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INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



Liberal Democrats assembling for the Peoples' Vote March

The Trump-Kim Singapore Summit

LI Exec & Human Rights, Berlin

Turkey

Myanmar

EVENTS

9th July LIBG AGM. NLC 6.30pm

13th-14th July Donald Trump in UK
13th July Together Against Trump
Demonstration – assembles 2.00pm outside
BBC, Portman Place, Rally Trafalgar Square
5.00-7.00pm

17th July Europe: What Next? Pop-Up Politics.
Grand Rue de Péra, Queen's Road, Hastings,
TN34 1RL

10th-12th August Activate 2018 – Young Liberals
Summer Conference, Swansea

15th-18th September Liberal Democrat's
Conference. Brighton

13th-14th October Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol
Cymru/Welsh Liberal Democrat Autumn
Conference, Marine Hotel, Aberystwyth

28th-30th November LI Congress, Dakar, Senegal.

December LIHRC, Copenhagen

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

NLC= National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place,
London SW1A 2HE
Underground: Embankment

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Photographs: Stewart Rayment, Burma Campaign.

LIBG AGM.

9th July

NLC 6.30pm



**National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place,
London SW1A 2HE
Underground: Embankment**

Assessing the Trump-Kim Singapore Summit

David Krieger

The Singapore Summit was a dramatic turn-around from the adolescent name calling that Trump and Kim had engaged in only months before. Trump had labelled Kim as “Little Rocket Man,” and Kim had labelled Trump as “Dotard.” Having gotten through this, the summit was on for June 12, then it was abruptly cancelled by Trump when Mike Pence had referred to the “Libya model” for North Korean nuclear disarmament, and a North Korean official had called Pence a “political dummy.” North Korean officials were understandably sensitive to the Libya model reference. They view Gadhafi’s demise as a direct result of his giving up Libya’s nuclear program. Then, in the midst of the chaos, something happened behind the scenes and suddenly the summit was back on for June 12, as originally planned.

It was a summit of smiles and handshakes. Little Rocket Man and Dotard seemed very happy in each other’s company. They smiled incessantly, shook hands many times and, at one point, Trump gave a thumbs up.

The most obvious result of the summit was the change in tone in the relationship of the two men. Whereas the tone had once been nasty and threatening, it was now warm and friendly. The two men appeared to genuinely like each other and be comfortable in each other’s company. For both, the new warmth of their relationship seemed likely to play well with important domestic constituencies. Although the summit elicited a lot of scepticism from US pundits, the optics were those of a breakthrough in a relationship once considered dangerous and a possible trigger to a nuclear conflict. Both men viewed the summit as a major achievement.

They each committed to a rather vague Summit Statement, which said in part: “President Trump committed to provide security guarantees to the DPRK (North Korea) and Chairman Kim Jong-un reaffirmed his firm and unwavering commitment to complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” Trump added as an unexpected sweetener that he would put a halt to the joint US-South Korean war games, which the North Koreans had long complained were highly provocative.

Each was being promised what he most desired: security for Kim and his regime, and complete denuclearization of North Korea for Trump. They were also gaining in stature in their home countries. Prior to the summit, Trump was asked by a reporter if he thought he deserved the Nobel Peace Prize, to which he coyly responded, “Everyone thinks so, but I would never say it.”

There was much, however, that didn’t emerge from the Singapore summit, and it can be summarized in a single word: “details.” The ultimate value of the summit will be found in the details that are agreed to and acted upon going forward. Will these details build or destroy trust? Will Kim truly believe that he can trust Trump (or a future American president) to give security to the Kim regime? Will Trump (or a future American president) truly believe that Kim is following up on denuclearizing? The answers to these questions will depend upon details that have yet to be agreed upon, including those related to inspections and verification.

While the summit has relieved tensions between the two nuclear-armed countries, nuclear dangers have not gone away on the Korean Peninsula or in the rest of the world. These dangers will remain so long as any country, including the US, continues to rely upon nuclear weapons for its national security. Such reliance encourages nuclear proliferation and will likely lead to the use of these weapons over time – by malice, madness or mistake.

We can take some time to breathe a sigh of relief that nuclear dangers have lessened on the Korean

Peninsula, but then we must return to seeking the complete abolition of nuclear weapons. An important pathway to this end is support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted by the United Nations in 2017 and now open for state signatures and deposit of ratifications.

David Krieger

David Krieger is a founder of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (www.wagingpeace.org) and has served as its president since 1982.

First published in The Sunflower, Issue 252 July 2018

200th Executive Committee of Liberal International; FDP HQ, Berlin, 22nd-23rd June 2018

The UK was well represented at the Berlin Executive Committee held at FDP HQ on 22nd-23rd June. Bureau member Robert Woodthorpe Browne was joined by former LI President Lord Alderdice, Executive members Phillip Bennion (myself) and Jonathan Fryer and Sir Graham Watson who was present as a speaker. Our broader group also included LIBG delegate Paul Reynolds supported by LIBG exec member Catherine Royce. The current IFLRY representative is Denali Ranasinghe who was a great addition to the British presence.

Christian Lindner

The meeting was opened by FDP leader Christian Lindner and it was particularly interesting to hear what he had to say in the light of accusations that the FDP election campaign was pulled to the right by the threat of the AFD. He gave a wide-ranging speech covering the recovery in fortunes of the FDP, the rise of populism, globalisation and climate change. It was a clear attempt to place the FDP firmly back into the political centre and to counter accusations of a lurch to the right.

The FDP revival he said was based on common values and a new self-belief rather than any particular eye-catching policies. He attacked the AFD for being responsible for the rise of xenophobia and racism in Germany and drew parallels with UKIP and the end point of Brexit in the UK.

He went onto global politics and criticised the transactional approach of Trump and concluded that Europeans should stick to our commitment to multilateralism.

He drew attention to the increasing trend towards ideological assertions in policy making and urged a return to a science-based approach. He said that we needed to use technology as the main weapon against climate change alongside an adherence to international agreements. He also called on the rich world to give economic help to poor nations to move their economies to a more sustainable path.

He went on to talk about those left behind who are not sharing the benefits of globalisation, which leaves a pool of people prey to populist and nationalistic messages. He said that we need to strengthen the social market economy and focus on the life chances of those left behind. If we take these ideas and principles forward with confidence we can be successful in turning these recent trends around.

Liberal Manifesto then Lunch

There followed a discussion by Juli Minoves and Karlheinz Paque on the Liberal Manifesto agreed in Andorra and its translation into a number of languages. This was followed by a conversation between

Nicola Beer MP and LI vice President Astrid Thors. Following this we took the short walk to the Reichstag building for a lunch reception with the FDP parliamentary group.

Resolution Breakout Session

The afternoon session to discuss resolutions and amendments was chaired by Robert Woodthorpe Browne, so the Liberal Democrats were represented by myself and LIBG by Paul Reynolds (except by Catherine Royce on the Assisted Dying resolution). The session functions to draft compromise amendments and make recommendations to plenary on voting.

The first resolution on Restoring Democracy to Cambodia was passed along with our amendment to recall ambassadors. Sam Rainsy, the opposition CNRP founder was present, along with Saumura Tioulong . The resolution called for strong measures including sanctions against Cambodia over the banning of the opposition CNRP and the gaoling of its leader Kem Sokha. An amendment from the VVD to delete revoking of trade privileges was defeated.

Resolution 2 on Assisted Dying proved controversial and the Germans tried to talk it out and have it brought back to Dakar in November. I strongly objected to this as delegates had come to Berlin for the express purpose of debating the issue. Many of them would not be in Dakar. I suggested that the movers and amenders go to another room and come back with an agreed text, as we had done with our Rohingya resolution in Johannesburg. The Chair agreed and they returned later with a very short and to the point text which was agreed. We have to thank Catherine Royce of LIBG for her efforts in drafting amendments and for taking the lead in the re-draft.

The third resolution called for the removal of obstacles to free expression and development of personality with respect to LGBTI rights. The resolution was uncontroversial and our amendment that no LI Member Party should introduce or support discriminatory legislation was included.

The fourth resolution on a Digital Geneva Convention was supported despite some muddled thinking in some areas, particularly regarding what constitutes a state of war, but the general idea has merit. Urgency resolutions were passed concerning the resolution of the Greece-Macedonia naming logjam, the attacks on civil society in Egypt, the US returning to the Human Rights Council and the Maduro regime's persecution of the liberal leader in Venezuela. A fifth urgency criticising the disproportionate nature of the Israeli response to the fence protests was defeated by a coalition of Germans, Dutch, Israelis and Africans, despite being a targeted statement on the specific incident and not delving any deeper. It is almost impossible to get resolutions through our international organisations that are openly critical of Israel in any way. Both Lib Dems and LIBG supported the resolution which came from Radikale Venstre of Denmark.

Delivering Climate Justice

Day 2 was devoted largely to the theme of "Delivering Climate Justice". It was opened by LI Deputy President and former Moroccan Environment Minister Hakima el Haite. She pointed out that climate change has adverse effects on everyone and even the US had probably seen a loss of 1.6% of its GDP through climate change. However, the effects were more serious in poorer and more southerly countries. Droughts were more and more common and agricultural land was being lost. 500 million hectares in Africa was stricken by drought and the 2-degree target for limitation of temperature increase was too high for many and particularly island nations.

She pointed out that climate change exacerbates migration and has resulted in 68 million refugees worldwide. This could rise to as many as 250m if nothing is done. Around 4000 people are drowning each year trying to cross the Mediterranean.

The concept of Climate Justice was developed at COP23 in Marrakech prompted by weather events in the Philippines causing around 10000 deaths.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals had been adopted in 2015 by the UN; the same year as the Paris Agreement was signed. She said that we now need a transformation in the way we live; a civilisation change to a new Low Carbon Civilisation.

A fund is needed to directly address the problems and climate change issues should be built in to Free Trade Agreements. Liberals across the world must offer this transformation to their electorates through investment in low carbon technologies and innovation. We must be a coalition of political parties committed to this change and use our global network as guardians of the Paris Agreement. We should use the United Nations as a vehicle.

Can technology provide the Answer?

Such was the title of the day's second session. We were told that scarcity of resources has not pushed up prices as much as expected largely due to innovation in using less and finding replacements. There are still many areas where scarcity can be addressed, for example wasteful irrigation systems. With water the focus has been too much on raising supply than on reducing demand.

Is carbon pricing a good solution? Not as good as hoped, because the fossil fuel producers could easily grab all of the additional revenue themselves.

Too little progress has been made on sequestration as there are no economic incentives.

Regulation has a role, but we have probably relied on it too much at the expense of innovation.

Subsidy is good for priming technologies but most that have real promise will become competitive without subsidy once established.

IFLRY Fringe

I took part in the lunchtime fringe with IFLRY along with Catherine Royce and Denali Ranasinghe (Young Liberals). We looked at means of involving young people in the fight against climate change. It was concluded that they are motivated but work through channels other than political parties. However, politicians still control the decision-making process so young people are missing out in this respect.

Sustainable Cities

The afternoon session was on sustainable cities moderated by acting Director General Gordon Mackay with speakers from Senegal, Philippines and Poland. Gordon suggested that liberals are sometimes unclear on their approach to climate change.

The Senegalese perspective was that drought leads to rural depopulation and thereby urban sprawl. This causes flooding and waste of available water resources. The main challenge in the Philippines has been waste management, but the message on recycling has finally started to get through. The Polish speaker concentrated in lack of good planning, particularly a problem in Poland where there was an extreme reaction to the former communist straightjacket. Now every adult in Warsaw has a car, which is an unsustainable situation.

Senegal has followed examples from the developed world on legislating for green spaces in cities, unlike most developing nations. We need to look more at improving living conditions within constraints of space and resource.

Poverty is a problem in creating sustainable cities as people cannot afford to change capital items for more efficient ones.

Energy Markets

The next debate was on energy markets looking at the situations in Germany and Guatemala. In the latter 65% of energy production had been non-renewable in 2007, but this had been reversed and in 2018 73% was renewable, including hydro, biomass, wind and solar. They also have potential for geothermal with exploitation just starting.

In Germany there is a strong reliance on wind and solar but neither operate 24/7. 37% of energy production is renewable but they have a huge need for back up. So far the retreat from nuclear has not been difficult as there was a lot of overcapacity and they have had success in reducing demand. However they are heading for a crunch as coal is also being phased out so there is an urgent need for investment in gas for back up. Returns from the market have been insufficient to stimulate the required investment.

Innovation in storage technology is important for the German energy mix and 8GB hours are required by the mid 20s. This is likely to be installed in homes and business rather than by the suppliers. The German speakers thought new nuclear was too expensive for rational investment in any case and that the phase out was therefore not the problem foreseen and that the UK and France may come to regret their expensive decisions. They are having problems with energy intensive industries at present due to the relatively high price of electricity and are struggling to find the right policies for this sector.

Final Session

The Berlin declaration on Climate Justice was adopted in the final session after a lot of bickering. There was considerable dissatisfaction with some of the language used; being in places too colloquial and in others too obscure. It was adopted in the end with minor amendments and the decision to set up a new Climate Justice Committee, parallel with the Human Rights Committee was finalised. We envisage that member parties and groups will be asked for nominations in due course.

The Senegalese issued the formal invitation to the Congress in Dakar from 28th-30th November and the meeting closed.

Phil Bennion.

Chinese LibDems 12th Birthday Dinner

September 16, 2018 8:15 PM - 10:00 PM
China Garden Restaurant, 88-91 Preston Road, Brighton



Please join us in celebrating our 12th anniversary with a scrumptious eight-course Chinese meal at our favourite restaurant in Brighton!

Guest speakers: Layla Moran MP, Lord Paddy Ashdown and newly elected Councillor Sarah Cheung Johnson.

Ticket price: £30 per head

Liberal International Human Rights Committee, 21st June 2018, Berlin

Chair Markus Loening told us that the migration debate in Germany had taken an unfortunate turn in becoming xenophobic and even racist. He went on to inform us that LI have a new officer dedicated to servicing the new climate change priority.

Survey

Tamara Dancheva (Human Rights Officer) then took us through the results of the survey she had undertaken amongst the member organisations of LI. The most successful areas were seen to be the Human Rights events that we organise, advocacy at the UN and networking between member parties. Examples were working together to successfully secure the release of the leader of our sister party in Zambia as well as the long campaign for the release of Anwar Ibrahim. The least successful were policy coordination and making use of our parliamentarians worldwide for concerted campaigns. Our public outreach was also seen as a weakness.

Parliamentarians' Network

The formation of our global network of parliamentarians is a key strategy in addressing these weaknesses. William Townsend gave us a rundown on progress. The licence for Nationbuilder for managing the network was imminent, so although we have recruited a good number of parliamentarians into the network it has not yet been deployed. We discussed the management of the network. Frank van Dalen thought that it would need the committee members to take an active role in following up, as otherwise messages sent out to the network would not result in coordinated action. Boris van der Hamm and I both made suggestions on the form of content to be sent out and the process of amplifying campaigns. It was pointed out that we needed to do something internationally to raise awareness of the continued imprisonment of Senator Leila de Lima in the Philippines to coincide with her award of the Prize for Freedom in late July. As the Nationbuilder will not be up and running by then we resolved that several committee members (including myself) would send out the information and urge our parliamentarians to table questions and make public comments at the time of the award.

4th Area of Focus for LIHRC – The Shrinking Democratic Space

The LIHRC has three standing working groups focussing on 1) Religion and Belief, 2) Minorities and LGBT+ rights, 3) Women's rights.

Asa Soderstrom and I proposed a fourth group at the meeting in Andorra last year to deal with the assault we are seeing on the rights to democratic opposition in many countries and the committee had seemed at that time to endorse the proposal. However, it had failed to appear on the agenda at our last meeting in The Hague. The group on The Shrinking Democratic Space was formalised in Berlin under the chairmanship of Asa Soderstrom (Sweden) and includes LIHRC Vice Chair Astrid Thors (Finland), Naomi Blumenthal (Israel), Stevens Mokgalapa (South Africa) and myself.

Projects

The booklet on Freedom of Belief had been completed and released. The associated event in Ghana had been recorded as a YouTube video¹ but had very few views. Boris van der Hamm had written articles and brought together speakers from Morocco and elsewhere. Boris was keen to develop a better strategy for disseminating our output to a wider audience. He also suggested trying to create a Liberal World Order Index to raise our profile. Boris asked to set up an ad hoc working group to look at ideas for raising the profile of Liberal International to make us more effective, including the deployment of the parliamentarians' network. I was invited to join this working group.

Charlotte Burgess of Radikale Venstre (Denmark) outlined her project to run an event to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights to be held to coincide with the December LIHRC in Copenhagen.

AOB

Medard Mulangala (DRC) suggested that our subject matter for the submission to the next UNHRC in September could focus on the deaths in the field of two visiting experts in the Congo.

Tamara Dancheva suggested that we should have a Human Rights session or visit alongside the Congress in Dakar 28th November to 1st December. A number of LIHRC members are unable to travel to both Dakar and Copenhagen within one week of each other, so it was agreed that she should explore possibilities.

Phillip Bennion

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6W3qhdFOYxw> Ghana YouTube video - 11th Human Rights Bulletin: freedom of belief

Palestine Petition.

Fiona Dunlop's petition for Britain to recognise Palestine as a state in its own right (interLib 2018-05) has now reached 799 signatures. Leading constituency is Peterborough, with 16 signatures, followed by Suffolk Coastal with 13. Lead Liberal Democrat constituency as we write is Bath, with 8 followed by Oxford West & Abingdon and Twickenham with 5 each.

Fiona's petition is fully in line with last Autumn's Liberal Democrat Conference which voted to support Palestinian statehood. An overwhelming majority of MPs voted for this in October 2014, but Mrs May's Government is dragging its feet, saying that it must wait for "the right time". The petition can be found at <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/220199>

International Abstracts

USA

Obama: 'You are right to be concerned' In his first public comments in months, the former president talks about anger, regrets — and what the Republicans are doing right, by Edward-Isaac Dove, Politico 29.6.2018

Will the entrenched interests in the Democrats allow them to take heed?

<https://www.politico.com/story/2018/06/29/barack-obama-advice-to-democrats-685940?cid=apn>

So much for Donald Trump's "Purple" Values: his Red State support stems from flagrant sexism, by Amanda Marcotte, Salon 3.7.2018

Interesting take on the class struggle and sexism Stateside.

<https://www.salon.com/2018/07/03/so-much-for-donald-trumps-purple-values-his-red-state-support-stems-from-flagrant-sexism/>

The Red Hen's treatment of Sarah Sanders shows shame isn't dead yet, by Jack Holmes. Esquire 25.6.2018

But, oh dear, what a sorry state American politics has sunk too...

<https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a21929857/red-hen-owner-sarah-huckabee-sanders-shame/>

THE TURKISH ELECTIONS: THE END OF THE REPUBLIC? YILDIZ

Turkish election is over, with it secularism, freedom, democracy and republic itself over too. On the edge of Europe there is a new dictatorship formally announced. We are going to observe the rise of insanely power hungry, unstable, unreliable new “Duce”. Academically there are several definitions of fascism exist but new Turkish version has its own characteristics. It has similarities to Bonapartist or Peronist regimes. Nuances do not change the fact 80 million of Turkish citizens now under order of the one man. Despite all the cheating, killings, threats and oppression dictator’s party has lost some grounds. His share of votes gone down but his coalition partner (MHP) surprisingly increased their share of vote to 11 percent. Basically, government is consisting of Sunni religious conservatism and hard-core nationalism.

Last 15 odd years a lot of so called liberal voices from West and Turkey had been calling more democracy and freedom for Turkey and with it heavily supported T Erdogan. He was the darling of the West, most loved politician by bankers and hedge fund managers and post-modern thinkers. One good example of this appeared in The Guardian which described T Erdogan as “illiberal democrat”, Guardian editors definition of democrat is unfortunate, totally biased and horribly wrong.

Geopolitics benefits and worries plus the race to redesign the Middle East worked for him so much and still does. I reckon that so long as he agrees to keep Turkey as a NATO member, western powers will keep supporting him. The question is how long this would go on, how long can he play between NATO and Russia? Turkish military incursions continue after Afrin, now into Iraqi Kurdistan. Allies in the Middle East come and go pretty cheap for the West; will they wake up some day?

Tayyip Erdogan has finally reached his ambition but with it the last remnants of democracy in Turkey are buried so deep underground I am afraid we might never be able see it again. It maybe is the sign of times; Trump in USA, Brexit in UK and rising right all over the Europe. When we look at this angle current situation in Turkey does not look odd.

Although he won the election but dark clouds over the country are getting darker; Turkish economy has to find 5 billion of USA dollars every month in order to close the trade gap and keep the wheels turning. At least more than half a dozen very big companies went under in the last three months. Inflation is at the highest level since 2003 (nearly 15 percent) 51 percent of the population has credit cards debt which is again highest among developing nations possible highest in the world. Unemployment according the official figures is around 11 percent, young unemployment is running close to Spain and Portuguese. His core supporters expecting better economic results and better times from him. Could he fulfil this expectation that is another matter entirely? On top of this he still insists to pull down the interest rates because he argues higher inflation caused by high interest rates. So, in the sense of economy everything is muddled and nothing looks good. There is a clear contradiction between in need of fresh capital and desire to lower the interest rates. this dilemma might bring the collapse of Turkish economy as we know but on the other hands he is now eternal leader so he does not have to keep his promises so he might not touch the rates in order the keep the hot money flow.

Emergency regime will be lifted but everything it contains; all the laws and regulations will remain the same as new security measures. More than 100,000 are estimated to be in jail.

I must admit it is so easy to criticise from a secure distance, otherwise one would face, confiscation of passport, being unemployed and lengthy jail time. Of course, it’s much worse in the south east. Unimaginably scale of corruption, oppression and security state will undoubtedly lead to a worst level of

violence and fear. These conditions would inevitable push everything to the edge. He played the migrants card and he won it but in the near future these palliative policies would cause even bigger migrant crisis to the West.

Democratic and prospered Turkey is very important for the future Europe for many reasons but under a one-man regime blackmailing of Europe by migrants would keep going and that will lead more and more political chaos in the continent.

Yildiz

The Turkish elections were held on the 24th June 2018. Tayyip Erdoğan topped the presidential poll with 52.59% of the vote. The social democrat, Muharrem Ince secured 30.64% - he won in European Turkey and the Aegean litoral, and the traditionally leftist Manbij, but otherwise Anatolia was solidly behind Erdoğan. The Kurdish HDP won in the south east, with Selahattin Demirtaş running from prison, taking 8.40% of the vote. Meral Akşener took 7.29%, Temel Karamollaoğlu of the far right Saadet Partisi took 0.89% and Doğu Perinçek, of the left-wing Vatan, 0.20%.

In Parliamentary seats, the People's Alliance - Cumhuriyet İttifakı, the coalition between Erdoğan's Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) and the right-wing nationalist Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP), won 26,904,024 votes and 344 MPs. The AKP lost seats in parliament over alleged corruption and mismanagement after a decade and a half in power. Nation – the coalition of the social democratic Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP), Akşener's İyi, and the centre-right Demokrat Parti (DP), won 17,190,808 votes and 189 MPs and the Kurdish Halkların Demokratik Partisi (HDP) 5,867,302 votes and 67 MPs. The overall turnout was 87%.

Amnesty International said that there were no large-scale allegations of fraud, but that the elections took place in what described as a “climate of fear”. The country is still under a state of emergency in place since the attempted coup of July 2016. As mentioned above, one of the presidential candidates is in prison and since the election, the CHP's Eren Erdem, who lost his parliamentary seat, has been arrested, ostensibly for assisting the followers of the US-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen whom Erdoğan believes to be behind the attempted coup.

Gambian nationals get the right to vote in UK elections, again.

One of the quirks of the UK electoral system is how the country's past means foreign nationals from a variety of countries get the vote in the UK. If a country is a member of the Commonwealth, then its nationals living in the UK can vote in our general elections despite Liam Fox's views.

Or rather, can vote as long as the legislation has been updated. Which meant that when The Gambia left the Commonwealth in 2013, its nationals kept the vote for a fair while in the UK. Three years or so in fact.

A change of power following elections earlier this year has resulted in The Gambia re-joining the Commonwealth, and this time round the legislative moves have been less sloth-like. The law has been changed already, it has just come into force and their votes are back.

Mark Pack.

Gambia withdrew from the Commonwealth on 3rd October 2013, and rejoined on 8th February 2018. Whilst accusing the Common-wealth of neo-imperialism, then President Yahya Jammeh's homophobia was widely cited as the more likely cause (interLib 2014-08 page 16). The nation is welcome back in the fold.

THE REFUGEE'S RIGHT TO RETURN HOME

Paul Sztumpf

'The right of return' is a fundamental right of all refugees, to voluntarily return to their country of origin or of citizenship and is enshrined in international law. However, as the thousands of Palestinians on the Gaza border are demonstrating, exercising that right is not that simple. Burma's million refugees face similar problems, central to this is the concept of citizenship or country of origin. The Rohingya suffer a carefully constructed narrative that questions both their origin and citizenship. International law aside, for the refugees themselves there are the fundamental questions of is it safe to return and what are they returning to? Refugee camps on the Burma border are not holiday camps but more akin to large open prisons, fenced in, controlled by guards, personal freedom is restricted. The camp residents face mental health problems not



A refugee child at Ei Tu Hta IDP camp in Karen

just because of the traumas they have gone through but the hopelessness of their lives, the overcrowding and the day by day queuing for food, the latrines and safety is always a problem. The desire to return home is strong but to "what?" is the question.

The returning refugee is going to hope for papers that prove citizenship to minimize future status questions by the authorities, a return to their lost homes, livelihoods and the ability to live in relative safety. The Rohingya know that at best they are being offered some form of second class citizenship but may well not even get that but some other papers that will allow them to live in Burma but under numerous controls. However, even then, what will they return to and how safe will they be? Most Rohingya were farmers and shop keepers before fleeing. The shops are long gone and the farms have often been taken over by others. As one local lawmaker put it "it's not a good idea to leave those farm lands unattended. Local ethnic people and landless farmers should be allowed to farm there if they wish". There are also unverified reports of land being leased to private companies. The reality on the ground for returning refugees is that returning to their villages and rebuilding lives is simply not on offer. What exactly is on offer is not clear. One suspects government-controlled villages akin to open prisons where the guards may well be the very rapists and arsonists that Rohingya fled from and that

work will be provided, maybe on the company farm that leases the Rohingya land from the government. This speculative view of the refugee's future unfortunately has an all too believable ring to it.

Burma's 100,000 Karen, Karenni and Mon refugees on the eastern border have many of the same problems with the added danger of landmines which have taken a heavy toll on limbs and lives. Some of these refugees are returning home, some in fear, others more hopeful, however the numbers of returnees are small. UNHCR rightly focus on the Rohingya but other refugees must not be forgotten.

It has been reported that the UNHCR have made secret agreements with the Burmese Government on the Rohingya's future and that an investigation commission with outside representation will determine the true events leading up to the Rohingya exodus. Based on past experience few trust secret agreements or Burma government commissions. However, in the end it may well be the forces of nature which determines the refugees' future, the monsoon's torrential rain has already exacerbated the suffering of the Rohingya, damaging and destroying the makeshift houses on the now treeless hilly terrain in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district. This is only the start of the monsoon season.

The developed nations must accept that strategies of ignoring the plight of refugees or containing them in what are effectively open prisons will simply not work. Sooner or later the camps will flow over and cross borders, bringing desperate people to their borders. The international community must look deeper into the causes of people seeking refuge, face open-mindedly their own role in those causes. In Burma's case the international community has, maybe unintentionally, rewarded the military for setting up a quasi-democracy and financed a peace process which is being cynically used to strengthen the military and undermine the confidence in ethnic nationality leaders. External investment has driven land grab from the poor and financial inequality has risen to unprecedented levels, with the military as the main benefactor. The international community needs to re-frame its aid and development program in Burma away from helping the powerful into one that helps create conditions refugees would willingly return to.

Paul Sztumpf

Paul Sztumpf is a Refugee researcher with the Burma Campaign UK

Are you IFLRY's new Human Rights Co-Programme manager? Josh Newell

Our Human Rights team are looking for a new co-programme manager.

You will be working close with our other Co-Programme Manager, Bram Roodhart, with leading the team and take charge of IFLRY's Human Rights policies.

The tasks of a programme manager are managing the group of team-members, looking into funding for activities and helping our Pool of Trainers with facilitating non-formal Human Rights Based-education at trainings/seminars/study-sessions.

So, would you like to represent IFLRY? Do you want to be in the heart of our Human Rights work? Then Apply!

Send your application to

nickolas.pagonakis@iflry.org before Sunday the 8th of July at 15 pm CET.

Please make sure to take some time on Monday the 9th and/or Tuesday the 10th (both July) for a possible Skype interview.

To hear more about the Human Rights programme reach out to Bram on: bmroodhart@gmail.com

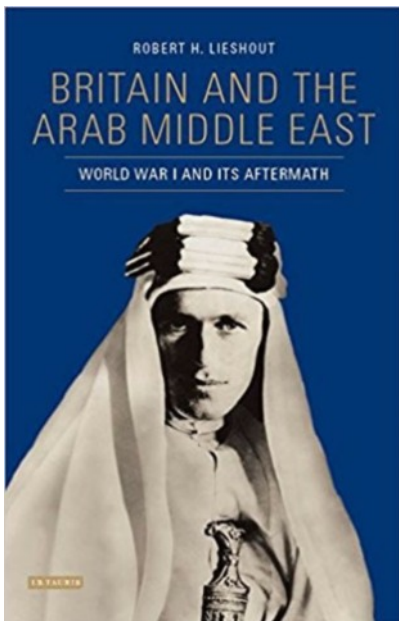


reviews

**Britain and the Arab Middle East, by Robert H Lieshout,
I B Tauris 2016 £29.95 isbn 9781784535834**

Britain's war against the Ottoman Empire, following the Turks' decision to side with Germany in the First World War, was considered a side-show by many generals and politicians in London, who believed that the Western Front was the real battlefield. Yet British intervention in the Middle East, partly in harmony with Arab forces keen to liberate themselves from the Ottoman yoke, was to have resounding consequences that are still being felt today. Robert H Lieshout's weighty study of the subject, essentially covering the years 1914-1919, *Britain and the Arab Middle East*, examines the voluminous public records covering the period, notably of the War Cabinet and Foreign Office, supplemented by diaries, presenting material in such detail that one almost believes one is present.

There were wrangles aplenty about just how much encouragement the British Government should give Sherif Hussein of Mecca regarding the putative independent Arab Kingdom that was meant to come into



being after peace was agreed, but there is little doubt that he and his sons were largely duped. Despite the Entente, France comes over very badly most of the time, and whereas by 1918 the Lloyd George government believed that the infamous Sykes-Picot Agreement carving up spheres of influence in the non-Turkish parts of the Ottoman Empire could not stand in its original form, because of the Wilsonian doctrine of self-determination, Paris dug its heels in, determined that France should have its Syrian and Lebanese cake and eat it.

Another issue that gave rise to huge disagreements within the British government was the Balfour Declaration, whose centenary was commemorated last year. The only Jewish member of the Cabinet, Edwin Montagu, was strongly opposed to the Zionists' pleas as he believed the Arab population of Palestine would not agree to Jewish domination there and moreover that Jews elsewhere might suffer further persecution in their home countries if a Jewish state were proclaimed.

Some of the most valuable parts of Lieshout's book cover these sometimes heated discussions and the personalities involved. Largely, he lets the documents speak for themselves, keeping critical commentary and theorising to a minimum, which allows the reader to make up their own mind. Presumably for marketing purposes, the book uses a fetching photograph of T E Lawrence in Arab garb on the cover, though he was in reality quite a marginal figure, despite the publicity that his romantic derring-do later generated. The index will be of use to serious scholars of the period, as well as to amateur historians of the Middle East, as this well-documented narrative is a valuable resource.

Jonathan Fryer

**Goddess of Anarchy, the life and times of Lucy Parsons, American Radical, by Jacqueline Jones.
Basic Books, New York, 2017 \$32.00
isbn 9780465078 ebook isbn 9781541697263**

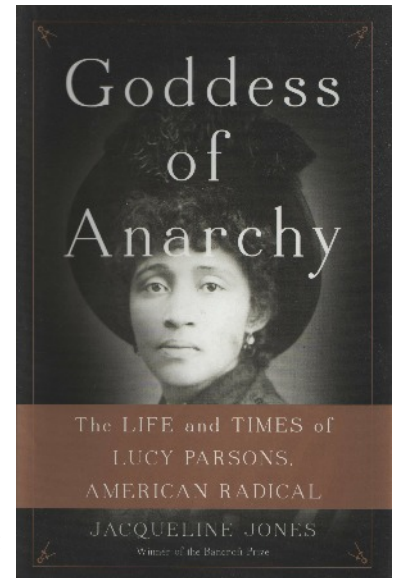
Jacqueline Jones is mostly renowned for her studies of slavery and its aftermath amongst America's black and white underclasses, from a feminist perspective. Lucy Parsons is thus a likely subject – black (though in denial, a former slave, she claimed Mexican and Native American origin) and champion of the American underclasses. The problem with that is like so many self-appointed tribunes of the proletariat, she neglected their diversity, particularly careless in a society as racially divided as America. In some respects, the Parsons were part of this problem, for example, Arthur Parsons, whilst highlighting the plight of black share-

croppers, not wanting to see them compete in the labour market with white Chicagoans. One can trace this trait is socialist thought back to Marx & Engels.

The other problem is that, whilst probably induced by the violence of America's response to the class struggle, the violence of her rhetoric contributed to the popular misunderstanding of anarchism. This indeed, would lead to the judicial murder of her husband, Albert Parsons and his comrades, in the wake of the Haymarket outrages.

I find Parsons not widely known amongst progressive Americans of my acquaintance, but Jones' biography goes a long way towards correcting some earlier misapprehensions. Is there, at least in its conventionally understood 19th century-on context, a goddess of anarchy? Dysnomia perhaps?

Stewart Rayment



Trade is War, by Yash Tandon

OR Books, 2nd edition 2018 £14.00, \$20.00

isbn 978-1-682191-49-1 e-book isbn 978-1-682191-50-7 £7.00 \$10.00

As the world girds its loins to withstand America's current assault on the international order and its institutions, along comes a timely polemic on trade and tariffs. Members of Liberal International are already well versed in some of the issues; how the wealthy world's subsidies have had a devastating effect on the developing world; and the hypocrisy of developed countries demanding free access to poor nations' markets, ignoring their own track record of protectionism.

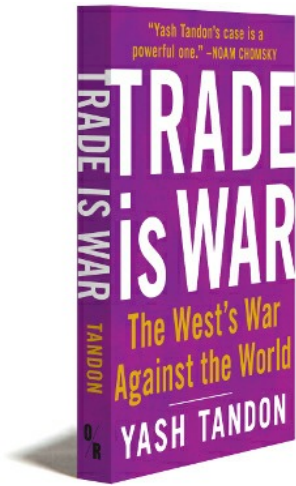
Yash Tandon, the author of Trade is War, believes there is a conspiracy to keep poor countries from industrialising and thus competing against the West. He also sees an ulterior motive: providing a military alliance against the countries that do not bow to American hegemony e.g. Russia, China, Zimbabwe, Venezuela, Iran and Cuba.

Tandon is a Ugandan with long experience of both campaigning and advising the global South during trade talks. He contends that developing world leaders are pressured into signing disadvantageous deals by the threat of having their aid cancelled. He also believes parts of the global South haven't industrialised because intellectual property laws and copyrights prevent Western processes being used across the continent. Those of us with experience of working in Africa might suggest there is also a deficit of managerial skills, coupled with low productivity and poor infrastructure.

Strangely, Tandon's does not examine China's economic impact on the developing world. In too many cases China offers long term loans on condition that vanity projects of dubious value are awarded to Chinese contractors without environmental impact assessments or competitive tendering. While the local elite benefit from these deals, few of their subjects are employed or trained. Tandon also ignores the way in



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which a poor country's existing manufacturing base may be decimated by the deliberate dumping of Chinese goods on their markets at below cost, crippling local producers.

Instead, the author praises China for its ostensible policy of non-interference, saying of China's support for the Sudanese regime (whose leading lights have been indicted for genocide in Darfur by the International Criminal Court), "it is for the Sudanese to resolve." Would Tandon have taken the same view of South Africa under apartheid?

The author believes Russia and China use their veto power at the UN to "save the South from being pushed around," and writes that calls for democracy, freedom of the press and good governance are tools used by the West to fight what amounts to a war against the South. Brave campaigners in Myanmar,

Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, and the Arab world, etc., might beg to differ.

By this point, LI readers may rightly suspect we are in Corbynland. The author praises ZANU-PF, without mentioning the slaughter of 20,000 Zimbabweans in Matabeleland. He admires Cuba, without considering the repression of Christians and gay people. The bombing of Serbia was a war crime, he says, but the Serbs' decade-long jihad against their neighbours goes without comment. He claims the U.K. has made "a big hoo-ha about the threat Russia poses to their security," that there is no evidence Russia interfered in the 2016 US election. He also believes that Hillary Clinton is no better than Donald Trump.

His answer to the tyranny of the big international institutions is for thousands of non-violent communities to become self-reliant, organising their own methods of production and consumption, trading with each other. Capitalism cannot be regulated, he claims, so it must be ignored.

In this volume, Tandon makes many valid points about the way in which trade and tariffs hold back the global South. Readers will reach their own conclusions about how realistic his answers are.

Rebecca Tinsley

<http://www.orbooks.com/catalog/trade-war-yash-tandon-2nd-ed/>

**The Origin of the Jews, the quest for roots in a rootless age, by Steven Weitzman.
Princeton 2017 isbn 9780691174600**

How they handle whatever stuff life's made of, like it was a material they were sampling, makes you realize immediately that they are an old, old, senior people who've been in the business of existence for a very long while indeed. Colin MacInnes, *Absolute Beginners*. 1959

Steven Weitzman isn't the first and won't be the last to attempt to unravel this mystery, though he does pose the question of whether the issue is now too contentious for serious study. Most of the Bible and the Torah are myth. This doesn't detract from their message, but it is in no way a historical account, no more so than any mythologies. Weitzman progressively dismisses literary, genealogical and archaeological accounts. Despite the best efforts of Israeli archaeology, evidence remains scant. Are Abraham and Moses anymore than mythical figures? There was a Davidic dynasty, but the David of the Books of Samuel remains in doubt. A medieval mass conversion of the Khazars is similarly disregarded for lack of evidence. One should caution that though it has always had its adherents and opponents, post 1948 Moslem scholarship can overstate that case, in much same way as anti-Semites did, to one end or another in the last century (and no doubt still do). The debate descends into the mists of academia and one easily gets lost, but where on the ground of the common man, they should inform political opinion.

So Weitzman doesn't provide an answer to the question, but his sift through the evidence is entertaining until the arguments get too academic – you'll know when to stop.

Stewart Rayment