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# INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



# EVENTS

**5<sup>th</sup> December** LIBG Forum. Syria -the current situation and the outlook for the future. Speakers include John McHugo. NLC 7.00pm

**9<sup>th</sup> December** People's Vote Rally 1pm for a 2pm start at the ICC Auditorium, ExCel Centre, Western Gateway, London, E16 1XL.

**December** LIHRC, Copenhagen

**7<sup>th</sup> February 2019** Scottish Group meeting with Baroness Alison Suttie. Details to be announced. Contact [paul.edie@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:paul.edie@blueyonder.co.uk)

**22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> February 2019** Scottish Liberal Democrat Conference, Hamilton

**16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> March 2019** Liberal Democrat Conference, York

**24<sup>th</sup> June** 2019 NLC Diplomatic Reception

**14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> September 2019** Liberal Democrat's Conference. Bournemouth

*For bookings & other information please contact the Treasurer below.*

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Underground: Embankment

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**Photographs:** Stewart Rayment, Rebecca Tinsley, George Cunningham, Chinese Lib Dems



## Liberal International (British Group) Forum **Syria - the current situation and the outlook for the future.**

Speakers include the international jurist and expert on the Middle East John McHugo, whose latest book is "Syria: A Recent History" and Chris Doyle, director of the Council for Arab-British Understanding. Others to be confirmed.

**December 5, 2018 7:00 PM-9:00 PM**  
National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place,  
London SW1A 2HE

# From Saudi to Cameroon, do UK business links really ‘open channels to raise human rights concerns’?

**Rebecca Tinsley**

So the government claims. But the evidence fails to convince. There are better options, including targeted sanctions.

Do business links improve the UK’s influence with repressive regimes, as the government claims?

In the brave new pre-Brexit world, business brings diplomatic influence. Or so we’re told.

In Yemen, the worst humanitarian disaster since the Second World War, 85,000 children have starved to death in a war prosecuted by Saudi Arabia and its proxies. Earlier this year, the UK government responded to calls to stop arms sales to Riyadh as follows: “The longstanding partnership between Saudi Arabia and the UK has helped make both of our countries safer and more prosperous...intelligence we have received in the past from Saudi Arabia has saved potentially hundreds of lives in the UK.”

Theresa May has repeatedly used this phrase to defend Britain’s embrace of Saudi Arabia, while providing no examples of how, when or where attacks were deterred. Saudi school books still promote hatred of Christians and Jews, and the Kingdom continues to fund the spread of extreme Wahhabist Islamic ideology in thousands of mosques across the globe. Together with the Khashoggi murder and the imprisonment and torture of women’s rights activists, how has trade had a positive influence on Saudi’s ruling class?

**Across Africa it’s a similar story.**

Britain cites trade to justify closer relations with Sudan, whose leader, Field Marshal Bashir, has been indicted for genocide in Darfur by the International Criminal Court. Last year, Foreign Office minister Rory Stewart told a Parliamentary committee, “Engaging with the Government [of Sudan] provides another channel to raise human rights concerns.”

Since Sudan continues to rank at the bottom of both Freedom House and Transparency International’s indices, with journalists, lawyers and democracy activists routinely imprisoned and tortured, “engagement” has not had much impact.

A few months later, responding to an MP concerned by Khartoum’s systematic and racially-based jihad against its Black African citizens, Stewart wrote “As part of our phased increase in direct engagement with the government of Sudan, we continue to consider opportunities to promote trade with Sudan. Trade can help open up closed off political and economic systems and thereby to improve the human rights situation.”

Yet, groups such as Human Rights Watch detect no improvement in the regime’s behaviour. Minutes of a Sudan government cabinet meeting on November 11th 2018, leaked by two sources, read like a script for The Godfather Part 4. Ministers talk of blackmailing opponents, using “tricks and deception” in negotiations, “buying” leaders, and “giving them a glimpse of hope in order to deceive them.” The regime’s contempt for Western diplomats is palpable. In the light of their unguarded discussion, it is delusional to believe the men running Sudan will be influenced by British “engagement.”

And what of Cameroon, where Liam Fox, the trade secretary, boasts that a British company, New Age, has signed a £1.5 billion deal for Cameroon’s natural gas?

Conservative Peer Baroness Goldie, responding for the UK government in a recent debate on the deteriorating situation in that country, told the House of Lords, “We do not see that there has to be a choice between securing growth and investment for the UK, and raising human rights...by having a strong relationship with Cameroon we are able to have open discussions on a range of admittedly difficult issues, including human rights.”

Yet, despite that “strong relationship” and “discussions,” President Paul Biya, in power since 1982, refuses to meet any representatives of Cameroon’s marginalised English-speaking minority. Human rights groups say Biya responded to 2016’s peaceful protests with disproportionate violence, prompting a militant and violent Anglophone reaction, and pushing the country further into conflict.

Disregarding a wealth of evidence from Amnesty, Human Rights Watch and Crisis Group, Goldie insists Cameroon’s violence had “complex causes, and as with many conflicts, it is not always easy to establish what is happening on the ground.”

Goldie’s statements recall a similar justification for inaction as genocide in Bosnia, Rwanda and Darfur unfolded. Former UK foreign secretary Douglas Hurd framed the killing in the Balkans as “ancient ethnic hatreds” echoing other Western diplomats, implying both sides were as bad as each other. A year after the war ended, Hurd, then at National Westminster, held meetings with Slobodan Milosevic, later tried for genocide, to discuss the privatisation of Serbia’s state assets.

### **Trade and fantasy, Russia and China**

And it’s a similar story of trade first, everything else second, with other repressive regimes.

Close business ties with Russia have also failed to lead to an improvement in human rights, the rule of law, a reduction in corruption, or the opening of public space for civil discourse and participation.

In James Mann’s 2006 book, *“The China Fantasy: How our Leaders Explain Away Chinese Repression,”* he argued that Western politicians and businesspeople foster an elaborate set of illusions about China, centred on the belief that commerce will lead inevitably to political change and democracy. Instead, many China-watchers point to the increasingly repressive climate under President Xi and his cult of personality, with a million ethnic Uighur people held in re-education camps, and a crackdown on freedom of speech.

The “trade” which UK ministers encourage with repressive regimes is usually British companies selling extractive industry services and equipment, or weapons. Have UK officials not realised that the seller has no negotiating power in a situation where the buyer has plenty of other sources from which to buy? What also becomes apparent from UK ministers’ comments is a confusion about the benefits of trade: when Britain is purchasing goods from repressive regimes it increases the UK’s trade deficit and is of no apparent benefit to the UK economy. Yet, ministers seem unaware of the difference between buying and selling.

### **What can we do? Targeted sanctions and soft power**

If trade links fail to influence repressive regimes, what policies might have an impact? How can we use existing international law to protect human rights when our governments, regional institutions and the UN, lack the necessary political will to enforce treaties, conventions and global justice mechanisms?

Sanctions rarely reach decision-making elites guilty of atrocities, while their wretched populations bear the burden. However, research indicates that economic tools which carefully target the assets of dictators could have greater impact by making it personal. Having their credit cards refused, stopping their visits to cosmetic surgeons in London or shopping trips to Paris, seizing their villas on the Riviera, and excluding them from high-status global summits makes the punishment humiliating, and therefore much more likely to work.

Experience in Bosnia and Darfur illustrates the futility of placing peacekeepers with inadequate mandates into conflict zones. But stronger rules of engagement, backed by political will, would mean that peacekeepers represent the eyes of the world. Romeo Dallaire, the UN commander in Rwanda, believes that if the UN had allowed him to deploy 5,000 troops, it would have signalled its seriousness to the *genocidaires*.

Peace deals often fail because they lack specific benchmarks and punishments for failure to honour promises: they must include punitive measures and enforcement mechanisms. Genocidal regimes, like the Sudanese, know from experience that they can get away with violating the provisions to which they have signed-up, even before the international mediators' planes have left Khartoum's airspace.



Soft power also comes in the form of entertainment and culture. During the Cold War, West Germany broadcast TV shows into the Soviet-controlled East, and millions behind the Iron Curtain relied on the BBC World Service for relatively impartial news. On occasion, Hollywood has projected an idealistic and inspiring view of life in a liberal democracy that has fired the imagination of people living in repressive regimes.

The work of Western charities in the developing world often shows what could be possible. Across Britain's former empire, there are impressive civil society leaders who are the products of UK-funded schools, and families benefiting from health care provided by UK charities.

The sooner we embrace soft power tools such as these, as well as smart sanctions which are precisely targeted at human rights-abusers, the sooner we can reject the binary choice between averting our eyes or dropping explosives from 30,000 feet. As Brexit diminishes Britain's influence in the world, our government will be increasingly desperate for trade deals, and less discriminating about whom we court - another good reason to develop soft power alternatives to selling what remains of our soul.

### ***Rebecca Tinsley***

*Rebecca Tinsley is the founder of Network for Africa, a charity that trains local people to become lay counsellors for the survivors of conflict and genocide. She also founded Waging Peace, an NGO campaigning for human rights in Sudan.*

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### **Cover image: Christmas Tree 2016, by Shirazeh Houshiary.**

In a world turned upside-down – Brexit, Trump, Putin, Populisms it seems appropriate to recall Shirazeh Houshiary's Tate Gallery installation *Christmas Tree 2016*.

She said of it at the time, 'I would like us to contemplate that the pine tree is one of the oldest species and recognise the roots are the source of its continued stability, nourishment and longevity. As the roots remain hidden, it is best to seek what is hidden rather than what is apparent. As a Buddhist monk wrote, 'An old pine tree preaches wisdom'.'



# DAMNED FROM THE START

## Paul Reynolds

At the Liberal Democrats' conference in Brighton, a motion was passed commending the party's new foreign policy, as in a policy paper 'Britain's Place in the World'. This paper was the result of nearly three years work, undertaken by a working group at the behest of the party's Federal Policy Committee; the standard route for party policymaking.

Notwithstanding the passing of the motion accompanying it, the paper has been subject to very heavy criticism by some of the party's most eminent figures. I stepped into the fray too, with a 20-page analysis including suggestions for significant improvement, wearing my Federal International Relations Committee hat.

### HORRIBLY WRONG

Reading the paper, it is obvious that something went horribly wrong. The paper does not provide a useful critical analysis of existing UK foreign policy and neither does it set out by contrast a different approach. It does make some recommendations, but these are largely disconnected from the rest of the document and are either embarrassingly trivial or strangely absent of justification in the text. It is clear the report has not been stress-tested.

Britain's Place in the World is a compelling argument for policymaking system reform for one very good reason; it was well-planned, had plenty of time, the policy working group committee was populated by a wide variety of party members with expertise, and it took evidence from relevant organisations and specialists. In other words, in terms of procedures and personnel, it was exemplary. It represents a wider system failure rather than a failure of individuals.

The paper contains many of the policymaking problems typically found in Liberal Democrat papers, but in this case they have almost all come together in one report.

First, there is no definition of the 'foreign policy problem' the party is attempting to address. Being somewhat unfocused on addressing what we see as the problems, has led to a lack of clarity over what we would do differently in government. Indeed, extracting the policy changes the party would put in place from the report is not easy at all, and importantly there is no attempt to describe current UK foreign policy. It is difficult to glean exactly what we disagree with, which is an odd approach for an opposition party.

This absence of problem-definition has also led to a structure which makes a focus on what we would do differently rather tortuous. The report's structure, dividing 'The World We're In' versus 'The World We Want to Build' not only makes it hard to say what we would do differently, it has neo-colonial overtones. This is because the brave new world we wish to build lies within sovereign nations, whose populations or governments may, unsurprisingly, have an opinion of their own.

This structure also suffers from an absence of timeframe. Is the policy a set of principles to be applied in future foreign policy issues over a 60 year period? If so, then referring to present day conflicts or problems may not be necessary. A shorter timeframe would necessitate a deeper look at specific regions and countries. The paper is silent on such matters - is it general principles only or are we setting out policy for the next 3-5 years?

In the latter case probably the major global development is China's Belt and Road initiative, and maritime 'silk road', which have been creating a swathe of Chinese influence through Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey to the Mediterranean, taking in some GCC countries and the Horn of Africa. China and Russia are being brought closer together as a result.

These are important tectonic shifts in the global balance, and are central to UK foreign policy making over the next decade for the UK and the EU. However strangely little attention is afforded it in the new foreign policy report.

There are many other important developments which the party's new policy might be expected to usefully address. These include Iran and the JCPOA, the end of quantitative easing, the rise of protectionism, the Yemen war, US debt and the US petrodollar, Brexit, the fallout from Chinese influence in south-east Asia and Africa, the consequences of a Russian 'victory' in Syria and a Western 'defeat' in Iraq and Afghanistan, the arms trade, the 'proxification' of war, and many other issues that will be with us for at least the next three to five years.

Perhaps surprisingly The World We're In section pays scant attention to such matters.

A fair explanation for this apparent neglect might be found in the list of policy priorities and the goals described. They are summarised as:

- i) promotion of gender equality
- ii) addressing climate change and the environment
- iii) extending and protecting human rights
- iv) reducing economic inequality
- v) improving access to information and communications technology.

These are linked to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). However the report purports to be an updated foreign policy statement.

MDGs are important, but international development goals are not foreign policy; primarily since they exclude the pursuit of the UK's (or EU's or western) self-interest. A foreign policy which circumvents the concept of the UK's interests and those of its allies is not a foreign policy. A foreign policy includes international development policy but also includes UK defence, economic, diplomatic, environmental, global governance, human rights and migration policy among others.

Proposals for explicit changes specifically in foreign policy represent the weakest part of the report, whereas they should be the strongest.

Proposals include making 1,000 or more agreements with mobile phone companies worldwide so UK citizens receive text messages about UK embassies on arrival in foreign countries.

They also include the UK spending vast sums developing IT, fast internet and artificial intelligence capacity in poorer countries, without making reference to why such countries fall behind in the first place, or whether direct investment of aid funds in IT infrastructure is the best way of achieving such aims.

The report seems ignorant of the telecomms and IT sectors in the developing world; quite a shortcoming in a policy committing billions of pounds of UK taxpayers' money.

There is a proposal for a pan-governmental cabinet committee on international affairs,. However, there has been such a thing for over 100 years. It was recently (mis)renamed the National Security Council, a change made with the approval of the Lib Dems in Coalition.

Nine extra non-permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council are proposed, but there is no proper explanation as to why and what problem this change addresses.

A proposal is made that senior staffing at the Foreign Office should be 50/50 male female. This is an admirable goal to be pursued (the FCO is the worst offender) but it is implied that this is a policy to be applied across government.

It is therefore a public administration matter not a foreign policy one. In any case it is also implied that it is to be summarily implemented. Is this achieved by firing senior males because of their gender, or by hiring hundreds of additional senior females, in which case what will it cost and what will they do?

Despite gender equality internationally at the top of the list, proposals for achieving it are largely absent. In particular the report seems to forget that countries where gender equality goals might be pursued are sovereign. Any major project to meet the report's ambitions (not just village level) would require the consent of the host government, and thus proposals are meaningless if this issue is not addressed.

Finally the report, by contrast to its MDG focus, seems very hawkish on military matters, seeing Libya as a successful humanitarian intervention by the UK and apparently regretting that we did not go to war with Russia in Syria on responsibility to protect grounds. The report argues for focusing UK forces almost exclusively on R2P-justified attacks around the world.

The reality is that most of these policy ideas have simply not been thought through or stress-tested, rather than being misguided.

I have absolutely no doubt that some ambassadors or high commissioners in London from 'emerging market' countries, would describe in language less polite than 'neo-colonialism' the absence of recognition of their sovereignty, the glossing over of domestic regulatory frames for IT investments for example, plus unexplained proposals for changes to the UN Security Council, and the idea of frequent R2P-justified attacks on countries.

## **SYSTEM FAILURE**

The system failure to which I refer is reinforced by my own experience as a past member of several Liberal Democrat Policy Working Groups, where similar problems resulted.

The brief, usually very broad, and the interpretation of the brief, are where the many problems begin. If the group doesn't start with, or arrive at, a definition of the problems with current government policy it is supposed to be addressing, then its work is likely to be unfocused and drift off into people's hobby horses or supply side interests rather than focus on public policy. If there are no initial hypotheses about the nature of the obstacles or the policy changes one might envisage, then research is likely to be unfocused.

This systemic difficulty is very clear on examination of many past policy papers, and has frequently led to long lists of sometimes random recommendations where the trivial are intermingled with the far-reaching, and many obvious problems with existing government policy are overlooked.

This method of deliberations is another systemic flaw. First, it is not clear if members are lay 'representatives' of parts of the party, or experts in the subject matter. The latter is at least nominally the basis of recruitment to the groups, but the former is the basis of a process that emulates the 'taking evidence' approach of parliamentary select committees.

Taking evidence from organisations can be difficult in the pursuit of public policy, if such organisations send along public affairs or marketing officers merely lobbying over the superiority of their 'products' or activities.

Without problem-definition, the absence of robust lines of enquiry from such working groups further weakens the usefulness of the evidence-taking approach.

These Policy Working Groups do not apply conflicts of interest rules, and in my own experience not everyone on these groups is pursuing public policy.

Some have careers and CVs to enhance, and others are pursuing supply side interests. The latter is very common. The laborious nature of the groups' research system typically leads to a decline in attendance over their one or two-years life. Those with motives other than public policy can easily sit out the meetings until



there are only a handful attending, and ensure their sectional aims are met in the final report.

The proper response to the Britain's Place in the World is not just to recast the policy paper, addressing these criticisms. It should be to overhaul the policymaking process itself. This would be the best outcome for the party, and its credibility.

***Paul Reynolds***

*Professor Paul Reynolds is a member of the Liberal Democrat Federal International Relations Committee and the executive of Liberal International (British Group).*

## **Shoring Up the Iranian Nuclear Deal**

### **George Cunningham**

On 8<sup>th</sup> May, President Trump decided to withdraw the US from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly known as the "Iran Nuclear Deal", and to reinstate all previously lifted sanctions under this agreement. The re-imposed US sanctions came into effect after a "wind-down" period of 90 days (ending 6<sup>th</sup> August 2018) for certain sanctions and will come into effect after 180 days (ending 4<sup>th</sup> November 2018) for others.

A meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission was convened in Vienna shortly afterwards President Trump's announcement at the request of Iran with the E3+2 (China, France, Germany, Russia, United Kingdom) chaired by the EU to review the situation. The IAEA has confirmed 11 times so far that Iran has abided by the agreement. The EU remain firmly committed to all aspects of the JCPOA on condition that Iran continues to abide by the deal, which had been unanimously endorsed previously by UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

As the first batch of re-imposed US sanctions on Iran took effect on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2018, the EU's updated Blocking Statute entered into force immediately to try and mitigate their impact on the interests of EU companies doing legitimate business in Iran. The Blocking Statute allows EU operators to recover damages arising from US extraterritorial sanctions from the persons causing them and nullifies the effect in the EU of any foreign court rulings based on them. It also forbids EU persons from complying with those sanctions, unless exceptionally authorised to do so by the European Commission in case non-compliance seriously damages their interests or the interests of the Union.

Sanctions imposed by the EU in view of the human rights situation in Iran, support for terrorism and other grounds are not part of the nuclear agreement and remain in place.



*Deputy EU Ambassador George Cunningham, joined by the Ambassadors of France, Germany and the UK, leads the discussion on the JCPOA with Afghan Foreign Minister Rabbani in Kabul, May 2018.*

# THE DEATH OF A JOURNALIST

## Lou Ford

The death of Cemal Khashoggi is the latest casualty of a somewhat funny fight for the leadership of the Sunni world of between house of Erdogan and house of Saud. Since his disappearance after Khashoggi walked in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, the Erdogan regime played its cards carefully to erode the influence of the Saudi crown prince over the Sunni world. The main target of this fight is to get the support of the western countries, USA, UK and EU. Khashoggi 's death played into Erdogan's hand; first he emerged as the saviour of the oppressed dissident, secondly he successfully managed to have a major PR coup against new Saudi regime as events portrayed the crown prince as a ruthless killer.

Since early 70's the Saudi regime has been investing heavily in Turkey; buying banks, financial companies, factories and land. Also setting up religious foundations, mosques and basically trying to create Wahhabi factions in Turkey. Until Erdogan came to power, the Saudi's had a lot hurdles to clear while creating an influence in Turkey. With Erdogan regime those hurdles disappeared and they had relatively free hand. Particularly when Syrian war started, both regimes worked together to help the jihadist by sending arms, ammunition and set up channels for jihadis to fight in Syria.

On the other hand, the main differences were never resolved between them. The Arab Spring particularly made it clear that the two regional power had clearly different ideas about the future of Middle East. Erdogan's support of Muslim Brotherhood and his ambitions of setting up a new Ottoman empire were clearly worrying signs for the Saudi's. Both regimes were fighting in background to get the approval of western world, yet on the surface it seemed they were working in line. The new crown prince in the Saudi kingdom brought the struggle between two regimes into the daylight. His unorthodox moves weakened Erdogan's hand. The Prince moved much more swiftly than was anticipated. In the meantime, Erdogan was trying really hard to get enough support from west particularly from Trump. Erdogan needed victories and recognition in order to consolidate his power in the country, most importantly support for Muslim Brotherhood movements. The most striking difference between him and the new prince was surfaced on issues of Muslim Brotherhood movement, relations to Israel and most importantly Iran. Qatar and Turkey seemed to be on the losing side against new aggressive policies of the crown prince.

On the other hand, Erdogan's power had been weakening because of economic crisis and steep devaluation of Turkish lira. He certainly needs show himself to his power base (in Turkey) as a regional leader, a credible military power even a power broker in Syria.

Then Khashoggi walked in Saudi consulate in Istanbul and brutally killed. Erdogan who successfully set up a proto fascist regime in Turkey, suddenly emerged as a friend of the oppressed and dissidents. He has certainly weakened Saudi prince's hand but not enough. An internationally recognised journalist became a victim of two ruthless regimes' power struggle. Whole affair played out as if it was a carefully orchestrated PR campaign by Erdogan regime. So far it looks successful. But some cracks have appeared, for instance the French foreign minister's criticism of how Turkey handled the whole affair. The Saudis still has a lot money tied up in Turkey; Erdogan still needs Saudi money. One of the important factors in this whole affair was the Israeli reaction, they sided with Saudis which is not good news for Erdogan particularly in the light of gaining influence over eastern Mediterranean.

Since the death of a journalist; Saudi prince bin Salman's power has weakened; there are non- stop rumours about a possible coup and leadership changes. On Erdogan's corner there are also problems; coming local elections, looming economic crisis and rising dissatisfactions in his own party ranks. Plus, he did not get Trump's support, as he hoped that he would get after the death of Khashoggi.

*Lou Ford*

# International Abstracts

## Nick Clegg

In Defence of Nick Clegg, by Matthew Parris. The Spectator 27<sup>th</sup> October 2018.

Matthew Parris (himself of an interesting Parliamentary career) provides a spirited defence of Nick Clegg as he moves on to a new career (& why not?) and an attack on everything that is wrong with The Guardian (though I would date it to 1970 when it became an openly Labour newspaper).

<https://www.spectator.co.uk/2018/10/in-defence-of-nick-clegg/>

## Liberator 393

Paul Reynolds article on the flaws in the Liberal Democrats new Foreign Policy paper is available here in print format should you prefer it. Natasha Chapman writes on the short-comings of the Immigration debate at their Brighton Conference – they were courageous to hold the debate. Otherwise, Graham Bishop nails Churchill's colours to the Remain cause, Claire Tyler writes of mental health, Richard Kemp on deprivation and Kiron Reid on housing (with a mention of Ukraine).

## Radi><

How to move beyond Europe's Strategic Impotence, by Renaud Girard. Radix 31.10.2018

*Looks at some of the nuclear issues facing the West, with proposals for Macron taking these forward when Trump & Putin meet in Paris on 11<sup>th</sup> November.*

<https://radix.org.uk/how-to-move-beyond-europes-strategic-impotence/>

Is Europe heading for its equivalent of the Cuban Missile Crisis? Times of Malta 15.11.2018

*Crisis of middle age more like; a summary*

<https://radix.org.uk/news/is-europe-headed-towards-its-equivalent-of-the-cuban-missile-crisis/>

Iran: the mullah's moment of choice, by Renaud Girard. 28.11.2018

*Looks at the problems for Iran, including civil unrest, after the restoration of sanctions by Trump.*

<https://radix.org.uk/iran-the-mullahs-moment-of-choice/>

## USA – Mid-term elections

Beto's loss was a blessing in disguise for the Democrats, by David Frum. The Atlantic. 7.11.2018

*More analytic than the title suggests. For the record, O'Rourke took 48.3% of the Texas vote, to Ted Cruz's 50.9%. Neil Dikeman (Libertarian) polled 0.8%.*

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/11/why-democrats-won-2018-midterms/575179/>

And more Beto-mania

<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/11/20/beto-orourke-2020-president-campaign-analysis-222639>

## UNESCO

UK to quit UNESCO? The Week 13.11.2018

*Penny Mordaunt's ambition as International Development Secretary.*

<https://www.theweek.co.uk/97742/uk-to-quit-unesco>



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# Chinese Lib Dems' Annual General Meeting

On Sunday 25 November, as has become customary for Chinese LibDems, members and friends gathered for our annual general meeting at the New Loon Fung Restaurant in Chinatown, followed by dimsum lunch. It has been an eventful year, as reported by Co-Chairs Cllr Tatyán Cheung and Merlene Emerson:

CLD contributed to and were mentioned in Lord Alderdice's report on the culture of the party, we supported 5 candidates of Chinese heritage in the May local elections (with Cllr Sarah Cheung Johnson successfully elected to South Cambs District Council), participated in anti-immigration raids in Chinatown and the Anti-Brexit Peoples march and launched our new logo at the Autumn conference where we shared a stall with

Liberal Democrat Campaign for Race Equality. We also celebrated our 12th birthday at a dinner in Brighton with Lord Paddy Ashdown.

In addition to party business, we continue to support Chinese community campaigns and events such as lobbying for a permanent memorial to the contributions of the Chinese Labour Corps in WW1, and promoting UK and China trade and investment via business networks such as the England China Business Forum co-founded by Vice Chair, Dr Yeow Poon. Our activities in 2018 have been broadly in line with our main aims or promoting LibDems policies, Chinese community engagement and mentoring and support for Chinese candidates.



The work of CLDs in the forthcoming year will be taken forward by the newly elected executive committee:

Chair: Cllr Tatyán Cheung,

Vice-Chair: Dr Yeow Poon,

Secretary: Cllr Sarah Cheung Johnson,

Membership Development officer: Larry Ngan,

Treasurer: Shavonne Konno, and

Ordinary executive members: Linda Chung, Yeing Lang Crouch, Merlene Emerson, Albert Kueh, Phil Ling and Dennis Tam.

There is vacancy for one more ordinary member on the executive. Please feel free to apply to be considered for co-option, if interested, to [info@chineselibdems.org.uk](mailto:info@chineselibdems.org.uk) before the end of the year.

Chinese Lib Dems are also distressed to report the attack on a young South Korean girl in London's Oxford Street by around ten assailants on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2018. Aside from the failure of bystanders to intervene and a purported lack of interest by the Metropolitan Police and the Korean Embassy, Brexit Britain had better wake up to the fact that the incident got wide coverage in the Korean media. That should help our tourist industry and future trade deals. A full report of the incident and actions coming out of it can be found on the Chinese Lib Dems website at <https://chineselibdems.org.uk/en/article/2018/1285788/attack-on-south-korean-woman-on-oxford-street-vigil-to-be-held> Whilst the vigil has passed, we urge you to log-in and support the petition.

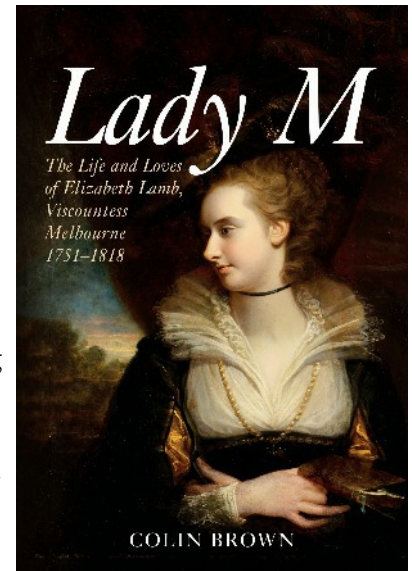


# reviews

**Lady M, the life and loves of Elizabeth Lamb, Viscountess Melbourne 1751-1818, by Colin Brown. Amberley 2018 £20.00 isbn 9781445666501**

One of the great questions in any biography is what does the author really think of their subject? Typically, biographies are of the pen of a friend or enemy; but after 200 years a little objectivity can be expected. The secret lies in the 'and loves', although Elizabeth Lamb's political impact is justly covered. Of 'and loves', Elizabeth certainly knew how to enjoy herself, and if we exclude her husband, for whom she provided an heir (he had already sloped off with his mistress) counted Lord Egremont and the Prince of Wales amongst her long-standing conquests. She was certainly more fortunate in this than her friend Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire. Although this may have been the only way for a woman of her class to get on in the world and influence politics (she was a conduit for Fox through to the Prince Regent), I'm not sure if the author really approves, and certainly not of the more dissolute elements of her lifestyle and that of her compatriots – endemic gambling, excessive drinking, which would, in turn, hit the health of all of them.

There is a certain irony for Elizabeth's efforts to raise the family in the peerage; she didn't live to see her second son, William, become Queen Victoria's favourite Prime Minister (and what a load of bollocks recent television representations have been), but the line terminated with her third son, Frederick, in 1853; her male children lacking their mother's fecundity. In an age when politics was still primarily a male aristocratic affair, there is a general consensus amongst recent biographers that Lady Melbourne and the Duchess of Devonshire made a significant contribution to the progressive Whig cause. Their campaigning is regarded as central to keeping Fox in Parliament, against the wishes of George III. The fears of the extremities of the French Revolution played upon reactionary trends at a time when the body-politic was out of synch with rapidly moving changes in society. Elizabeth can against this, be seen as self-interested – supporting the introduction of the Corn Laws for instance, agriculture being the main source of landed wealth.



The Three Witches from Macbeth, Elizabeth, Viscountess Melbourne, Georgina, Duchess of Devonshire & Anne Seymour Damer, by Daniel Garner 1750-1805, National Portrait Gallery.

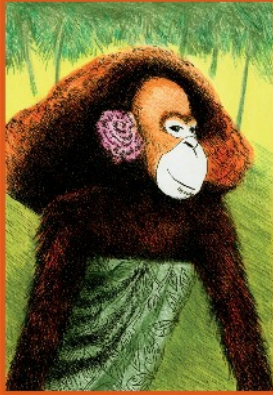
A proper biography of Elizabeth Lamb is long overdue and here we have it. She gets six lines in the Encyclopedia Britannica, all in the context of her PM son. The Dictionary of National Biography runs to about 3½ pages. Her annotated letters were published in 2000, but even then, she was overshadowed by Lord Byron, as no doubt, all associated with him were. As Byron's 'Corbeau Blanc' (the title of that anthology); she features in his *Don Juan* as Lady Pinchbeck. That at the age of 60, Elizabeth could turn the head of Byron and become his closest confidante says something. I think Byron has the last word on her:

I said that Lady Pinchbeck had been talk'd about  
As who has not, if female, young, and pretty?  
But now no more the ghost of Scandal stalk'd about;  
She merely was deem'd amiable and witty,  
And several of her best *bon-mots* were hawk'd about:  
Then she was given to charity and pity,  
And pass'd (at least the latter years of life)  
For being a most exemplary wife. (Canto 12:47)

**Stewart Rayment**

# GingerNutz

*The Jungle Memoir of a Model Orangutan*

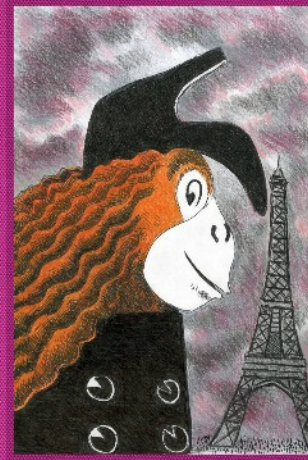


Michael Roberts

Foreword by Grace Coddington

# GingerNutz Takes Paris

*An Orangutan Conquers Fashion*



Michael Roberts

Foreword by Grace Coddington

**GingerNutz, the jungle memoir of a model orangutan, by Michael Roberts.**

**MW (Matsumoto Watkins) Editions 2017 isbn 9780998701806**

**GingerNutz Takes Paris, an orangutan conquers fashion, by Michael Roberts.**

**MW (Matsumoto Watkins) Editions 2018 isbn 9780998701837**

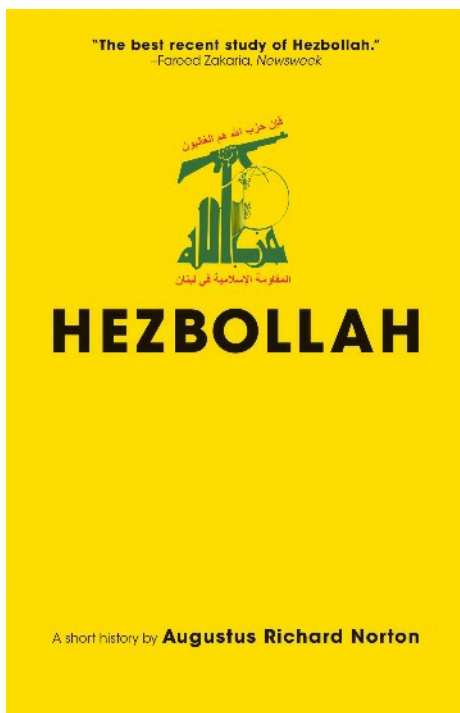
Once again, we ride to rescue with something for every Christmas stocking – for the sheer hilarity of it, and especially for the fashionista amongst family and friends. Endorsed by American *Vogue's* Grace Coddington, who contrary to predictions enthused at the parody of her career... that is a real super-model. Whilst, as you'd expect with Michael & Grace spending their lives at the forefront of fashion, the creations are up to the minute, you'll love the occasional discontinuity in the fabric of time. President Macron's award of ze Legion de Banane, Premier Classe, is well deserved.

***Stewart Rayment***

**Hezbollah, a short history, by Augustus Richard Norton,  
3<sup>rd</sup> edition Princeton 2018 \$16.95  
isbn 978069180885**

Something which has become clouded in the on-going problems of the Middle East is the maxim that my enemy's enemy is not necessarily my friend; allegiances shift rapidly and this isn't just the case in the Syrian Civil War and associated conflicts, it continually dogs Lebanon.

When Norton first published his short history, Hezbollah was widely lionized as the defender of Lebanon against Israeli aggression, something the Lebanese army could not, or would not do. There was a growing understanding that Hezbollah might be responsible for Israel's aggression, but if so, Israel's behaviour was disproportionate and targeted the Lebanese economy so broadly that there can be little doubt as to their overall objective. Hezbollah had been the main player in persuading the Israeli's to withdraw from the bulk of southern Lebanon. They have not withdrawn completely, though they claim that the land still held is



Syrian, thereby legitimising Hezbollah’s initial stance against Israel. The occupied land, though small, is important for water supply.

Whilst there was never any particular doubt as to where Hezbollah got the weapons and probably training to achieve this military success, the last decade has shown them as more closely tied to Iran and Syria. Their involvement in the Syrian Civil War has been as crucial to Asad as Russian airpower – no matter how many piles of rubble he can create, Asad still needs capable ground forces. To those who had some respect for Hezbollah, this is disappointing. It may be improbable that the Syrian Civil War wouldn’t overflow into Lebanon, but the very success of Hezbollah on Asad’s side has made sure that it would. I might add that *interLib*’s attempts to get coverage of the refugee crisis in Lebanon failed because none of our friends there felt willing to stick their necks out – understandably.

Back in 2007 when the first edition of this book was published, Norton wrote of the need for compromise. Twelve years on, the compromises are going to be much messier. *Syed Rahman*

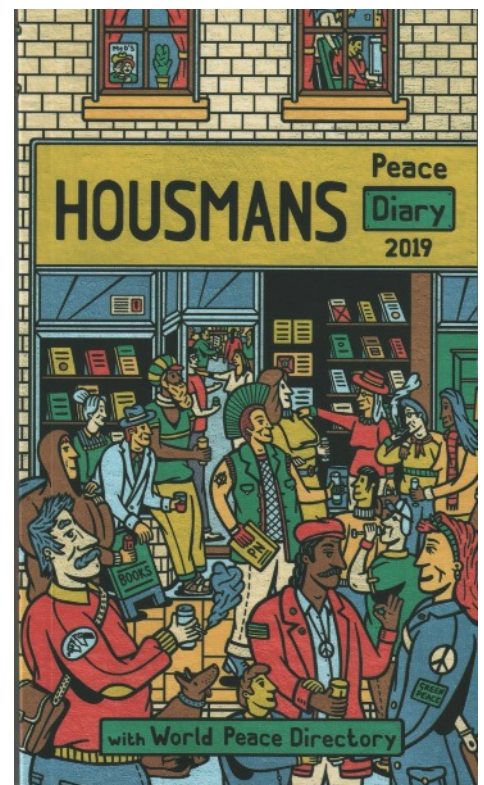
**Housmans Peace Diary 2019**  
**Housmans Bookshop 2018 £8.95**  
**isbn 9780852832806**

Despite the digital age, the pocket diary remains indispensable, and Housmans is hard to beat for the progressive political activist, with its daily events that might prompt an action – a post on your Facebook page, or tweet perhaps? For example, on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1969 15 people died in an Ulster Volunteer Force bombing of a bar in Belfast. Does Theresa May and her Brexit buddies really want a return to this?

66<sup>th</sup> edition of the Peace Diary features an account of 60 years of Peace News and countless radical causes at 5 Caledonian Road. As an aside, I recall particularly Max Levitas, an old Stalinist who died earlier this year at 103, despite smoking around 40 Weights a day up to the age of 80. Whilst one might disagree on a lot with Max, he was always good for a laugh – not least in his pathological hatred of the Labour party and the Trotskyists. Alas Niko’s café where you might bump into the old tankie has also gone. At least 5 Caledonian Road did not succumb to the lure of redevelopment. [www.housmans.com](http://www.housmans.com)

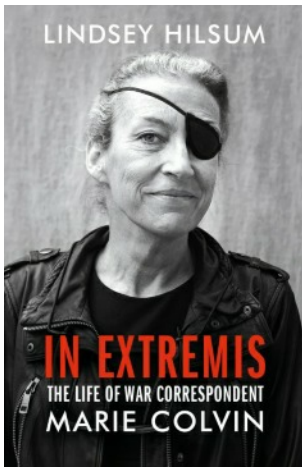
*Stewart Rayment.*

**In Extremis, the life of a war correspondent Marie Colvin, by Lindsey Hilsum.**  
**Chatto & Windus 2018 £20.00**  
**isbn 9781784740931**



I can think of three people who have made a difference in genocidal war situations, Pauline Cutting in Beirut, Paddy Ashdown in Bosnia and Marie Colvin – all over the place, but East Timor certainly ranks. There are others, whose efforts I won’t dismiss, but first two I’ve had some, if small, encounter with and Colvin’s death made a profound impact on members of my family.

After losing her eye in Sri Lanka, Marie Colvin seems to have been happy with children asking her if she was a pirate; her biography is a charter of adventure, whether on the high seas or not. I’d particularly recommend having a copy of her collected journalism *On the Front Line* (Harper Press 2012, reviewed *interLib* 2013-04 page 12) to hand if you’d really like to capture the flavour. The open question, for family,



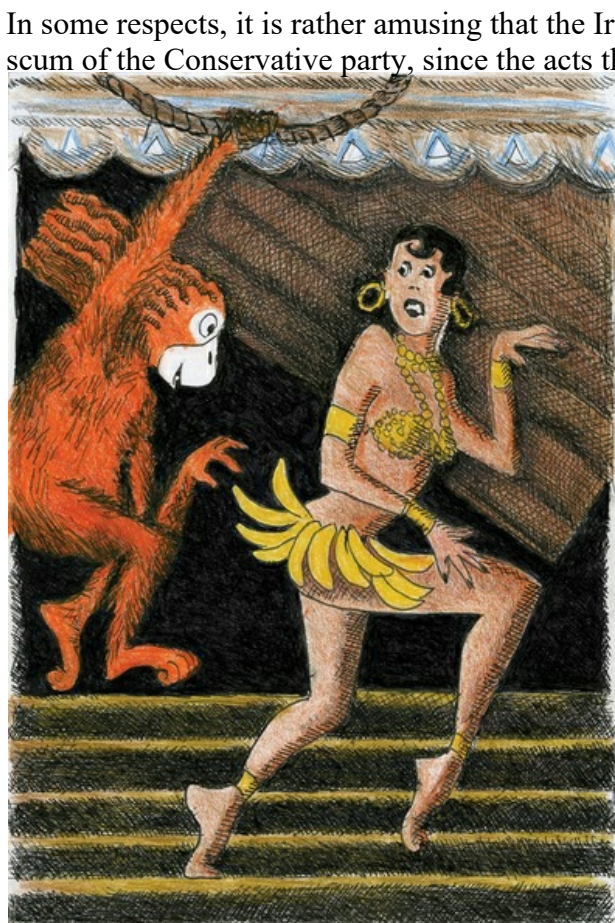
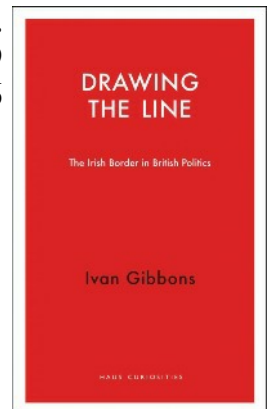
friends and colleagues must be ‘did the *Sunday Times* press her into dangerous situations, which would ultimately cost her life?’ Mortality rates for war correspondents are high – even within the pages of this book. One senses an element of bravado and having never been closer than a lingering whiff of tear-gas it is hard to judge. Paradoxically she never received the Martha Gellhorn Award for Journalism, not even posthumously; her inspiration, with whom it is perhaps too easy to draw parallels, lived to a ripe old age.

I sometimes wondered if Marie Colvin was the prototype of Neil Gaiman’s & Terry Pratchett’s *Caroline Zuigiber*? “Her hair was true auburn, neither ginger nor brown, but deep and burnished copper-colour, and it fell to her waist in tresses that men would kill for, and indeed often had.” *Good Omens* was published in 1990, by which time Marie Colvin would have done Libya, Beirut and Iraq; her name was getting around, but only just, Gaiman was probably writing 1985-88 so just falling back on archetypes is more likely. In any case, Marie Colvin had green eyes. Colvin was not alone in an obsession about her looks, to general puzzlement I suspect.

Lindsey Hilsum is International Editor at Channel 4 News; like Colvin, she is something of a specialist on the Middle East. She said in *The Guardian* (27<sup>th</sup> October 2018) that she got to know Marie Colvin better in death than in life – diaries that might otherwise have remained unread, but has certainly done justice to a friend and colleague in this book. Will justice reach General Shahadah? One can only hope so.

**Stewart Rayment**

**Drawing the Line, the Irish Border in British Politics, by Ivan Gibbons.**  
**Haus Curiosities 2018 £7.99**  
**isbn 9781912208296**



Our favourite Orangutan fashionista brings a whole new meaning to ‘unzip a banana’ when she interrupts Josephine Baker’s show at the Folies Bergère. Remember not to buy products using palm oil, one of the main threats to the orangutan’s environment.

treason in the highest echelons of the party. Further, that the ‘Unionists’ might actually cause the break-up of the Union. I have no sympathy with them. Mr Gladstone might have resolved the Irish question and Asquith probably would have if war hadn’t intervened. Although revision of the border was mooted in the original separation, politicians on either side had other things to contend with and that remained the case pretty much up to 2016 – even Sinn Fein would not have wanted a referendum that they would lose. Once we were both in the EU it was clear that the solution lay there – not least in lifting the Republic out of the dark ages of De Valera.

Ivan Gibbons gives us an intelligent background to the border issue. It is concise, primarily impartial and inexpensive – just what you need to understand the issue. History aside, the UK subverts the Northern Ireland economy by £24 billion a year, and provides around 40,000 public sector jobs. Trade between Northern Ireland and Britain outweigh its trade with the Republic by four to one. The Republic’s economy, even with EU support, does not have the clout that facilitated the reunion as Germany did, and look at the unresolved problems there. So, ditch Brexit and get on with life.

**Stewart Rayment**