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INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



The Isaiah Berlin Lecture 2016

**US Elections 2016 and the Future of Liberal Democracy.
Howard Dean**

Syria.

Israel & Palestine.

EVENTS

11th-13th March Liberal Democrat Spring Conference, York.

14th March LIBG Exec.

11th April "UK - in or out of Europe – An international perspective" NLC 6.30-8.30pm

18th July LIBG AGM, NLC.

17th-21st September Liberal Democrat Federal Conference, Brighton.

For bookings & other information please contact the Treasurer below.

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London, SW1A 2HE
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Nassar, Palestinian Return Centre, Jonathan
Fryer.



York – the international bits... *Are few and clustered around the fringe...*

Saturday 12th March 13.00-14.00

Social Liberal Forum and Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary Safe at Last? Syrian Refugees in the UK Zrinka Bralo (Executive Director, Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum) and Baroness Sally Hamwee (Home Affairs spokesperson in the House of Lords). Chair: Mark Blackburn (Acting Director, SLF). ***Novotel, Meeting room 3***

Rights-Liberties-Justice (Liberal Democrat Lawyers Association) International Human Rights and Human Rights Defenders Rights-Liberties-Justice are having two meetings on human rights. This meeting concentrates on the international aspects and the role of 'human rights defenders'. Speakers will include Academics, International human rights defenders and party representatives. Chair: Graham Colley. Updates at http://bit.ly/RLJ_Updates ***Novotel, Meeting Room 6***

Brussels and Europe Liberal Democrats (BELD) EU referendum and immigration: turning the tide of opinion Immigration will be a decisive issue in the EU referendum. How can Liberal Democrats and Remain campaign develop a positive message that resonates with voters? Catherine Bearder, Sunder Katwala (British Future), Baroness Sarah Ludford, Alberto Nardelli (Guardian), George Cunningham (BELD Chair). ***Hilton, Minster Suite***

Saturday 18.15-19.15

Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine Palestinian Refugees, their Right of Return – The Challenge for Middle East? Speakers: Chair- Jonathan Fryer; A Representative of UN Relief & Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees; Baroness Kishwer Falkner. Should the Liberal Democrats stand up to the challenge of finding a pathway for the stranded Palestinian Refugees back in to Palestine? ***Hilton, Micklegate Room***

International Office Securing Britain's Future in Europe: International Perspectives on Winning Referendum Campaigns. With the EU referendum fast approaching, join the International Office for a discussion on the dos and don'ts of referendum campaigning, with speakers including key figures from Ireland's 'Yes Equality' campaign and from liberal parties experienced in running referendum campaigns. ***Novotel, Meeting Room 3***

Saturday 19.45-21.00

Liberal Democrats for Peace & Security Syria – not in my name? What, if any, was the political objective and the military plan for bombing Syria? What should we have done? Paul Reynolds, Defence and Middle East expert. Jonathan Fryer, writer, broadcaster, lifelong knowledge of the Arab world. ***Hilton, Walmgate Room***

Saturday 22.00-02.00

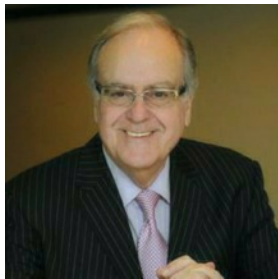
Glee Club The ultimate end-of conference celebration! Pick up your copy of the Liberator Songbook and come 'raise the roof'! ***Novotel, Fishergate Suite***

Sunday 13th March 09.00–09.40 F19 Emergency motion or topical issue ***Conference chamber... you never know...***



NLC Commonwealth Forum

Thursday, 14th April 2016
7.00pm to 8.30pm



Guest Speaker -

**HE Norman Hamilton,
Malta High Commissioner**

with Lord Chidgey in the Chair

*“Malta – a small country with a big influence
on the world stage”*

Following the successful 2015 Malta CHOGM, Malta will be chairing the Commonwealth until 2018 and in 2017 will be assuming the Presidency of the EU for a critical six month period, Malta’s role is pivotal.

All Club members are invited.

No charge to attend but a Cash Bar will be available.

BOOKING FORM

To: Mrs Louisa Pooley (louisa@nlc.org.uk)
National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, London, SW1A 2HE
Tel: 020 7930 9871 Fax: 020 7839 4768

Date	Event	No. of places
14/4/2016	NLC Commonwealth Forum	

Name..... email address.....

Address.....

LIBG members welcome, but please contact Mrs Pooley (above).

The Isaiah Berlin Lecture 2016

US Elections 2016 and the Future of Liberal Democracy.

Howard Dean

Thank you very much for that kind introduction, I should say that Democracy for America and I have a temporary separation, they are supporting Senator Sanders, I am supporting Hillary Clinton, so of all of the family, my brother now runs Democracy for America. We have wonderful discussions; my mother referees them at the age of 87.

I thought that I would spend a little bit of time talking about the state of Democracy and some of the problems. I'm sure that we going to spend a great deal of time on Donald Trump, which I get asked about everywhere I go. I'm on the board of the National Democratic Institute and we organised a meeting in Serbia last week and the week before, which is the sort of thing the NDI does, and we brought together members of the three leading political parties from seven different countries, on the grounds that that was where they could talk to each other, which they don't do at home, and it was terrific, except that we had to organise a special hour to think about Donald Trump, otherwise the whole programme would have been disrupted with these questions. I also just want to say how much I like talking in Europe, it's so refreshing. I know everybody in Europe believes that the Americans are always acting without thinking, and it's true, so it is wonderful to come to a place where they think without acting.

So let me be slightly serious for a moment. Winston Churchill was always fond of saying that democracy was the worst form of government, except for every other, and I think we've had a very difficult time with democracy. The roots in the last couple of decades, the roots, you can trace this back to anywhere, I prefer to trace it back to 1994 when was the first time that the Republicans took over the House in the United States, and they did it by polarizing the electorate as much as they possibly could, demonising their opponents, since that time, that's become a weapon that's used all over the world, and of course the Republicans didn't invent this in 1994, this is a standard way of gaining power, that is to demonise the opponent, say outrageous things about them and get some people to believe them and hope that that is just enough to push you order to gain political power, and the close association between capitalism and democracy.

Most people believe, and I do as well, that democracy and capitalism go hand in hand. For the most part of the world, that's true. When I talk about democracy I'm not talking about the kind of election we had in Uganda last weekend. Most people believe that's true and I actually believe that capitalism is a good thing. But the problem is that capitalism has created an enormous down-draft for a lot of middle class people; sort of the Bernie Sanders message and why he's done so well. The truth is that no system in America, or anywhere else in the world works without some kind of regulation. What you've seen on Wall Street for example, and in the City as well, is essentially a rugby game with no rules, and I think everybody understands what happens when you do that. So I'm not one of these people that think that capitalism is bad thing, I think it's probably the most efficient system of economics that we've ever had. But I also think that it is in a position now, and I don't really blame all the people in Wall Street for doing all of these things that have got the into trouble. I hope most of you have seen *The Big Short*, one of the greatest movies that I ever saw, and thanks to Selina Gomez they do a wonderful job of explaining all of the interesting problems in it. But I think the main problem is our tax codes. At least in the States we have made it more profitable to invest in derivatives, that don't accomplish anything, than we have to invest in housing and infrastructure. So the real example, the real solution to this in the long run, much as politicians all over the western world will talk about more regulation and taxing wealthy people and so forth, none of which I have anything in particular against, but it's not the most efficient way to change things. I think we have to begin with our tax codes and

I think we have to reward the kind of behaviour we want because it's incentives to work. So the reason I take this veering off into discussion of capitalism is because I think in most people's minds in the world capitalism and democracy are thought of as twins.

When capitalism begins to fail people then people cast aspersions on democracy. Putin has been a great example of this; when capitalism failed in Russia because we weren't able to control the behaviour of the oligarchs, then democracy failed, nascent democracy failed shortly thereafter. Now the Russians don't exactly have a long history of democratic institutions, but our economic system and the outcome of our economic system for ordinary people anywhere in the world is going to be connected with our government



Dr Juli Minoves, President of LI, Dr Leslie Vinjamuri (Chatham House) & Howard Dean.

system, and the notion that we need strong people in government and that we value stability over freedom, which is what you've seen recently in places like Hungary and Poland, comes from the fear that people have of not being able to provide for their families, of not being able to get jobs once they lose them, and having a gloomier future for their children that they do. So this is not a matter of just standing up for liberal democracy in our values, it's also a matter of sure our economic system meets the needs of all of our citizens and not just a few of our citizens. And I think that the kind of rhetoric that Senator Sanders is using is not terribly helpful, because I think that when the real issue is not that he's wrong, but the real issue is that we all

have to be in this together. If you single out a particular group, even if it's oligarchs and billionaires, you fall under the same trap as Donald Trump is exhibiting although some of his rhetoric is essentially identifiable as racism, which I don't think is true of Senator Sanders.

We have to behave responsibly as democratic leaders and if we fail we cause democracy to fail. There's been an enormous amount of short-term election based thinking that's going on and we are now living with those consequences. We're living with the consequences for example, of a Hungarian government that didn't tell the truth to its people that it squandered huge amounts of money and of course there was a predictable reaction, and now Viktor Orban is eliminating democratic institutions. We're living with the consequences in the United States of a terribly polarized electorate and a terribly polarized government which really has been relatively ineffective in domestic policy, and in changes in the kind of systems, education, in infrastructure, that need to be changed, not only in our country, but in many others. We've been ineffective because people have decided that they want to use polarization.

Responsibility is part of governing, and one of the things I think we fail in the west is we talk about our rights all the time. In the States it's gun rights, abortion rights, gay rights. I don't hear many discussions any more about our obligations as citizens. There's too much focus on what the government owes to us and not enough focus on what we owe the government. And what we owe the government isn't so much the government, it's us. If you're not willing to run for election, and why would you in this atmosphere? That's a loss for everybody. If you're not willing to vote, and a lot of people have given up, so they don't, particularly in the United States, then that's a problem for democracy. So democracy is as fragile or as strong as those who are willing to talk about our obligations, and we have to training the public to speak about obligations, which takes political courage, which is in short supply in many of our western democracies. So that's, I think, Job One. Less focus on our rights and more focus on what our obligations are, that will lead to our rights. And I'm not talking about making obligations mandatory, especially in the United States, which is probably the most libertarian country on the face of the earth, but having a sense of citizenship which

includes a sense of obligation to something greater than ourselves is the core. It's what great leadership is about. If leaders ask that, then they have to behave that way, and of course it is impossible for leaders to ask that unless they do that themselves.

And that is where I think there has been a tremendous amount of short-term thinking. I'm sure I'll hear from the embassy in the morning, but I think the Brexit debate is happening because the Prime Minister made a calculation some time ago, that he would keep his party together, and the right wing in the party, but promising this. And this is like a child playing with matches and now the whole building is on fire, and it's too late to put it out and the risks are enormous. David Cameron could be the last Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, because I think most of us believe that if you exit the European Union, Scotland will exit the United Kingdom. I actually has a discussion with a very bright guy from Wales, who was in New Hampshire, covering the American primary, and he told me that the thought Wales would leave, and I pooh poohed it, though it was preposterous. But in fact he pointed out that a great deal of Welsh trade is with Ireland and they don't want to have to cross a border and deal with all of those things. What would be the case in Northern Ireland? This incredibly hard-won peace agreement after years and years of, as someone who's involved in the Irish elections said, of blowing up children and women, supposedly for a cause. Finally, we've had more or less sustained peace; what happens if you make a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland? I don't think anybody thought about these things when they were busy trying to get their party together, trying to get the anti-Europeans together and people with the pro-European party. It is a case of short-term thinking for political advantage blowing up in your face and no longer being able to be in control.

I think we've got this problem in our country. Donald Trump is so far out there that should he become president, and there is a chance that he becomes president. People are horrified to hear that in most parts of the world that I go to; people would like the predictability of a Hillary Clinton, but if that should happen, and to this I can attest, because I was the person who was going to become president before there was a single vote cast, and that only lasted one primary, anything can happen in politics, and if you can get as far as Donald Trump...



I'll tell you the scenario. Donald Trump gets past the 15th March after which all primaries in the Republican party are winner takes all, there are a couple of candidates, he gets 35 or 40% of the vote, that means he takes every single delegate in a few more big states, he is the nominee and Bloomberg decides to come in as a third candidate. Mike Bloomberg cannot win a single state, and I did that calculation in 2008, because I thought he might run then, he can't win a single state, but he will inevitably take enough votes away from the Democratic candidate, because he will soak up all of those moderates who want to leave the Republican party, and to whom Hillary Clinton is an acceptable alternative, and Donald Trump will be elected President. It can happen. So we should be afraid, very afraid. There are worse things that could happen. Ted Cruz, who I think fundamentally doesn't believe in democracy, could be the next President of the United States. That would be even more frightening.

So, the point is that there has to be some fore-thought, and we haven't had a lot of that lately. I have great admiration, even though she doesn't represent my end of the political spectrum (though in America she probably would) for Angela Merkel. I think Angela Merkel is a real leader. Is she perfect? No. Do I disagree with some of the things she's done? Yes. Has she stood up for the core values for which she was elected and for which I believe Europe stands? Yes, she has, and I think under great political pressure, and I believe Angela Merkel is really what we seek in a great leader. She may be law, she may lose. Great leaders sometimes lose, they lose because they do the right thing.

Since this is a Lib Dem lecture I want to say just a couple of things about Nick Clegg. Nick Clegg is a personal friend and I helped him in his first campaign and continued to speak with him thereafter; I spoke with him just this morning for an update. I think Nick Clegg did something that I wish more leaders would do, and it cost him and his party 50 seats. Nick Clegg took the Liberal Democrats into government, a government that he wasn't terribly comfortable with, for two reasons. First of all, the British people had rejected the Labour government, and Nick didn't feel that it was proper to counteract the wishes of the electorate by going into coalition with the Labour people, and it would have been difficult because you would have had to patch together a few single party, two seat parties and that would have been hard. Nick Clegg also was the head of a party that had not been in government for 75 years and I'm a very frank speaker, so I'll say this and hope I won't insult anybody. After I first came over for my first fund-raiser I turned to him and I said 'You know half the people in this room that I've just met tonight, don't want you to be in government because they want to complain, that's what they want to do'. Nick understood that and he took the party into government and they paid a huge price as a party, but he stood up he believed in. It's always hard when

you're a junior partner in a coalition. You always get the blame because your base is not where you have to be sometimes, he never gets the credit for having modified the Conservative programme. Now the Conservatives, of course, are going to implement the rest of their programme, which wasn't so popular. So I just want to say that Nick is the kind of person that I believe is a great leader, even though what he did led to the decimation of his party. And I predict right here and now that he will be back and his party will be back, especially if there is a Brexit. And I really pray for the sake of all of us, British and Americans alike, because you are



after all, our closest ally, that the sun does not set on the British Empire for the last time, because I think that's what is at stake.

Let me talk, right here and now, a little bit about America. What is our road to getting out of this polarization? It's a very difficult time; it's not quite as bad as you all think it is over here, of course, because I'm sure the Daily Mail says all sorts of outrageous things on the front page... we have our version, the New York Post for those of you who spend some time in America. The headline writer on the New York Post is clearly the most under compensated journalist in New York, he's certainly the funniest, although I wouldn't buy the paper because you can see the headline as you pass by and the rest of it is not worth your 25 cents. How are we going to get out of this? Well, and I have some students here who have heard this before, so I apologise to them. The new generation of young people is not at all like we are. In many ways we're more polarized, we're less forgiving of our opposition. They are much more focused on results. Unlike us, they don't have to organise in order to change everything, even in large institutions, in fact they don't like big institutions. Why? Because big institutions 1) are unresponsive and you have to get 15 people's permission, if not 16s, to do anything. And 2) they know that big institutions, if faced with a decision between their mission and their existence, will always choose their existence, which of course, is often the end of the mission. And 3) they don't need them, because if they have a cause they can go on the internet, find 5,000 people who agree with them in a matter of days, bombard Washington or London with their desires and these things happen. They killed a major Intellectual Property Bill because it unintendedly would have gotten rid of YouTube. There was a young lady called Molly Catchpole, who went to the University of Rhode Island, which is a working class base university, and when Horizon tried to charge for paying for planning online, which was a pretty stupid business decision, they did it, because they thought it would be great, they'd get two dollars a month plus times thirty million. She went online, got a 100,000 – 200,000 said they'd switch to ATT and Horizon changed their view. Bank of America tried to charge five dollars for

a debit card, she went online again, bank fought her for forty, forty-eight days, and finally threw up their hands and backed out of it. The idea that we'd have in our generation is 'oh well, it's only another five dollars and I'm too busy to do anything about it and the bank is too strong, doesn't exist with these young people.

But the problem is that they don't need politics to do most of what they want, because they can fundamentally change the way things happen without politics. So the other characteristic that's really important is that unlike, at least in America, my generation, who were willing to fight to the death over the issues that we were fighting over and really continue to do so, they actually would much prefer to work together on the 80% of things that they do agree on and ignore for the time being, the 20% of things they don't agree on. And it's a different generation, the ideological bandwidth is less, less wide. I'll give you an example of this, an interesting polling statistic. When I was chair of the Democratic National Committee, my chief of staff was a Pentecostal Minister, and we were sitting around one day and I said "you know, if you are Red Letter Christian, that is a Christian who has a Bible in which the words of Jesus are in red and all the commentary and the prophets and everything else is in black; if you're Red Letter Christian you only read what Jesus said. Jesus looks like he's substantially to the left of Bernie Sanders, right? So why is it that evangelicals don't vote for Democrats?" So, a pollster is in the room, so he says "I'll do a poll for \$40,000". So I say "great". This was ten years ago. So we polled evangelical Christians. Those over 55 were driven by two issues, one was abortion rights and the other was gay rights. Those evangelical Christians under 35, their



number one priority was poverty, their number two was climate change. And I said that how is this possible that evangelical Christians basically agree with what I would call secular activists, like university campuses? Because there is a much narrower ideological bandwidth and they are willing to work together on issues, no matter that there may be other issues that they can't agree on.

So when these folks get into Parliament and get into the House of Representatives and become Senators, there's going to be change, as they have no tolerance for this. Now today some people

are getting into these places, but the problem is that there is so few of them that they get socialized by the institution before they manage to socialize it. It is going to take a while for these guys to get into politics, why? Because politics is incredibly unattractive, it is incredibly unattractive right now. You have to go, you pay your dues for a long period of time, you get socialized, you're not really accomplishing anything. Think about a 30-year career in Parliament, in the United States Senate, what have you really done? You get your name on a couple of Bills; Ted Kennedy probably has some accomplishments, but even he, one of the lions of the Senate, thirty years, ninety-nine other people that you have to convince. Why would you do that if you can create models to change everything?

So I'm to close with an example of what this generation can do and what we have ahead of us, and then we'll sit down and take questions about Donald Trump. After I'd finished my campaign I was asked to judge an internet contest, because the campaign had a lot to do with the internet. The internet contest was put together by an organisation called dosomething.org, which incidentally is looking for a new marketing officer if anyone wants to apply, I'm sure they'd pay you very well. So dosomthin.org gives a \$100,000 prize every year to the idea that young people come up with that's most likely to make substantial change, so I interview this person and she doesn't get the award, but here's what she got. When she was 18, she's about 21 or 22 at the time, so when she was 18 she comes for La Guardia High School, which would be a state school in England, in New York, and she ends up in the University of Vermont, which is rather unusual, and she finds herself a mentor, she's 18 years old, she finds a mentor who knows a lot about inter-

national relations. The mentor convinces her to go to South Sudan, which at the time was a war zone. She goes to South Sudan, the lesson that she comes up with is, that at 18 years old, American foreign aid makes people more dependent, not less dependent, which I think is probably true. So instead of coming back and deciding that she is going to have a career in politics, work for somebody in the Hill, or whatever, she goes online, she finds a foundation in New York called the Siegel Foundation, which agrees to give her a \$1,000 to do something to fix the problem. She goes across the hall, talks to her friends and the two of them start something called Sparks Microgram and they go to Africa, to Rwanda, Uganda and now Burundi until the recent upheavals, they had to stop their operation temporarily, and they begin to hire African university graduates who were having trouble finding jobs, and they train them and they send them in to small rural villages around east Africa, and they go through a process, they say “We’re going to give you a \$3,000 cheque, and in order to get that cheque, first of all, it is the only one you’re ever going to get, so you have to design the programme, figure out whatever it is you want to build and figure out how to maintain it, govern it into the future; this is all you get.”

There were a lot of different things that were done, one of them, one of the more interesting things to me, was, they wanted a health centre, and the conclusion is, they built a bridge, and that happened because the next village over was a mile and half away, and that had a health centre, but it was on the other side of a river, that couldn’t be crossed unless you went up stream six miles, crossed the river and then came back down. So they built a bridge across the river; essentially now they had a health centre. This is the kind of stuff they did. But as Sasha will tell you, the real genius of this was nothing to do with what they built, that’s the fundamental difference, it was all in the decision making process, because in many patriarchal rural societies around the world, the women do all the work and the men make the decisions, and what had to happen for this to go forward was that if the women were going to do the work, the women would have to participate fully in the process, so they did and they fundamentally changed the power relationships in a rural African village. There was one quote from a guy in a newsletter and it said ‘My wife and I make joint decisions about what’s going to happen in the family’.

That is what foreign aid is supposed to be about, it’s not supposed to be about building a bridge and then maybe your standard of living goes up a little bit, it’s supposed to empower people and we have failed to do that in general speaking with foreign aid, and it’s a big mistake. At 26 she now runs a million dollar a year foundation and she has had more effect than anybody who has sat in the Senate for 35 years in the United States. This is the future of politics. If we won’t get out of the way and take responsibility and start speaking about peoples’ obligations the next generation will. Whether they will get involved in politics and change the fundamental governance problems that we have as a result of demagoguery, as a result of short-term thinking, that is the big question? Is there time? I’m an optimist and I think the answer is yes. Thanks very much.

Howard Dean

Governor Howard Dean was Chairman, Democratic National Committee (2005-09) And Candidate for Democratic Nomination in Presidential Election (2004)

The Isaiah Berlin Lecture was held at Chatham House, London on 22nd February 2016 and was chaired by Dr Leslie Vinjamuri, Associate Fellow, US & the Americas Programme, Chatham House.

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/event/us-elections-2016-and-future-liberal-democracy#sthash.kEFEHnT4.dpuf>



The Syria Vote and Beyond: Radical Ideas for Difficult Problems.

The Revd Nadim Nassar

I write as a child of Syria, whose homeland is dear to his heart, and I write as a priest rather than a politician.

For years, the British government and Parliament have struggled with the issue of their involvement in the conflict in Syria. On one hand, the disaster of the invasion of Iraq still weighs heavily in the nation's memory; on the other hand, there is the clear desire of the government to act to support the Syrian oppositions and to combat ISIS. The whole world has realised that something must be done to stop this evil power. Although Parliament had decided against military intervention against the Syrian regime itself, MPs subsequently voted to bomb ISIS forces within Syria as they are already doing in Iraq.

I have always argued against foreign military intervention in Syria. I lived through seven years of the Lebanese Civil War, and while I was in Beirut I saw many nations try to impose "peace" through violent means. The only result was more destruction and death, and the flames of war just rose higher. I am sure that military intervention in Syria would not achieve any other result; as in Lebanon, even more lives would be lost and the situation would worsen. What happened instead, was a total failure of the West to engage in any attempt, military or political, to bring peace. For years, Britain and America refused categorically to enter into any dialogue with the regime, or to encourage the opposition groups they support to do so, because they did not want "to talk to a dictator"! I believe that was a grave mistake which has postponed any ceasefire or peace treaty by years; dialogue is not made for friends but for enemies, and the West knows this. Every war is ended by dialogue between the opposing parties. The innocent people of Syria have paid the price of the West's selfish refusal to talk to the regime in Syria. The interests of Britain and America, and Russia and Iran, have apparently outweighed any humanitarian concerns. Syria is in the grip of a proxy war, with many of the nations of the world arrayed on opposing sides in the conflict.

What about the people of Syria? If you were to ask them, the majority of Syrians would tell you that they want a united and peaceful Syria. They do not want a monoculture. The people of Syria love their diverse country, and we have lived in the richness of diversity since the history of humanity began. My fear is that the ruins of my country will be divided to suit the needs of the great and not-so-great powers of the 21st century, as they did across the whole region in the first 50 years of the Twentieth Century.

Radical problems need radical solutions. The only way to end the Syrian conflict would be for the Syrians to begin a dialogue amongst themselves, with the involvement and support of the regional and international powers. The role of the foreign powers is firstly to stop the flow of resources to the warring parties, and secondly to guarantee the implementation of decisions taken by the Syrians in dialogue, encouraging a new sharing of power across the religious and political spectrum. It is absolute nonsense to hold a referendum or election in Syria now, as they could not be free or fair; a period of power-sharing and empowerment of the people is vital before national decisions can be taken through the ballot box. This would also give time for the millions of displaced Syrians to return home to play their part in the future of their country.

However, despite what I have said above about all Syrians being involved, this dialogue cannot involve jihadist and extremist groups whose purpose is to eliminate anyone who thinks or acts differently. Groups such as ISIS and Jabat Al-Nusra would sabotage any attempts at peaceful dialogue as their very existence depends on war and chaos; in addition, they cannot be part of the decision-making process for the future of Syria because they do not belong to the fabric of Syrian society – on the contrary, their sworn goal is to destroy that very fabric and the richness of Syria's diversity. These extremist groups – of which there are HUNDREDS in Syria – rely on the flow of weapons, personnel and money from outside their borders. They cannot possibly survive on their own internal resources. One of the great tragedies in Syria has been the enormous in-pouring of support for groups such as ISIS; the jihadist groups are the clearest and most horrific manifestations of the proxy nature of the conflict in Syria. This must stop if we want to help the Syrians to recover and rebuild their country.

We all have our part to play in bringing peace to Syria. Each of us should write to our MP and ask them why more is not being done to stem the flow of resources, much of which is originating in, or passing through, countries which we identify as our allies. We need a proper peace process for Syria that includes all of the warring parties apart from those imported extremist groups to whom peace is anathema. There are now many political parties within Syria and in exile who have a great contribution to this process; they must all be included and the foreign powers must not be allowed to pick and choose who gets to the peace table. This must also include what we now call “the regime”, which must contribute to the political peace settlement, both because it controls a substantial portion of the country and because it is still running the official economic and civic institutions of Syria.



We must not repeat the mistake of Iraq, where the West entirely dismantled the civic fabric of that country, including the army, civil service and police; the result of that foolish act was utter anarchy and the rampant growth of the major extremist belligerents who now plague the world.

My country was a major part of the Cradle of Civilization. The cultural, social and human loss is colossal. The whole world must step up and act to end this tragedy and bring hope back into the lives of the Syrian people.

The Revd Nadim Nassar

The Revd Nadim Nassar is Director of the Awareness Foundation and was one of the speakers at "The Syria Vote and Beyond - Radical Ideas for Difficult Problems" conference of 9th January 2016.

www.awareness-foundation.com

Registered Charity in England & Wales No. 1099873

Libya

In Defence questions just now (29th February), the Secretary of State for Defence has confirmed to me that if the UK were to consider launching military operations in Libya (because of Daesh's activities there) the UK parliament would debate and presumably vote on the matter.

Tom Brake

Male Genital Mutilation

Liberal Democrats have campaigned strongly against the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (the website currently has some 27,000 signatures). The Party, however, has still to tackle the issue of Male Genital Mutilation (circumcision) for non-medically compelling reasons. A Facebook group LibDems against Male Genital Mutilation has been set up with the objective of proposing a motion to the Autumn LibDem Conference 2016. If you oppose the practice, you can join the group by clicking in facebook

www.facebook.com/groups/1561214477503914/

Can there be peace between Israel and Palestine? · How can we help?

Sir Vincent Fean

I was in Jerusalem from 2010 to 2014, representing the British Government and talking mainly to Palestinians. What I witnessed there, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, made me want to talk about the Israel/Palestine conflict tonight. It is a conflict too easily neglected. I had the privilege of going there and seeing for myself. We neglect it at our peril.

Now retired, I will share my personal impressions of what is happening on the ground and at the political level now; look at three options for the future in what we call the Holy Land, two of them bad and the only good one – the solution of two states - becoming harder to achieve by the day, and end by suggesting why we British should care, and what we can do to make the best outcome more likely to happen. I shall talk more about Palestinians than about anything else, because it's best to talk about what I know something about.

What is happening now, on the ground and politically

Let's not start from the beginning. But let's start with the Prophet Abraham, revered by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. Abraham embodies the fact that all three of those great religions belong together in the Holy Land, and have so much in common. They teach peace, justice and mercy. So let no one tell you that this conflict is about religion. It could go that way, into sectarian strife – but at heart, it's about land, power, control, security and the well being of two peoples who are cousins.

There are two strongly competing narratives – one Israeli Jewish, one Palestinian Arab. Both peoples feel a sense of victimhood, past or present. Both narratives deserve respect, but you don't need to believe just the one, and espousing one to the exclusion of the other doesn't actually help. Nor does it help to assimilate an entire people with the actions of a government. That mistake is too often made. Today, what we have is the State of Israel recognised on pre 1967 war lines by almost all the world including, very importantly, by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), and neighbouring Egypt and Jordan. In 1967 Israel won a war and occupied what I today call Palestine – East Jerusalem, the West Bank of the River Jordan and the Gaza Strip. That Israeli-occupied area is recognised as a state – the State of Palestine – by two thirds of the members of the United Nations, including China, Russia and India, but not by the USA or most of the European Union, including the United Kingdom. I advocate recognition of Palestine. Recognition matters, which is why it is not easy to obtain.

On the ground, the Occupation inevitably causes friction. To put it bluntly, one people's army is bossing around another people, who resent that fact. During this 49 year occupation there have been a number of uprisings by Palestinians, overpowered by Israel, for Israel has the power, including three Gaza wars – the last in 2014. The cease fire between Hamas in Gaza and Israel has held since then, but is very precarious. Elsewhere in Palestine and Israel, in recent weeks we have seen desperate and totally futile individual acts of violence, often by very young Palestinians, against Israelis – both military and civilian. These acts are hard to prevent – they look and are spontaneous, unplanned, uncoordinated. Often the perpetrators are killed on the spot. Their violence is to be deplored, condemned outright. We should also ask what drives them to desperate acts. Where is their hope for a better tomorrow, for the sort of future we seek for our own children?

Politically, there is next to no communication between the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships, between Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas. Each side talks to the Americans, to the EU – but barely to each other, except for megaphone diplomacy, at which Israel is much, much better than the Palestinians. It does not help at all that the Palestinians are politically as well as administratively

divided, between Hamas in Gaza and Fatah, the PLO or the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. Western diplomatic efforts focus on the PLO as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people”, as agreed in the Oslo Accords, and the Palestinian Authority as the legitimate authority in Gaza, which it is. Currently the PLO excludes Hamas, though Hamas won the last Palestinian parliamentary election back in 2006, and won fairly.

The Americans traditionally lead on efforts to bring peace between Israelis and Palestinians. It is for debate whether the Americans are neutral, unbiased. In any event, since Secretary Kerry’s valiant effort failed almost 1 year ago, the USA have signed off. This is a Presidential election year in the US. Obama wants his Democratic Party to win, and taking risks for peace in the Holy Land by challenging Israeli policies is a risk too far. Optimists would say that this is an opportunity for the EU to fill the vacuum, but EU policy on this conflict is of the lowest common denominator type – the opposite of adventurous or assertive. If you thought that the Quartet – the US, Russia, the EU and the UN – had folded its tent and faded into the night, you might be forgiven for thinking that, since it has achieved so little. But it continues to exist, and is working on a policy document setting out what needs to be done. I am not holding my breath. That leaves the French. I am not saying much about our Government – their mind is elsewhere – an error we can correct, but for now let’s focus on the French, as our partners and rivals in EU foreign policy formulation. They propose an international conference on the conflict this summer. Today Abbas is keen and Netanyahu is cool, but has yet to say no. He was irritated by the remark of France’s then Foreign Minister, Laurent Fabius, last month that if the conference fails to come about, or fails to work, then France will recognise the State of Palestine, albeit under Occupation. I have long admired, and sometimes been jealous of, French diplomacy. I think they’ve got this right.

Three possible outcomes to the Israel/Palestine conflict

I believe we are at a decisive point in this conflict. I see three possible ways ahead. Only one of them is actually a way forward.

The first is more of the same – the status quo continued. That means continued illegal Israeli settlement expansion in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, contrary to the 4th Geneva Convention, and the continued closure of Gaza, locking in 1.8 million people – most of them under university age. It means chronic violence in and from Gaza – if nothing changes, the conditions for violence there will recur. It probably means a continuation of the sporadic violence in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and indeed in Green Line Israel proper. Israel’s security forces are strong and well practised in pre-emption, though not always with proportionate use of force. In the last Gaza war Israel’s use of force was not proportionate, and Israel’s international standing suffered as a result. Israel will continue down this spiral as long as she maintains the Occupation.

The words “status quo” have a seductively reassuring ring – an air of continuity, pause for breath, time to take stock. This status quo is different – it’s dynamic, with already 650,000 Israeli illegal settlers on the Palestinian side of the Green Line, and more coming every year. That’s over 10% of the Israeli voting population: an increasingly influential political force. This status quo suits some Israelis – by no means all Israelis - but no Palestinians at all. To me, it risks meaning the end of the EU’s favoured option of two contiguous sovereign states on ’67 lines sharing Jerusalem as the capital of both – in other words, the demise of the two state solution, and thus of the agreed aim of the international community for the last 25 years or more. I think that’s bad for Israelis, and I know it’s bad for Palestinians. It’s bad for Israel’s international standing. It means the army of one people continuing to boss another people, with corrosive effect on both peoples. It’s bad for Palestinians because it deprives them of the sovereign state to which they aspire in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and thus of the opportunity to invest in that state, to make something of it, to give their children prospects. The absence of those prospects is daunting.

The second possible outcome is more clear-cut, but with the same result: it’s called the one-state outcome, or the “binational state” - ie two peoples in one state - which Mr Netanyahu swears will never happen. There are some in his cabinet who favour illegally annexing the countryside of the West Bank, just as Israel illegally annexed East Jerusalem in 1967. It is a short step from there to the assimilation of the West Bank into “Greater Israel”, bringing 3 or - if you included Gaza - 5 million Palestinians into a state created explicitly for the Jewish people. If those people had equal rights, the present Jewish

majority in Israel might lose power. That's not what Mr Netanyahu is about. Nor do I favour the one state outcome. I fear it would not be a state of equality, of equal rights for all, in my lifetime. To use a word that Secretary Kerry whispered, quite deliberately, it would be an apartheid state.

One major drawback of both these outcomes is that they internalise and perpetuate violence, because they perpetuate the Occupation of 1967 and the illegalities inherent in the conduct of that Occupation. Both deprive a people – the Palestinian people – of hope.

The third outcome is the one which the West has urged on the two parties to this conflict for decades – a two state solution which ends the 1967 Occupation while safeguarding the security of both Israelis and Palestinians and beginning to undo the harm caused by decades of mutual suspicion, of mistrust, of hatred. Easier said than done, as the last 49 years of Occupation have proved. This outcome needs work, lots of it, and lots of moral courage. It entails risk – more risk for Israel than for the Palestinians, because the Israeli authorities now exercise control of the Palestinian territory and the people through the Occupation, and will be expected to give it up. For it to work, Palestinians will need to exercise new-found power responsibly. Some of the 650,000 settlers will have to go home to Green Line Israel. Otherwise, there is no contiguous Palestinian state – just a collection of Palestinian bantustans in the West Bank.

We are not close to an equitable two-state outcome today, and many Palestinians say that it is a pipe-dream – so very far from the grim reality they live. But it remains the best available outcome for both peoples, and for us here. It's pretty clear what's in it for the Palestinians – though it does not address all of their concerns, including the plight of Palestinian refugees from 1948 and 1967. For Israelis to embrace the change, the goal of enhanced security for their children needs to be attainable, and credible – and the alternatives, including the status quo, need to become much less appealing, less comfortable. There is a security role here for the US, for NATO, for the EU. There is a major role for the Arab states, offering recognition for Israel, trade with and investment with Israel, based on the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002. There is a role for us British, as a concerned friend of both peoples: first warning of consequences for any illegal acts by either party, and then following through consistently if those illegal acts are repeated. Our Governments talk the talk, but hesitate to do more than speak.

Some say that Israel would be foolish to withdraw in a phased manner from the land occupied in 1967 – just look at the turmoil in the neighbourhood... The counter-argument is that no one in his right mind is asking Israel to disarm – but Israel's long-term interest lies in a peace treaty with the Palestinians such as Israel has negotiated with Jordan and Egypt. Those vital peace treaties, and the turmoil in Syria and elsewhere, mean that today there is absolutely no strategic threat to Israel from any of her Arab neighbours, unlike 1948 or, most recently, 1973. At the same time, there is genuine urgency: an equitable two state solution is disappearing before our eyes. You don't know what you've got till it's gone. Hope is dwindling – to many Palestinians, their situation is hopeless, and that is dangerous.

Why we should care, and what we can do

So, what's it to us? The answer depends on who we think we are, and what we stand for. What are our values, and where do our interests lie? We have "form" on this conflict, going back even before the Balfour Declaration whose centenary is on 2 November next year. In 1917 our Foreign Secretary said: *"Her Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine"*. Part two of that Declaration, that promise, is still unfinished business. Our unfinished business. In my view, only the creation of the Palestinian state alongside Israel will complete it.

I commend to you the work of a group of British academics and people of faith who have joined together in the Balfour Project – www.balfourproject.org - to shed light on that corner of our country's history, for the benefit of our young people and those charged with their education. The Project promotes justice, security and peace for Israelis and for Palestinians.

We British co-wrote the 4th Geneva Convention, after World War 2. Israel and the Palestinians – the PLO - have signed and ratified it. Israel's conduct of this Occupation does not conform to that Convention – it breaches it in several regards: the settlements are illegal, as is the Separation Barrier or Wall wherever it trespasses on Palestinian soil, which is often; the closure of Gaza, banning movement to the West Bank, is in effect collective punishment. There are other examples. This is not to condone the terrifying and indiscriminate rocket fire from Gaza, currently suspended – nor the stabbings and other violence to which I have referred. But two wrongs do not make a right. Justice requires an even handed approach if we really want to end this conflict, not just manage it. Expediency suggests trying to manage it – and diplomats are familiar with expediency - but the right thing to do is to try to end this conflict, which has poisoned and stunted the region for 50 years and more.

Politically, what can be done? France shows us the way. The international conference will only work if Israel sees opportunity for a better future not just with her nearest neighbours, the Palestinians, but with the entire Arab world – and sees that she is losing altitude internationally through her conduct of the Occupation. France is prepared to recognise the state of Palestine on '67 lines if the conference doesn't happen, or doesn't work. Recognition of Palestine is in the gift of our Government, who are reluctant to do it. But there is an urgent need to save the two state outcome – what better way to do so than to legitimise and strengthen the voice of moderate, non-violent Palestinians, without in any way delegitimising the state of Israel? Where France leads, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and others will follow. The message to the parties will be so much stronger if HM Government work with France on this issue. It matters greatly that Britain and France, the two European members of the UN Security Council, should work in concert, objectively, giving primacy to security for both peoples in Israel/Palestine and to upholding International Law.

There are British interests as well as British values at stake. The self-styled Islamic State or Da'esh makes much of its call to “liberate” the al Aqsa mosque in East Jerusalem, the third most holy shrine in Islam. Da'esh will do nothing of the kind, of course – but its sinister and efficient propaganda machine denounces the double standards of the West, including the United Kingdom, and claims that Israel acts as if she is above the law, with impunity. Some British youths may be swayed by this line. There is anecdotal evidence to support this. It is directly in our own security interest to uphold International Law without fear or favour – and to be seen to do so. That will confound Islamic State, which has misappropriated and abused the name of a great religion.

And finally – what can we in this room do? We should do what we can, while heeding the wise words – “Do no harm”. Those of us with political influence – and that's all of us in this democracy - should argue for more from our elected representatives than just DFID funding for Palestinians and ritual diplomatic condemnation of Israel when she creates new, illegal facts on the ground. Leaving this conflict to fester harms Israelis, Palestinians and us. So we should give everybody a hard time – but exerting maximum influence where we have the greatest clout, and on those with the greatest ability to change things. We should start with our own Government, because it is nearest to home, and we have great influence on it. Of the two parties, Israel has the power, and occupies the land. Palestinians need to reunite, and hold free, fair elections – the result of which we should respect.

Sheffield, this excellent university, is doing good things with Israeli and Palestinian students, including a valuable Gaza connection. I am delighted that public health student Hind al Alami from Gaza is here with us. In all of Palestine, Gaza is in the greatest need of skilled people to do what their community needs most. There is always more for Sheffield to do. Israel is well served by her universities. The Palestinians are the ones in greater need – their universities lack funding, external support and, in the case of Gaza, room to breathe. They need joint research projects, partners in bids for EU programmes – you name it. Israeli and Palestinian universities are centres of excellence, shaping the minds of the next generation. In partnership with Sheffield and like-minded British universities, they can only get better – and it's a two way street. The same goes for community links, church links, school links. I happen to be the patron of the Britain Palestine Friendship and Twinning Network (BPFTN), whose volunteer members do much good. In their spare time they come together locally to link with Palestine or a locality in Palestine – helping people there to feel less isolated, more valued, not forgotten. Please look at their website – www.twinningwithpalestine.net



Sir Vincent Fean

With regard to Israel, I do not favour academic boycotts – as an ex diplomat, I believe in talking, in the power of persuasion. There is one exception, and it is not in Israel. There is a college in Ariel, an illegal Israeli settlement in the middle of the Palestinian West Bank. Mr Netanyahu elevated it to university status a couple of years ago, against the advice of the relevant Israeli academic body. The German Government has written to all German universities advising them to have nothing to do with Ariel. That's my advice, too.

To conclude: yes, there can be peace between Israel and Palestine, if we act evenhandedly and encourage our partners to do so. Inertia will kill the two state solution - which remains the best and just solution. Of our Government and elected representatives I ask more activism, more willingness to speak the truth to power, to call things by their name, and to uphold the international laws we wrote. I ask them to work with France and other EU partners to legitimise the non-violent voices in Palestine through recognition of the State of Palestine, removing a potent propaganda weapon from Islamic State while doing the right thing.

Of this right minded University, I ask for a fresh outreach effort to both Israel and to Palestine – taking into account who needs us the more. Israel has America, no question. Palestine needs us, and we do well to recognise that fact – and that state.

Sir Vincent Fean.

Remarks by Sir Vincent Fean at the University of Sheffield, 25 February 2016.

Sir Vincent Fean was British Consul-General, Jerusalem, 2010-14. Now retired, he is a trustee of Medical Aid for Palestinians and patron of the Britain-Palestine Friendship and Twinning Association.



Insight with Julian Borger: How the Search for Balkan War Criminals Became the World's Most Successful Manhunt
13 Norfolk Place, London W2 1QJ
Wednesday 9 March 2016, 7:00 PM

The Balkan Wars of the nineties resulted in the worst war crimes seen in Europe since the Nazi era. When the fighting ended, a fourteen-year manhunt began in order to bring those responsible to justice.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) eventually accounted for all 161 suspects on its wanted list, including Radovan Karadžić, Ratko Mladić and Slobodan Milošević, a feat never before achieved in political and military history.

In his new book *The Butcher's Trail*, the Guardian's diplomatic editor Julian Borger, documents this monumental manhunt. He will be joining us to reveal what he discovered from the special forces soldiers, intelligence officials, and investigators that were involved, and how this process could set a precedent for bringing future war criminals to justice.

Julian Borger will be joined in conversation by Philippe Sands QC, an expert in international law and Kemal Pervanic, a survivor of the Omarska concentration camp, he has since dedicated his work to education, reconciliation and peace-building. The discussion will be chaired by author and journalist, Adam LeBor. Julian Borger is the diplomatic editor for the Guardian. He covered the Bosnian War for the BBC and the Guardian, and returned to the Balkans to report on the Kosovo conflict in 1999. He also served as the Guardian's Middle East correspondent and its Washington bureau chief.

Non-member tickets £12.00 - Concessions £10.00 <http://www.frontlineclub.com/insight-with-julian-borger-how-the-search-for-balkan-war-criminals-became-the-worlds-most-successful-manhunt/>

Poverty in Palestinian Refugee Camps.

Pietro Stefanini

On the 25th of January, Palestinian Return Centre (PRC) held a seminar in the Houses of Commons, titled “Poverty in Palestinian Refugee Camps: Challenges and Prospects”. The meeting, hosted by Labour MP Ben Bradshaw, focused on the adverse conditions that Palestinian refugees face living in camps, particularly in Lebanon – due to high poverty rates and lack of state or proper UN support. Speakers agreed that implementing the right of return is essential to providing a solution to the suffering of the Palestinian refugees as well as to achieving a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The event was chaired by Sara Apps, Interim Director at the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, who introduced the event by highlighting the importance of the right of return for the “here and now” and not just for the future. With the recent refugee crisis, we have a new opportunity to speak about the stories of Palestinian refugees.



Sameh Habeeb, Head of Media and PR at the Palestinian Return Centre (PRC) presented the work of PRC explaining that the right of return is a fundamental political issue. Although international law is clear about the right of return, this goes largely ignored at the expenses of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees around the world. He also touched upon the recent cuts in funding of UNRWA and Israel’s interest in dismantling its services. He concluded that the old Zionist trope, “The old will die and the young will forget” cannot be true as more and more Palestinians around the world continue fighting for the right of return.

Rohan Talbot, Campaigns and Media Officer at Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP), was next in line, and discussed the poor conditions and principal issues in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Although each camp is unique, all suffer from overcrowding, environmental hazards and poverty, which cause huge health challenges, which UNRWA cannot cope with. People with disabilities struggle to access services and the cost of health care is devastating. Working directly with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, he reported case

studies highlighting the restrictions imposed by the Lebanese government and the extra-marginalisation that they suffer because of it. Finally, he reminded that in the humanitarian discussions around refugees, we should always ask where the Palestinians are, as their multiple displacements are not covered by politicians and the media. “Next year, we’re going to be marking lots of anniversaries,” Rohan said. “It’ll be 50 years of occupation in Palestinian Territory, it’ll be 10 years of the Gaza Blockade, it’ll be 100 years since the signing of the Balfour Declaration. That is a moment for the UK to really focus on promises and the commitments and the responsibilities of the UK in this context. [...] 67 years is entirely too long for a displacement. The UK can do more and it really must.”

Pietro Stefanini, Researcher at the PRC, discussed his recently published report, “The Forgotten People: Assessing Poverty Among Palestinian Refugees”, available online on PRC’s website. His research addressed the socio-economic conditions of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon. Despite the lack of accurate statistical data due to a lack of systematic monitoring, the picture he provided is one of poverty, insecurity and need for a political solution. Two-thirds of the Palestinian refugees in the camps in Lebanon are considered poor or extremely poor and unemployment has reached a historical high. One-third of the population does not meet the standards of nutrition and early school drop-outs have increased. The policies of the Lebanese government discriminate against Palestinians with strict visa requirements that prevent them from integrating into the country. In closing, he affirmed that the right of return is not an obstacle to peace. It is simply non-negotiable as it is the basis for dignity and the right to rights. It is urgent that the international community starts implementing the Palestinian right of return, in line with international law.

Aimee Shalan, Director of Friends of Birzeit University, talked about the life in higher education for Palestinian refugees. Students in Gaza cannot access university in the West Bank, while Palestinian students from Syria fleeing to Lebanon struggle with the different syllabus. UNRWA schools suffer from stigma and continuous cuts in services. Access to higher education has become political as a way to counteract the Israeli occupation. In fact, literacy in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is one of the highest in the region. Quoting a Palestinian student, “The occupation’s main goal is to stop education. That is why there are lots of checkpoints to make it difficult to come to university. Coming to the university is resisting.” The issue of refugees is current and worsening, so proper action to tackle the issue must encompass everyone willing to make a difference in these people’s lives.



Pietro Stefanini, Rohan Talbot, Sarah Apps (chair), Aimee Shalan & Sameh Habeeb.

Ben Bradshaw, Labour MP for Exeter, contributed to the seminar by reaffirming his commitment to the issues faced by the Palestinian refugees. He spoke about his first visit to Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan. “It really hit me, from the first time, the magnitude of the Nakba and the ongoing effects it was having on families and successive generations of these families.” Ben encouraged the public to pressure their MPs, as well as other European and American politicians, to go on one of these visits, organised by the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU). The danger in humanitarian discussions on refugees is that the stories of Palestinians get lost. The issue of Palestinian refugees is the only way to bring peace to the Middle East. The UK Parliament should not forget its overwhelming vote of two years ago, which decided to recognise the State of Palestine. The UK should now live up to its promise.

The speeches were followed by a series of questions from members of the audience, which included representatives of organisations like Jews for Justice for Palestinians. The questions and answers remarked that the root cause of the problem of the Palestinian refugees is Israel’s illegal occupation of the Palestinian Territories, but that the British government and the neglect of other Arab states also contribute to the issue and therefore, should be part of the solution.

PRC will re-launch the “Sorry Campaign” about the Balfour Declaration in February, to ask the government to officially apologise for the problems it created. PRC invites David Cameron to join the Palestinian refugees for lunch or dinner in a refugee camp on the centenary of the Balfour Declaration, instead of celebrating the day with the Jewish community, as previously announced. PRC invites all members of public to share the campaign.

Pietro Stefanini is a researcher at the Palestinian Return Centre, and holder of M.Sc degree in Politics of Conflicts, Rights and Justice from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).

The Palestinian Return Centre’s seminar on Poverty in Palestinian Refugee Camps was held at the House of Commons on 25th January 2016.

<http://www.prc.org.uk/portal/index.php/activities-news/workshop-seminar/3467-houses-of-commons-seminar-on-poverty-in-palestinian-refugee-camps#sthash.b7swTXv9.dpuf>



Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary



Friday 11 March 17.00 – 21.00 at the Party Bodies Drop in session and the First Timers Reception (York Barbican) – note this is networking; we will have fact sheets to give out.

Saturday 12 March 13.00–14.00 ‘Safe at Last? Syrian Refugees in the UK’ joint fringe with Social Liberal Forum (Novotel meeting Room 3). Chair: Mark Blackburn (Acting Director, SLF) and Panellists Zrinka Bralo (Executive Director, Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum), Baroness Sally Hamwee (Home Affairs Spokesperson in the House of Lords) and Yasmine Nahlawi (Rethink Rebuild Society: the Voice of the Syrian Community of Manchester).

Saturday 12 March 19.00–21.00 ‘The Next Wave: How are things changing for BaME Britons as we are joined by today’s refugees and asylum seekers?’ joint fringe with EMLD at The Melbourne Centre, Escrick Street, York YO10 4AW. Chaired by Ruwan Uduwera-Perera (Chair of EMLD), opening welcome by Cllr Sonja Crisp, Lord mayor of York and panellists Suzanne Fletcher MBE (Chair of LD4SOS), Richard Brett (English Candidates Chair and former Leader of Leeds City Council) and Janet King (Founder member of Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary and Bromsgrove Welcomes Refugees). Buffet supper provided

@YORK

“UK - in or out of Europe – An international perspective”

What do our global neighbours think of Brexit? LIBG are holding a forum to look at the issue from this angle. American Howard Dean remarked on it in his Isaiah Berlin Lecture, and we are seeking wider views. The panel has yet to be finalised but as at time of writing to include: Baroness Meral Hussein Ece, Anuja Prashar (Chair of Communities4Europe), the Polish Ambassador (tbc).• We are also hoping to have an Irish guest speaker. •To be chaired by Phil Bennion. Watch the LIBG website for further details www.libg.co.uk

National Liberal Club 11th April - 6.30-8.30pm

International Abstracts

Big Data is the new ground game: How Ted Cruz won Iowa, by Dan Patterson. TechRepublic 2.2.2016
One for the geeks, but apply the lessons. However, the so-called "conservative" Iowans are also fanatically Bible Belt, and Cruz knew what dog whistle to blow (his father is a pastor).

http://www.techrepublic.com/article/big-data-is-the-new-ground-game-how-ted-cruz-won-iowa/?tag=nl.e101&s_cid=e101&ttag=e101&ftag=TRE684d531

Want to win for women? Then you've got to vote to stay in Europe, by Catherine Bearder MEP. New Statesman 8.3.2016

<http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/staggers/2016/03/want-win-women-then-youve-got-vote-stay-europe>

Catherine also has a very useful piece for International Women's Day (8th March) on BuzzFeed

<http://www.buzzfeed.com/catherinebearder/6-things-europe-has-done-for-women-280qr>

As we go to press news of the death of Ralph Bancroft has just broken. Most people will know Ralph as master of ceremonies of the Glee Club, at many a conference, and here he is with the late Liz Rorison, back in 1990. For many, Ralph and Liz were the definitive Glee Club partnership. He was editor of the Liberator Songbook, which first appeared as 'Raise the Roof' for many years.

Ralph's activity goes back to Harrow Young Liberals in the early 1970s. Always innovative, he formed the Radical Rollers to enter a roller skating competition in the town where a YL conference was taking place that year. He was a councillor in Harrow from 1982-1986, and was part of Des Wilson's General Election Team. He was a member of the Liberator Collective and of the Liberal Revue Team.

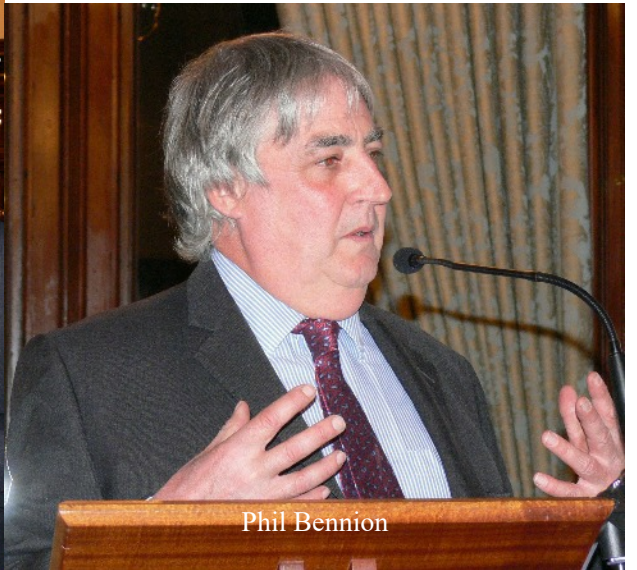
Absent from conferences over the last few years, Ralph's sight was failing. Notwithstanding, he appeared in rude health when he joined colleagues for a beer a few weeks ago. Ralph will be missed for his political insight, on top of all of the joy he brought to Liberal politics.

Stewart Rayment



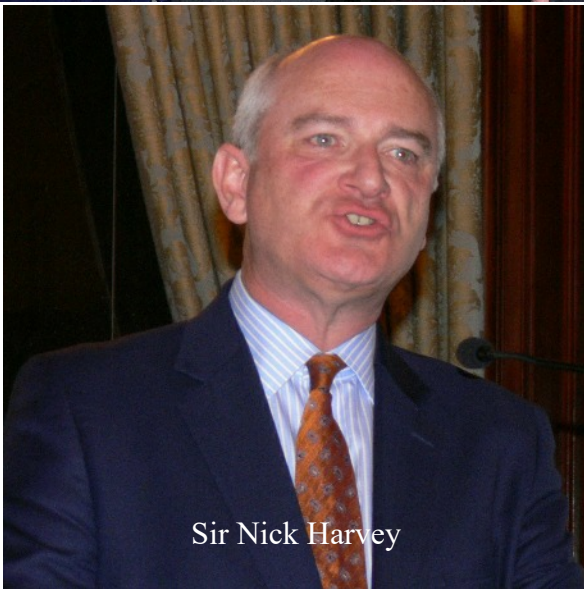
The LIBG Diplomatic Reception - 29th February at the NLC

Michael Saki (Counsellor, South Sudan Embassy), Paul Kyriacou (Southwark Liberal Democrats), Bernardino Pacheco (Counsellor, Embassy of the Republic of Angola) John Pindar (LIBG Exec).



Phil Bennion

Dr June Verner (NLC), Irina Bormotova (Russian Community Council) & Sayakane Sisouvang (Ambassador, Embassy of the Lao People's Democratic Republic)



Sir Nick Harvey



Lord Chidgey



Lord Chidgey & Mmasekgoa Masire-Mwaba (former Commonwealth Deputy Secretary General)



Yadav Bhandari (Director, Everest Inn) and Tej B. Chhetri (Chargé d'Affaires a.i., Embassy of Nepal).



Jitoko C Tikolevu (High Commissioner, Fiji) and Lord Loomba.

Girish Nunkoo (High Commissioner, Mauritius), Baroness Sarah Ludford and Sugeeshwara Gunratna (Deputy High Commissioner, Sri Lanka)



Lord Carlile of Berriew, Mr. & Mrs. Claus Grube (Ambassador, Royal Danish Embassy), Jerry Asquith (former member of LIBG Exec)



Karwan Jamal Tahir (KRG High Representative to the UK)

reviews

Hillary Rising, by James D. Boys
Biteback 2016 £14.99
isbn 9781849549646

Hillary Clinton is a polarizing figure: decades of character assassination have taken their toll. Now a majority of voters, even Democrats, question her honesty, although few can explain why. Still she is what currently stands between Americans and a Republican presidency: a preposterous Donald Trump, a much-disliked Ted Cruz, or a Marco Rubio, the "boy in the bubble." All of these candidates oppose a woman's right to a legal abortion, claim to favour quick military solutions in the Middle East, proclaim the Obama presidency a disaster, and promise to repeal the Affordable Care Act, commonly known as Obamacare. All favor what they call "Second Amendment rights" - easy access to guns. All have a xenophobic attitude towards immigrants, particularly refugees from the Middle East.

In *Hillary Rising: The Politics, Persona and Policies of a New American Dynasty*, James Boys has given us a well-organized and very readable book that provides an up-to-date if not particularly impartial or balanced study of Hillary Clinton for British readers.

Beginning with Hillary's early appointment to head up a task force drawing up a plan for health care that would cover the well over 10% of the population without health insurance, Boys states that the process by which she and her team devised the plan, the scale of the bill and her refusal to consider alternative approaches helped doom the effort. He criticizes her for secrecy during the planning, for not making the AMA (American Medical Association) and other opposition groups part of the process, and for rejecting a weaker plan proposed by Jim Cooper of Tennessee. Yet the whole point of universal health insurance was to insure the people whom insurance companies had refused to cover.

Hillary Rising offers a sketchy and somewhat naive reading of the fight for universal health care in the U.S., something often attempted since FDR. Only Obama succeeded, despite formidable opposition, in barely getting a flawed bill passed. Mainstream Republicans like Senator Charles Grassley of Iowa made headlines when they denounced Obamacare as something that would involve "death panels" and "pulling the plug on Grandma." Town hall meetings in 2009 where Democratic Senators and Representatives tried to explain and promote the plan were routinely disrupted by organized demonstrators shouting them down. Only a series of surprise Supreme Court decisions have saved Obamacare.

The vested interests of the AMA, the insurance and the pharmaceutical companies have long fought change: over 50 years ago they directly interfered in an election in Canada, where a single-payer system was being promoted by Premier Tommy Douglas of Saskatchewan.

To understand such fierce opposition to change, one has only to consider the vast sums of money involved in the American health care industry. Drug costs are spiraling out of control, and are currently being investigated by Congress. In our own experience in 2015, a prescription for 30 pills that was available for 65 euros in France, about \$35 in Canada, and £10 in the U.K. cost \$980 in the U.S.

The power of American health insurance companies is immense: hospitals and clinics have to employ office workers to check on whether certain procedures will be possible, that is, if the cost will be covered by the patient's insurance. (A typical policy might involve hundreds of pages of legalese). Insurance companies make their profits by denying payment. Hospital stays are short. A surgeon in Iowa complained to us about having to discharge patients soon after surgery, patients who'd go home alone and have to somehow manage without further help. So if "death panels" do exist, they are health insurance companies that until recently could refuse to insure patients with a pre-existing condition, or could refuse to renew a policy for no reason, something that Obamacare has successfully ended.

When Ted Cruz was campaigning in Iowa, a voter told him about his brother-in-law, a barber who could never afford health insurance. When he finally got insurance thanks to Obamacare, it was too late. He had terminal cancer, and nothing could be done. In his reply, Cruz gave the usual attack on Obamacare but like the other Republican candidates, offered no alternatives. In fact the human tragedy he'd just heard about seemed not to register with him.

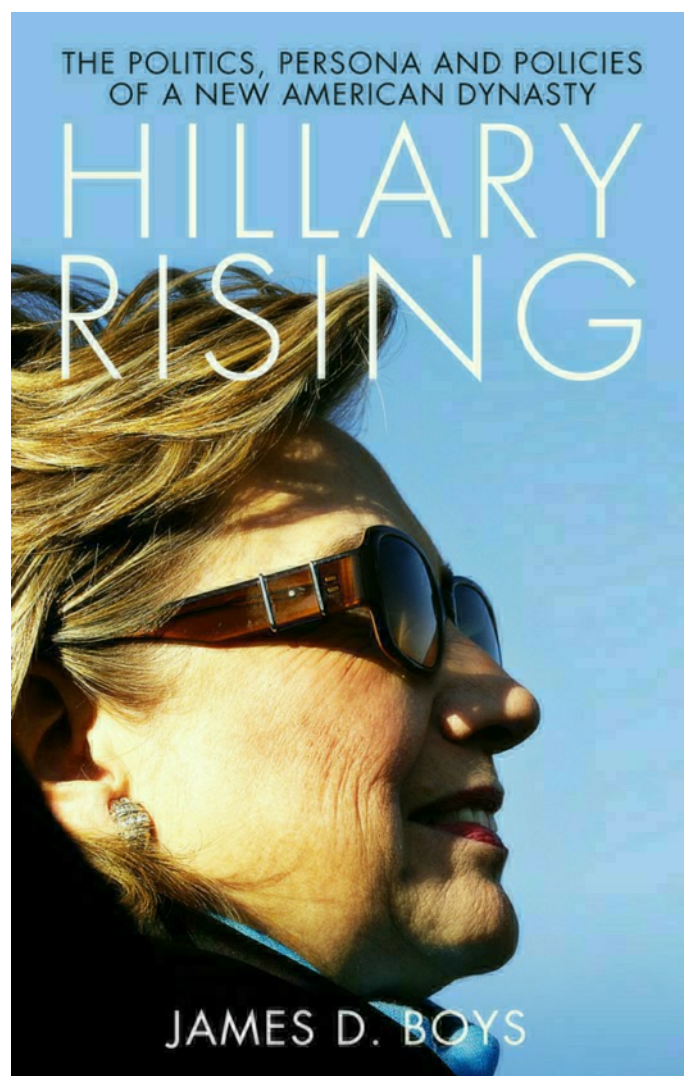
Bernie Sanders, the self-described Socialist senator from Vermont who is competing with Hillary for the Democratic nomination, has launched a fierce critique of Wall Street, income inequality, and the health insurance reform that has not gone far enough. In fact he espouses a European-style single-payer system. Although he has attracted much support from young voters, the sweeping changes he proposes would never pass in Congress.

The nadir of Hillary's career as Secretary of State was the attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi on September 11, 2012. A U.S. ambassador and three other Americans died in the attack, and ever since Republicans have tried to hold Hillary responsible. As Boys mentions, eight congressional investigations have failed to find any evidence of criminal wrongdoing. A more recent 11-hour grilling worked more to Hillary's advantage than to her accusers'. In fact, as reported in *Media Matters*, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), during an interview with Fox News about his candidacy for House Speaker, boasted that the committee had achieved its goal of damaging Clinton's poll numbers. Since then, former Benghazi committee staffer Bradley F. Podliska and a second Republican congressman, Representative Richard Hanna (R-NY) have admitted the committee was "designed to go after" Clinton.

At least the Republicans have taken Hillary seriously. Boys trivializes Hillary's contributions. In recent debates she has referred to the work she did as Secretary of State which led up to the resumption of diplomatic ties with Cuba and the nuclear agreement with Iran, yet on page 98 of his text, Boys states that it was only Hillary's "celebrity status" that got her both positions: Secretary of State and previously, Senator from New York. His clear implication is that a mere celebrity would not have much to offer.

In *Hillary Rising*, a main criticism levelled at the Clintons is their raising large sums of money by accepting high speaking fees and lucrative book contracts. The U.S. system rewards people with fame and influence, and members of both political parties have capitalized on it. It's worth remembering that special investigator Kenneth Starr spent close to \$40 million of taxpayers' money investigating the Clintons and managed to come up with little more than Monica Lewinsky. Of course no taxpayer money was available to cover the Clintons' legal fees.

The Clintons' focus on raising money could also be a realistic understanding of what's needed to win U.S. elections these days. Nowhere in *Hillary Rising* does Boys discuss the overwhelming influence of multi-billionaires like the Koch brothers (who are also climate change deniers), casino mogul Sheldon Adelson and many others who use their vast fortunes to affect public opinion and win elections. The 2010 Supreme Court decision "Citizens United" allows individuals or corporations to give unlimited money to political



campaigns. So the "vast right wing conspiracy" Hillary Clinton spoke of in 1998 is now better funded than ever.

Even back in 1998 the "conspiracy" was not something Hillary imagined: it had started earlier in the 1990s with Richard Mellon Scaife, a major backer of conservative causes. Scaife gave \$1.8 million to *The American Spectator*, a conservative magazine that in the 90s went in for scandal and "hit jobs" according to one of its writers. Scaife's gift funded investigations into Bill Clinton's personal life, including the "Troopergate" exposé which led to Paula Jones's sexual harassment suit against the President. (Ironically, Scaife's own wife later divorced him for seeing prostitutes). In *Hillary Rising*, *The American Spectator* earns one brief mention, and Scaife is left out altogether.

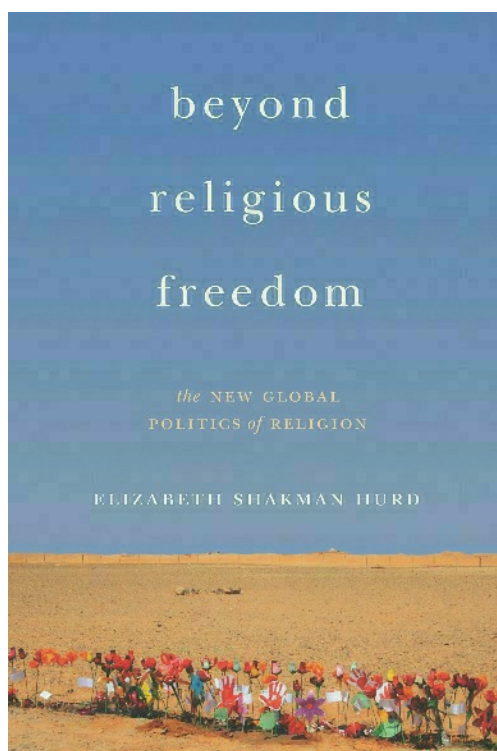
Recently, after the Iowa caucuses, former President Jimmy Carter commented on BBC 4 about what has happened to American democracy and how elections have changed since he was President: "I didn't have any money. Now there is a massive infusion of hundreds of millions of dollars into campaigns for all the candidates. Some candidates like Trump can put in his own money but others have to be able to raise \$100m to \$200m just to get the Republican or Democratic nomination. That's the biggest change in America." And that's a change that Hillary Clinton has to deal with.

James Boys describes the changes since her failed campaign of 2008, her greater efforts to engage with people in small groups, to convey to them that she is the candidate who has the potential to bring about real change and that this election will determine the future of the American middle class. As Boys puts it, she will face "many obstacles: her age, her gender, her past, her critics, the changing nature of American politics, her party, her husband, her role in the Obama administration, her 2008 campaign, and her own personal weaknesses." Many people would consider these her strengths. That Boys considers all of these aspects of what make up a candidate to be obstacles in Hillary's case, that he categorizes her as a celebrity who has not accomplished very much and goes further to compare her to Nixon for her lack of transparency puts *Hillary Rising* in an ever-increasing collection of anti-Hillary literature.

Christine Graf

**Beyond Religious Freedom, the new global politics of religion,
by Elizabeth Shakman Hurd.
Princeton 2015 £19.95**

The cause of religious tolerance and Liberalism walked hand in hand in Britain, and is something we more or less take for granted, notwithstanding the rants of the occasional secularist. By contrast several people



have been taken by surprise by the residual anti-Roman Catholicism of many continental Liberal parties, the point being that the Roman church was one of the bastions of high conservatism and tyranny too which they were opposed. For my part, I have found churches to be a part of community cohesion, though frequently crossed swords with red vicars, more on account of their politics than their faith.

On the world stage, so called radical Islam has held centre-stage for well over a decade, and one sees uses of religion to ferment nationalisms across the Balkans, in Myanmar, and Sri Lanka to cite just a few examples. The particularly dodgy strategy, promoted, typically by American intelligence agencies, is to find an 'acceptable' strain of a religion and promote it to some dubious end. The Israeli's promotion of HAMAS against a secular Palestine Liberation Organisation can give you some idea of how that can go wrong.

Luckily Hurd doesn't seem to be advocating this. She defines three layers - governed religion ("religion as construed by those in positions of political and religious power"), expert religion (religion according to those who "generate policy-relevant knowledge"), and lived religion ("religion as practiced by everyday people and

groups”). The first two are somewhat questionable, we have to hope for the best with the third, which is at imperfect vessel for the machinations of state and expert. I have great hopes for the impact of the west on Islam. In a tolerant secular society, Islamic thinkers are able to think the unthinkable in terms of what they might be able to do in their more theocratically oriented home states. This will take time, much time. At the moment it is hampered by the scenarios of imperialism and poorly conceived western interventions – all of those countries ventured into to ‘help’.

Maybe Hurd is amongst the ‘experts’ that the ‘governed’ or rather governors are listening to. If not, they might pick up this book.

Stewart Rayment

Keepers of the Golden Shore, by Michael Quentin Morton.

Reaktion Books 2016 £25.00

isbn 9781780235806

The transformation of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from impoverished sheikhdoms along the Trucial Coast to a dynamic post-modern society with one of the fastest rates of economic and population growths in the world is surely one of the most remarkable development trajectories of the second half of the 20th century. As a country, the UAE has only existed since 1971; previously, the seven emirates had survived with often indistinct borders between them drawn in the sand, all under the tutelage of Great Britain as the protecting power. It was largely thanks to the UK’s cost-cutting decision to withdraw from East of Suez that concentrated the minds of the local rulers that they would do better in an uncertain world as a single identity rather than as seven, though Ras Al Khaimah dragged its heels for a while. Bahrain and Qatar could have been part of the new enterprise but decided to go their own way. Subsequently, oil revenues helped Abu Dhabi become the strongest kid on the block, though Dubai’s embracing of economic diversification and in-your-face self-promotion has made it the one emirate of which that everyone has heard.



Abu Dhabi in the 1950s.

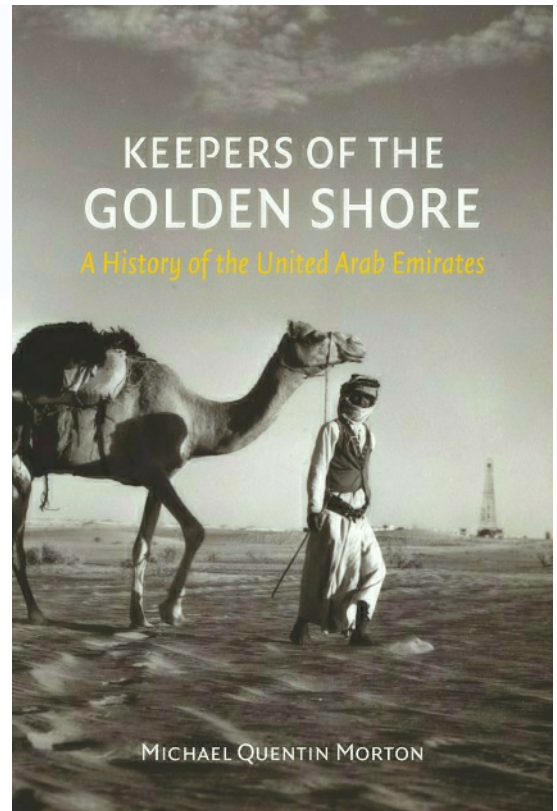
It would be tempting to think that the above is all the really matters when one considers the history of the UAE, but as Michael Quentin Morton’s new book *Keepers of the Golden Shore* recounts, archaeological findings show significant human activity in this region at a time when the climate was more benign than it is now. Moreover, pearl fishing brought periods of prosperity to Gulf communities, albeit unevenly distributed, for several centuries. But the bottom fell out of the pearl market around 1930 in the face of competition from Japanese cultured pearls and the impact of the Great Depression. The following two decades, including the Second World War, were a period of great hardship for Gulf Arabs, including widespread malnutrition, causing some local people to leave. The subsequent exploitation of oil dramatically changed that situation so that now the UAE’s hunger is for overseas migrant labour and the newest and flashiest of everything.

Quentin Morton, who grew up in the Gulf, writes with calm authority and rational judgment about the often passionate rivalry between the various emirates and their ruling families, several of which engaged in fratricide and other dastardly acts. He rightly underlines the particular significance of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan (1918-2004), ruler of Abu Dhabi and President of the UAE, without fully explaining his charisma. I was in Bahrain when Zayed died and the public mourning even there was dramatic and sincerely felt.

Perhaps because he does not want to get his book banned in the UAE and neighbouring countries, the author is a little circumspect in his treatment of the bloody suppression of the Pearl roundabout protests in Bahrain in 2011.

But for anyone who wants to understand from where what is now the UAE emerged and how that happened this is a most useful and readable account.

Jonathan Fryer



Team LIBG at the Diplomatic Reception

Trevor Peel, Merlene Emerson, Robert Woodthorpe Browne, Nick Harvey, Phil Bennion, Adrian Trett, Julie Smith & Nick Hopkinson