Friends groups of both Israel and Palestine, whose friendship doesn't stop short of telling those countries when to behave.

This is a valuable book, encompassing a distinct period in Liberal history as it does. If there was any doubt, it clearly establishes how internationalism permeates the parties. Put it on yer shelf and refer to it when you think Clegg has dropped a clanger.

*Stewart Rayment*

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## Human Rights under threat in North Caucasus

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The European Parliament discussed a joint motion for a resolution on the situation in the North Caucasus in October. The deputies expressed EU's concern about the unabated violence and human rights abuses by government forces in the region. The European members of parliament stressed the absence of rule of law and security in the region, citing the growing number of vanished residents of the North Caucasus republics who have apparently been abducted in other Russian regions. The European Parliament was also struck by the continuation of violent attacks in Chechnya, such as the attack on the Chechen parliament on 19 October. During the debate, the Parliament urged Russian authorities to observe its international obligations on human rights to fully enforce the rule of law in the region. "Russia has thus committed itself to protecting and promoting human rights and the rule of law, but what a long way removed we are," said Marietje Schaake, the D66 MEP (LI full member). "There really is no excuse for Russia not to comply with its own commitment to human rights. We look forward and will see to it that the representatives of Memorial have the freedom to come to this Parliament and as such will symbolize the freedoms and rights that all citizens in the North Caucasus enjoy."

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## NEWS FROM SCOTLAND

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The Scottish committee of LIBG is focusing its attention on a fringe meeting at the Scottish Liberal Democrats' conference in Perth in the run-up the elections for the Holyrood Parliament in May.

The meeting - on Saturday, March 5 at 5pm in the Royal George Hotel - will be a tribute to Ronnie Fraser, the founding member of LI in Scotland, who died earlier this year. Ronnie was an agricultural journalist who fought several general election battles in Scotland, the first as a Glasgow University student in 1950. *Willis Pickard*

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## ALDE reacts on tensions between two Koreas

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LI Bureau Member Jelko Kacin MEP of LI full member Liberalna Demokracija Slovenije (Liberal Democracy of Slovenia), and a member of the EU Delegation for relations with the Korean Peninsula, has responded to the exchange of fire between the two Koreas, strongly condemning the provocations from the North just hours after the confirmation of the existence of new additional uranium enrichment facilities in North Korea. 'It is unbelievable that the regime would again use an armed conflict to

facilitate the transition of power to the new generation of the Kim dynasty...The North needs to establish a firm civilian control over the army, which is trying to tighten the grip on its impoverished population' said Mr Kacin who authored the European Parliament June 2010 resolution on the situation in the Korean Peninsula. Urging both sides to refrain from escalating the tensions Kacin continued; 'This is a serious moment for the UN Security Council and the international community, including the EU, to find a way to continue the six party on the basis of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission report. China needs to step up the pressure on Pyongyang and fulfil its regional and international responsibility.'

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## Violence Marks Serbia's Gay Pride Parade

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On 10 October more than 150 people were injured in the violence that ensued when two thousand football hooligans, ultra-nationalists and religious extremists attacked and attempted to disrupt the first gay pride parade in Serbian since 2001. Thousands of police had sealed off central Belgrade to protect the event. Protesters also set fire to the offices of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP, LI Observer). Representatives from the LDP were present at the parade. Jelko Kacin, MEP and Vice President on the LI Bureau, criticized the anti-gay riots saying they 'show an elementary lack' of tolerance for minority rights in Serbia and the 'inefficiency' of the state in preventing such a trend: "[These] outbreaks of violence are not only to an attack on basic human rights, but they amount to an attack on the very rule of law in the country. [The] events also question the efficiency of the country's institutions and their ability to guarantee public order and the right to assembly and freedom of expression." LDP leader Cedomir Jovanovic has demanded tough action against the far-right groups that are 'trying to topple the democratic authorities.'



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## Catalan Convergència i Unió wins elections

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In Catalonia's regional election on 28th November, Convergència i Unió, won 62 of 135 seats in the regional Parliament, up from 48 seats won four years ago. While the party fell short of a parliamentary majority, the result ensures that its leader, Artur Mas, will head the next regional government. Mas has assured that over the next four years, Catalonia is going to cooperate with the rest of the Spanish state; "CiU will communicate with everyone, listen to everyone and join forces to put the economy back on course and bring Catalonia out of recession. Others will decide if they want to help the Govern. We will do everything we can so they do," Mas said.