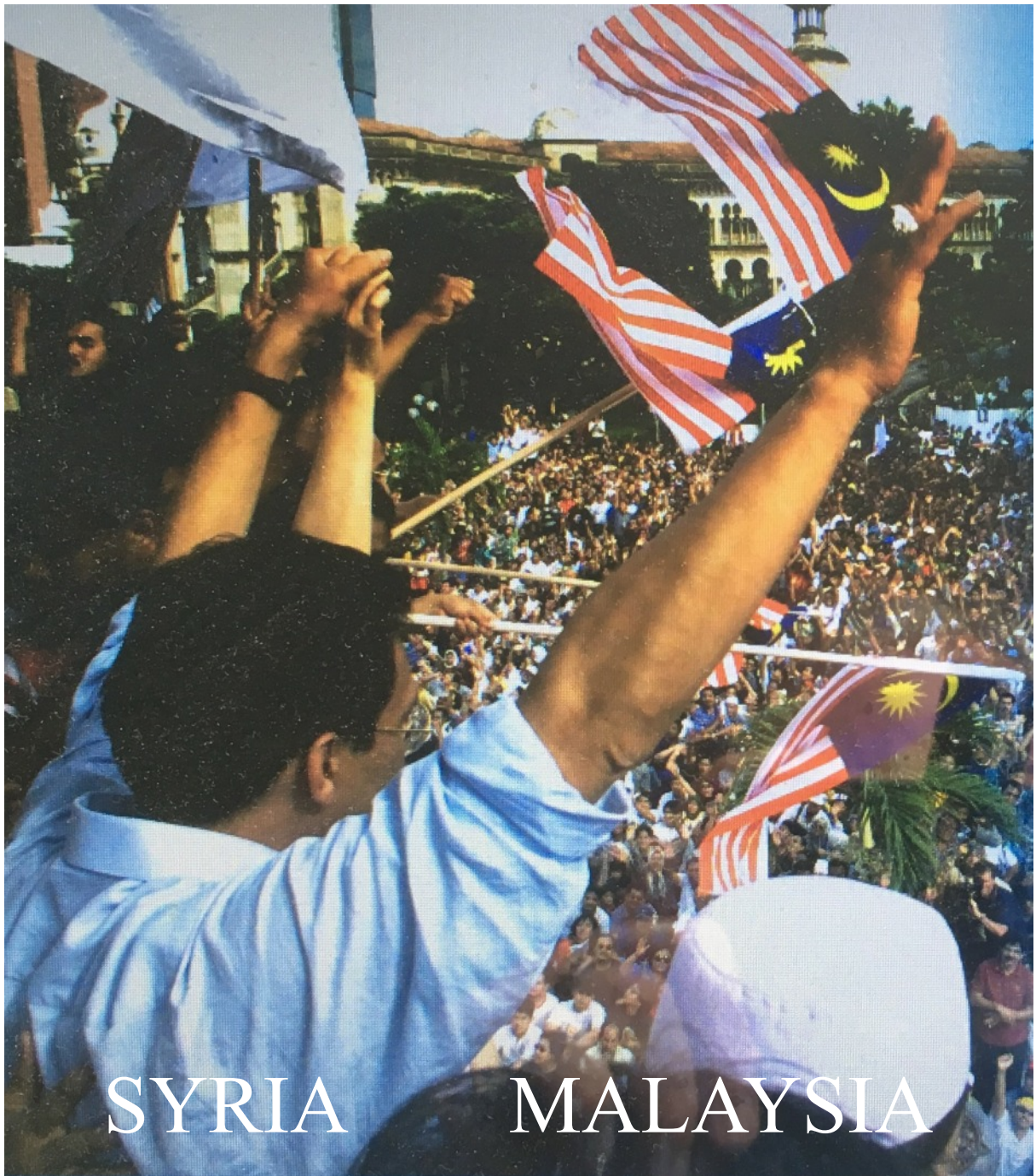




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INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



SYRIA

MALAYSIA

EVENTS

19th May Green Liberal Democrats Conference & 30th birthday. Jubilee Campus, Nottingham University, Nottingham. 11.00am-6.00pm

21st May LIBG Forum – Chinese Influence in Africa, Who Benefits? NLC 6.30pm for 7.00pm

22nd-24th June 200th LI Exec. Delivering climate justice: Liberal responses to the Paris Agreement, Berlin, Germany

23rd June March for a People's Vote, London

25th June NLC Diplomatic Reception. £25.00 NLC 6.30-8.00pm

9th July LIBG AGM

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

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

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Western Intervention in the Middle East: Is it beneficial?

Mohammed Nossier

Calls for one international political conference after another used to provide me with a glimmer of hope that some of our Middle Eastern challenges would be resolved through the initiatives of advanced Western nations – until I learnt that western bureaucracy is even worse than ours. Unlike most of my fellow Middle Easterners, I am not a believer in conspiracy theories; I believe that western nations are either unconcerned with exerting true efforts to solve some of our challenges or that they are happy with the status quo.

President Trump has famously described our region as “the troubled Middle East”, which would naturally imply that western nations would be making a wise decision by pulling out of the Middle East completely. However, the West does not want to kiss the Middle East a final goodbye nor does it want, or perhaps it is incapable of, constructively engaging in the resolution of our problems. The West is only good at assigning a delegate to each conflict, without giving him a mandate or making him accountable for any outputs.

Some western scholars argue that what we lack in this region is a clear strategy that is produced by the West, the United States in particular. However, this “no strategy” may be the intentional implicit tactic of the West in the Middle East, aimed at leaving the region to struggle with a number of clashes and thus empowering western nations to interfere at their convenience and on the scale of their choice.



Meanwhile, western policy failures are often blamed on our unwillingness to resolve our issues.

The West often advocates for idealistic propositions and tends to turn a blind eye to realistic solutions. Moreover, when the West wants to stress a given problem, it is able to resolve it in only a few days, ignoring other considerably less complicated issues. Yet in certain conflicts, the West often draws red lines, indicating clearly that Middle Eastern governments should not cross these lines, and hinting at a number of political propositions that we should adopt gratefully.

The strike on Syria that took place last April is a clear example of the West’s insincerity! Three western nations (the United States, the United Kingdom and France) decided to strike the Syrian ruling regime in retaliation for its alleged use of chemical weapons against Syrian civilians. Regardless of the accuracy of this claim, the West appears to have no problem with the internal war raging in Syria that has led to the killing and displacement of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians – but the use of chemical weapons is the red line that the Syrian regime should not cross.

Presently, the United States wants to pull its military forces out of Syria and replace them with Arab forces. The decisions to deploy forces, carry out strikes or withdraw troops are all western presidential decrees that might conflict with the needs of innocent citizens living in the countries concerned. Western leaders are always keen to provide their fellow citizens with some justification for their military interferences in other nations, yet they don’t really care to address the suffering victims in those nations.

The conflicts that have emerged in the Middle East are certainly our responsibility; our various political forces have contributed to their creation. However, once the West decides to interfere, whatever the method, it should assume some of the responsibility, which it often declines to do. Many of the West's intervention policies intensify the conflicts on the ground that we alone must bear, without exceeding the political ceiling that the West has clearly delineated for us and that sometimes works to our citizens' disadvantage.

I learnt from my western acquaintances that people should think prior to acting. However, when it comes to intervening in our region, the West tends to apply a "trial and error" approach. In dealing with western countries, Middle East nations have two clear options: either to endorse western (military or peaceful) interference or to submit a resolution to the U.N. Security Council – that will be vetoed by the same western nations. My answer to the famous Western question, "Why do you hate us?" is, "We do love you, but the magnitude of our love is equal to the extent of your intervention in our region!"

Mohammed Nossier

Mohammed Nossier is an Egyptian Liberal Politician working on reforming Egypt on true liberal values, proper application of democracy and free market economy.

... and what the Liberal Democrats had to say about Western Intervention - the Syria debate in the Commons.



[Sir Vince Cable \(Twickenham\) \(LD\)](#)

I also regret the fact that the Prime Minister did not seek the prior approval of Parliament, especially as at least some of her arguments are compelling. Further to a question from the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) that the Prime Minister did not answer, if the Syrian regime is now foolish enough to use its residual stocks to attack other

holdouts, such as Idlib, does the Prime Minister intend to order fresh strikes, or was this, in the words of President Trump, a one-off operation and "mission accomplished"?

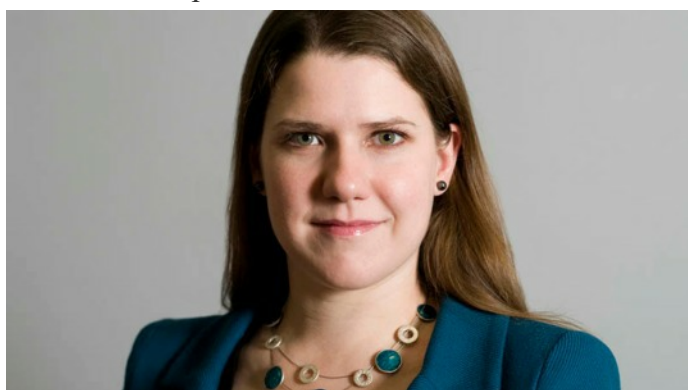
[The Prime Minister](#)

This was a limited, targeted set of strikes by the United Kingdom, the United States and France. The targets were carefully chosen, and the intention was to degrade the Syrian regime's chemical weapons capability and to deter its willingness to use those weapons. Nobody should be in any doubt about our resolve to ensure that we do not see a situation in which the use of chemical weapons is normalised.

[Jo Swinson \(East Dunbartonshire\) \(LD\)](#)

I am glad that we are finally debating this situation in Syria, but the Prime Minister could and should have recalled Parliament to discuss and vote on this issue last week.

The heart-breaking and sickening images of these chemical attacks leave us in no doubt why so many Syrians have felt forced to take their children and



flee their homes and their country. In the same circumstances, which of us would not do the same? But with deeper engagement comes greater responsibility, so does the Prime Minister recognise the jarring contrast between the humanitarian arguments she makes for this military action and her Government's inhumane and inadequate approach to Syrian refugees, which has left vulnerable children stranded and alone?

[The Prime Minister](#)

We have been providing significant support to Syrian refugees since the start of this conflict—it is the biggest single humanitarian intervention that this country has made. We have been providing water, food and medical consultations for tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of Syrian refugees, and we continue to do so. I believe it is right that we continue to recognise the need of those people and that we continue to provide for it.

[Mr Alistair Carmichael \(Orkney and Shetland\) \(LD\)](#)

When David Cameron came to the House in 2011 following the start of our intervention in Libya, it was for a full debate on an amendable motion. He got that approval by 557 votes to 13. I offer no prizes for guessing who was in the 13, Mr Speaker. Will the Prime Minister follow the precedent set by David Cameron and tomorrow allow the House a vote on an amendable motion, not just a general debate?

[The Prime Minister](#)

The right hon. Gentleman quotes the former Prime Minister. The former Prime Minister also said to the House of Commons in 2014:

“it is important to reserve the right that if there were a critical British national interest at stake or there were the need to act to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe, you could act immediately and explain to the House of Commons afterwards.”—[*Official Report, 26 September 2014; Vol. 585, c. 1265.*]

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-04-16/debates/92610F86-2B91-4105-AE8B-78D018453D1B/Syria>

Hansard 16 April 2018: Volume 639

... and the Lords

[Lord Newby \(LD\)](#)

My Lords, I too thank the Leader of the House for repeating the Statement. We on these Benches associate ourselves with the Government's condolences to the family and friends of Sergeant Tonroe.

Last week, the Government and their allies were faced with a painful dilemma. The atrocious attack in Douma was only the latest and most lethal in a series of chemical attacks that have occurred in Syria over the last year. The only credible perpetrator of these attacks is the Assad regime. The stark choice which the Government and their allies faced was either to do nothing or to take some form of military action to signal our abhorrence of the use of chemical weapons. Given the attitude of the Assad regime and its Russian allies, there was, in the short term, no third effective diplomatic avenue open.

To undertake military action the Government needed to ensure that it was legal, effective and proportionate, and did not lead to an escalation of the multidimensional conflicts that beset Syria. The strict targeting of facilities, the extraordinary accuracy of the missiles, the avoidance of civilian casualties, the forewarning of the Russians and the assurance that the military action was a one-off event appear to have met those requirements. Another requirement for the use of military action, however, that was not met was the need to gain the prior approval of Parliament. It would have been possible to recall Parliament last week at very short notice and the Government should have done so. They might have had in mind the precedent of 2013, when the Commons refused to back unspecified military action in response to chemical attacks in Syria, but the hesitancy of the Commons to authorise military action then only strengthens the case for getting its approval now.



However effective the air strikes might have been in degrading Assad's short-term ability to manufacture chemical weapons, they do not constitute a strategy. Indeed, the Government make no such claim. But the need for a way forward in Syria that goes beyond the brutal suppression of all resistance by the current regime has never been greater. As far as the UK's role in achieving this is concerned, we can be effective only when working over a sustained period with our allies and the wider international community.

As the Statement makes clear, the Foreign Secretary has today, alongside his French counterpart, briefed the EU Foreign Affairs Council about Syria. This is commendable but, if the Government have their way, in 12 months' time he would not be in the room. So I repeat a question that I have put before: after 29 March next year, how do the Government foresee being able to have a voice in EU Councils when they discuss Syria and foreign affairs more generally?

As for the US, it is reported that President Macron and Chancellor Merkel are to visit Washington next week. Does this mean that the French and Germans are now speaking for the European allies instead of the E3, of which the UK was a partner, which handled the Iranian nuclear negotiations?

On the prospects of a long-term settlement in Syria, while the Geneva talks appear to be deadlocked, there are more encouraging signs from the discussions convened by Russia in Sochi with the participation of the Iranians and the Turks. What is the Government's assessment of the potential of these talks and are they in any way associating themselves with them? Will the Government offer their support to those within Syria gathering information about those committing war crimes so that they can eventually be brought to justice before the ICC?

The multi-layered conflicts being played out in Syria—Assad v al-Qaeda, Turkey v Kurds and Iran v Israel—have the potential to cause further horrific suffering and senseless violence beyond that which we have already seen. At the very least, we must ensure that action by the UK does nothing to escalate these conflicts. Last week's raid appears not to have done so, but the Government must approach any further such interventions with great care and should take action only when they have the support of Parliament.

[Baroness Evans of Bowes Park](#)

I thank the noble Baroness [Smith of Basildon, Lab] and the noble Lord for their comments. As they will be aware, the UK is permitted under international law on an exceptional basis to take measures to alleviate human suffering, which is what we did. As the noble Baroness rightly said, we have published our legal position, which sets out how we believe that the military action taken has met this requirement. That is available for all to see.

The noble Lord and noble Baroness both asked about escalation. They are absolutely right: escalation is not in anybody's interest, and I hope that the Statement I repeated made it clear that escalation was considered in discussions about what action to take. This was a discrete action to degrade chemical weapons and deter their use by the Syrian regime. We do not want to escalate tensions in the region. The Syrian regime and Russian and Iranian forces were not the target of the operation.

We are committed to playing our part to help the humanitarian catastrophe. As the noble Baroness rightly said, more than 400,000 people have been killed and half of Syria's population has been displaced. As the Statement made clear, the UK is the second-biggest bilateral donor to the humanitarian response in Syria. Since 2012, our help has provided more than 26 million food rations, more than 10 million health consultations, more than 9.8 million relief packages and more than 8 million vaccinations. We have provided more than £200 million through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, and we remain committed to continue this within that region. I can reassure the House that we remain committed to achieving our goals in Syria: defeating the scourge of Daesh and achieving a political settlement that ends the suffering and provides stability for all Syrians. Alongside our US and French allies, we will continue to pursue diplomatic resolution—as I mentioned, there will be a further meeting of various partners next week to look at how we can continue to do that.

As I said in the Statement, and as the noble Baroness rightly mentioned, it appears that the OPCW team is being prevented from continuing its assessments in Douma. This has come out in a meeting today, so it is quite early days in terms of the information being passed back, but we will now work with our international partners to see what further steps can be taken. We must at the very least find out what is happening and we will work with our international allies to do that.

The noble Lord and noble Baroness both asked about parliamentary involvement. As I am sure they are both aware, the *Cabinet Manual* acknowledges that parliamentary debate is not necessary where there is an emergency and such action would not be appropriate. We believe that we acted in accordance with the convention. It was necessary to strike with speed so that we could allow our Armed Forces to act decisively, maintain the vital security of their operation and protect the security and interests of the UK. This is in accordance with the convention on the deployment of troops and Parliament.

This action has shown us once again to be playing a leading role internationally. As permanent members of the Security Council, we, the US and France have a particular role in upholding the international laws that keep us safe. That is what we were doing with this action. Support has been wide-ranging, including through many of our European allies, the EU, NATO, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey. We will continue to play a leading role in maintaining international order and making sure that we can keep people safe.

[Lord Campbell of Pittenweem \(LD\)](#)

My Lords, I find it difficult to see how anyone could reach the conclusion that this proportionate and targeted attack was anything other than lawful, although I understand it is the position of some in the other place to continue to doubt that. Having regard to the behaviour of the Assad regime, in particular following what one might call the warning of September 2013, the determination to persist in these unlawful attacks must inevitably provoke response.

However, I believe that the Government made a mistake, if I may put it as delicately as that, in not recalling Parliament—for the sake of 48 hours. If the question of urgency is to be raised in support of the Government's attitude to that, it is worth pointing out how little urgency President Trump



displayed over a period of several days. The United Kingdom was not at imminent risk. It would have been possible to debate these matters without reference to detailed and confidential intelligence and certainly without identifying targets. I do not expect the Leader of the House to agree with me, but I urge upon her that on any future occasion a more positive approach is taken to obtaining the discussion and, if necessary, the approval of both Houses of Parliament.

[Baroness Evans of Bowes Park](#)

I thank the noble Lord for his support in relation to the legal basis for the action. I am afraid he is right: I do not entirely agree with the second part of his comments. We believe we need to maintain the prerogative powers that allow the Executive to act in emergencies to alleviate human suffering, and we felt it was necessary to strike with speed so that we could allow our Armed Forces to act decisively, maintain the vital security of their operation, and protect the security and interests of the UK



[Baroness Falkner of Margravine\(LD\)](#)

My Lords, this is a sober moment for this country because, although we are extremely relieved that the operation has been successful, we have not seen the threatened Russian retaliation yet, so the game is not over and it is time to reflect a little bit. I am concerned that the Statement repeated here said two things. One was that speed was essential, yet we took seven days. The definition of an emergency is a serious, unexpected and often dangerous situation demanding immediate action. The second thing we have been told

today is that the House of Commons is not to be trusted. Despite assurances given by Mr Hague in 2011 and the assurances Mr Cameron gave after the Chilcot report in 2016, when he repeatedly told the other place that it would be extremely exceptional that the convention that had been agreed and established in both Houses would be disregarded, this week that convention has been disregarded. The Minister may know that I had a Private Member's Bill to codify a war powers Act that would have allowed this action to go ahead had it been codified. Will the Government now go back and contemplate resolving this once and for all?

[Baroness Evans of Bowes Park](#)

I am afraid I disagree with the noble Baroness's question. We made a decision and there was a Written Statement a couple of years ago. The position remains that we will not be codifying the convention in law or by resolution of the House in order to retain the ability of this and future Governments and the Armed Forces to protect the security and interests of the UK in circumstances that we cannot predict and to avoid such decisions becoming subject to legal action. That is what we have stated and that remains our position.

[Lord Alton of Liverpool \(Cross Bencher\)](#)

My Lords, in the snake pit of competing interests and proxy wars in Syria, it will have been of little comfort, as the noble Lord said a few moments ago, to hear the words "Mission accomplished", certainly for the relatives of some 400,000 people who have died and the 12 million displaced in Syria. I too would welcome more from the noble Baroness about what diplomatic action we are going to take to try to bring a conclusion to this terrible conflict.

I would also like to return to what she said about the veto that has been used in the Security Council and the accountability to which people will be held, whether they are responsible for genocidal crimes against humanity, in the case of Daesh, or for chemical weapons being used, in the case of the Syrian regime. What are we doing to create new mechanisms, such as a regional court that does not need a decision taken by the Security Council, which could be established by the United States, France, the UK and our allies so that those who have been responsible for these depredations will be brought to justice? Surely what marks us out from people like Assad or, for that matter, Daesh is our belief in the upholding of the rule of law.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park

I entirely agree with the noble Lord's sentiment. Russia has used its veto six times on the topic of chemical weapons use in Syria since 2017, including, as I mentioned, the recent veto of the draft resolution which would have established an independent investigation. Of course, we have used other mechanisms. Through the EU, we have brought sanctions against those involved in the use of chemical weapons in Syria, and we will continue to try to work through international bodies to ensure that those who commit these heinous crimes are brought to justice.

Baroness Sheehan (LD)

My Lords, I should like to focus on that part of the Statement which refers to the alleviation of humanitarian suffering in Syria. Do the Government recognise the greater urgency which now exists and will they, with respect to both the Syrian vulnerable persons resettlement programme and the vulnerable children's resettlement programme, bring forward the timescales that they are working to and increase the number they are prepared to help?

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park

We can certainly be proud of the humanitarian approach that we have taken to the area. Our commitment to resettle 20,000 of the most vulnerable refugees

fleeing Syria remains. More than 10,000 people have been resettled through the vulnerable persons resettlement scheme so far, with about half of those children. Indeed, Eurostat figures show that, in 2016, the UK resettled more refugees from outside Europe than any other EU member state. Overall, more than a third of all resettlement to the EU was to the UK. That is a record of which we can be proud.



Lord Roberts of Llandudno (LD)

My Lords, is the Minister basking in self-congratulation about the UK's humanitarian aid to Syria? I remember the night when we voted on the Dubs amendment. We wanted 3,000 children from Syria to be accepted into the UK and those on the Government Benches walked into the Not-Content Lobby. Is that a measure of congratulation? There are still children in Calais and Dunkirk, yet every step we take builds a barrier—a wall, not a bridge—for those children.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park

I am sorry that the noble Lord thinks we have been self-congratulatory. I do not believe that we have. This country has a strong record in this area and we should be proud of it. We have committed to resettle 480 unaccompanied children from Europe under the Dubs amendment and over 220 children have already been transferred to the UK. We provided refuge, or other forms of leave, to more than 9,000 children in 2016 and more than 42,000 children since 2010. That does not take away from the suffering of the many children who we have not been able to help. However, we do have a record in this area and we will continue to do what we can to help those most in need.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2018-04-16/debates/E514CB15-9E97-4B6F-933C-2CCE9D07813D/Syria>

Neither of these extracts are the full debate, only those contributions by Liberals and the Government's reply thereto by the Prime Minister or Baroness Evans of Bowes Park. It is likely that we have not heard the last of the attack on Assad's Syria. We still await the report of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), but they didn't gain access to Douma until the 19th April, whilst the attack reputedly took place on the 7th April. Human Rights Watch has documented 85 chemical weapons attacks in Syria since 2013.

PKR win big in historic Malaysia election

Pakatan Harapan the coalition of which the Parti Keadilan Rakyat (commonly Keadilan or the PKR - the People's Justice Party, LI member in Malaysia) made history in Malaysia on the 9th May, overturning the 60-year rule of the former governing coalition, Barisan Nasional, which had been in power since Malaysia's independence in 1957.

The coalition, Pakatan Harapan (HR), the Alliance of Hope was formed in 2015 between the PKR, the Parti Tindakan Demokratik, (DAP, the Democratic Action Party), the Parti Amanah Negara, (the National Trust Party) and the Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM, commonly known as Bersatu, the Malaysian United Indigenous Party).

The PKR won 50 seats in the Dewan Rakyat, an increase of 20, securing 2,046,484 votes. Overall the HR Coalition won 121 seats (+54) with 5,781,600 votes (47.92%). The PH Coalition, with the Parti Warisan Sabah is the largest coalition in 8 of the 13 state legislative assemblies of Malaysia and forming the government in Kedah, Penang, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Malacca, Johor and Sabah.

I president Dr. Juli Minoves has led congratulations on behalf of the international Liberal family.

Commenting after the results were confirmed, Dr. Minoves said: "On behalf of the world federation of liberal and democratic political parties, I am proud to lead the celebrations and applaud what PKR and its coalition partners have achieved in Malaysia. Their victory – overturning 60 years of rule by the former coalition government – is nothing short of inspirational; they give hope to many embattled liberals and democrats in every part of the world. In addition to championing PKR's reforms for Malaysia, LI remains determined to support the party in our long-running fight to have Anwar Ibrahim finally pardoned and released from prison", the LI president added.



Dr. Wan Azizah Wan Ismail

The election result sees Dr. Wan Azizah Wan Ismail become the first female deputy prime minister in Malaysia's history, joining other Liberal female leaders in the region president Tsai Ing-wen in Taiwan and vice-president Leni Robredo in the Philippines.

According to Forbes, which has likened the result to Brexit and Trump's election in the USA because of the impact of social media, it was very much a backlash against corrupt entrenched elites, and Chinese influence in Malaysia, which had grown under the

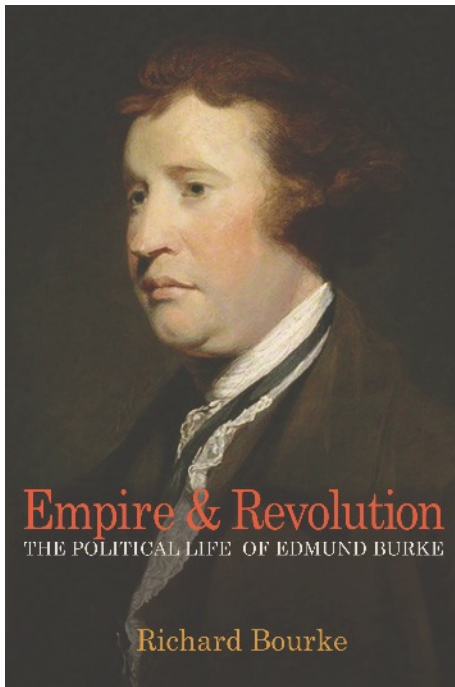
leadership of Najib Razak and the Barisan Nasional. New Prime Minister, the DAP's Mahathir Mohamad has said that he will revisit these Chinese dominated infrastructure projects, not just because they have swelled Malaysia's current public debt, but because these big projects have been facilitated by political insiders who lined their pockets with Chinese bribes and inducements.

Photo: By Pocket News from Malaysia - PRK P.044 Permatang Pauh By-Election Day With Dato Seri Dr Wan Azizah Putting Ballot Vote (7 May 2015), CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=42840256>

reviews

Empire & Revolution, the political life of Edmund Burke, by Richard Bourke.
Princeton 2015, paperback 2017 pbk £25.00 isbn 9780691145112
pbk isbn 9780691175652 e-book isbn 9781400873456

Every generation of students seems blest by a good guide to Burke, since he is a mainstay in the studies of history and political philosophy; mine was Conor Cruise O'Brien's introduction to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Penguin 1968). Richard Bourke presents us with a much more thorough assessment going into the minutiae of Burke's life. Burke is typically cast as the political theorist of British Conservatism and the *Reflections* are, of course, the basic statement of that. Had Burke, a Rockingham Whig, sold out and become a Tory? Yet the pallbearers at his funeral were all Whigs, primarily Rockinghamite or independent (although Portland had, by then, accepted office as Home Secretary in Pitt's government – he too was disquieted by the French Revolution).



As with most political thinkers, the answer is not as simple as that and there are many examples of Burke's proto-Liberalism in his *Letter to the Electors of Bristol*, where he supports the American revolutionaries on the basis of 'no taxation without representation' and his arguments for the impeachment of Warren Hastings and the critique of despotism and corruption in politics. It should be remembered that what are now canons of political thought we highly polemical work-a-day politics in their time.

Bourke's book is important because it looks in detail at the cusp of a great transitional period in politics and political thought; I don't simply mean in this the obvious cataclysm of the French Revolution nor that of America. It is a period in which Whiggism will begin to transform into what will come to be recognisable as Liberalism and the chance to be guided through the detail of this is a tour that shouldn't be missed.

Stewart Rayment

Pay No Heed to the Rockets, by Marcello Di Cintio.
Saqi 2018 £8.99

For such a small territory, Palestine has generated a disproportionate amount of books; I have several shelves-full in my library. But most of those works are about history, war and the search for peace. Literature rarely gets a look in. So Marcello Di Cintio's journey among Palestinian writers in the West Bank, Gaza and Israel, *Pay No Heed to the Rockets*, is both refreshing and informative.

The writers the Canadian author encounters physically or through texts range from the dead and famous, such as poet Mahmoud Darwish, to brave young literary activists (some feminist, one gay) mainly working in cafés in Ramallah, Gaza City and Haifa. Each has a unique story, all in some way affected by the dispossession and dislocation caused by 1948 and/or 1967, but to very different degrees.

Marcello di Cintio says he was prompted to embark on this project — part travelogue, part lyrical tribute to the craft of writing — by a picture of a young girl joyfully retrieving her rather battered books from the rubble of her home after an Israeli attack on Gaza. The author managed to track her down, as well as some of the writers who have been harassed at times by the Palestinian Authority or Hamas. One of the most

moving passages in the book recounts a visit he made to a venerable family library in Jerusalem's Old City which has successfully fought off expropriation by Israel and encroachment by so-called settlers.

As usual when Palestine and the Occupation are being examined, there is much to make one angry or depressed, but one of the great strengths of Di Cintio's book is that he does not become emotionally partisan, nor does he lose his critical faculties while hearing the stories of those he meets along the way. They emerge from the text as recognisable individuals, with their strengths and their foibles, and one gets a clear sense of the environments in which they live and work. All in all, this is one of the best books I have ever read about Palestine and it should prompt people to get to know some of the work by the Palestinian writers themselves.

Jonathan Fryer

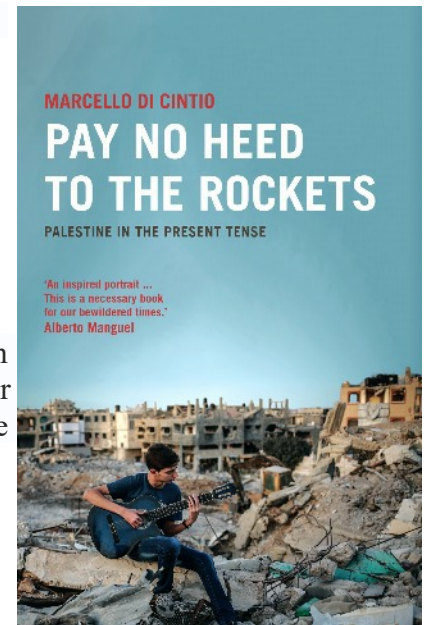
**A Matter of Interpretation, by Antonin Scalia,
Princeton 2018**

When Justice Antonin Scalia of the US Supreme Court died in 2016, it was the end of an era. People may have loved or loathed him for his conservative views, but there is no denying that he had radically changed legal debate. This edition of his seminal work, with new responses to Scalia's position, is a great opportunity to hear from the man himself and reflect on his life's work.

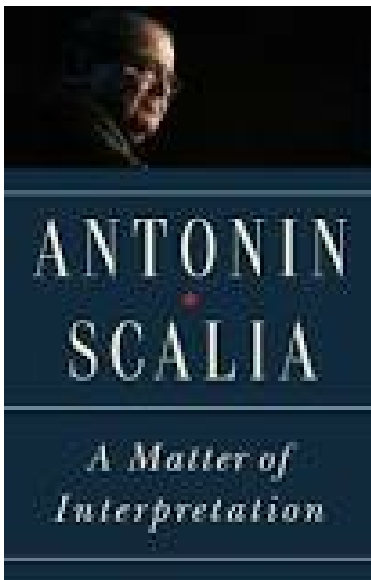
Scalia begins his essay by explaining how lawyers approach cases in jurisdictions like the US (including England). Our legal system was formed by layers of decisions in individual cases, where judges consider the best outcome on the facts whilst building general rules. Lawyers trained under common law are very good seeking just outcomes from experience and context. Today, though, legislation is the dominant source of law. And modern judges still try and weave together cases into a coherent set of rules that they think are right, instead of just applying the law as written. According to Scalia, this is undemocratic. As a textualist, he believes judges should simply apply the words that the lawmakers chose to enact.

So far, so good. Scalia then goes off-piste when considering the Constitution. He promotes originalism, which means applying the Constitution as it was originally understood. This is a confusing stance. When the Constitution prohibits "cruel and unusual punishment", we must find out what was considered cruel and unusual punishment in 1791. However, if Congress passed a law on "cruel and unusual punishment" today, it would be wrong to look at legislative debates and committee reports, let alone contemporary newspaper reports or books, to find out what this phrase means.

Scalia's devotion to originalism overrode his textualist interest in the Constitution. A cynic would say that he liked the original meaning of the Constitution because it allowed him to push conservative attitudes as



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though he were still living in the 18th century. A more generous interpretation is that he realised the limits of textualism in interpreting the broad brush of the Constitution and had to find external sources to aid his understanding. Most of the other essays in the book pick apart originalism, and it is also the focus of Scalia's reply. But there is also some criticism of his textualist approach to legislation, which is to be welcomed. Even a strict textualist like Scalia accepts that there are times when the legislator's real intent must be applied, rather than their accidentally mistaken words (so-called scrivener's error). And this of course leads to the question of where that line should be drawn. Legislators presumably think that the words of a law reflect their intent, but if they do not, surely they would like judges to apply the "real" meaning.

It is a great pleasure to read these thoughtful essays. Scalia was, for the most part, an articulate and principled judge. Even if you do not agree with his views, you can respect the care took in developing a methodology. He was also willing to engage in debate with his critics, which provides a further insight into his position. This book is a great read for anyone who cares about drafting or applying legislation. And in a world where frenetic legislating seems to be the response to all of society's ills, that should be all of us.

Eleanor Healy-Birt

**The Snail That Climbed The Eiffel Tower and other work by John Minton,
written by Martin Salisbury.
The Mainstone Press 2017 £35.00
isbn 9780957666535**

In his *Soho in the Fifties and Sixties*, Jonathan Fryer paints a sorry picture of John Minton; despite Minton's sometimes enraged claim, money can't buy everything, especially happiness. Homosexual when it was neither fashionable nor legal, even in Soho's bohemia, such life was wrought with problems. I recall a row with the then ascendant Francis Bacon, who poured a bottle of champagne over Minton's head and proclaiming 'Champagne for my real friends, real pain for my sham friends'.

There is a lot of snobbery around Art; artists of my acquaintance will frequently protest to me that if they display their work in a particular way, or undertake a type of work, then they will not be taken seriously as artists. I could give loads of examples, but John Minton is both proof of the pudding and its riposte. Nevile Wallis summed this up in a review in *Lilliput*, 'Is he too versatile, it is asked, to be quite serious?' Sir Alfred Munnings, President of the Royal Academy of Arts (1944-49) was more disparaging, but notoriously disliked all forms of modernism. Minton, on the other hand, though Salisbury reminds us that he was never short of a bob or two, advised his students to take commissions, commercial or otherwise, whenever the opportunity arose, because sales of paintings were an unreliable source of income. Critical reception may, however, have been a contributory factor in Minton's decline and suicide. Incidentally, Minton's portrait of Wallis (looking very serious) is in Brighton & Hove Museums & Art Galleries' collection; you might look it up if at the Liberal Democrats' conference this Autumn.



Martin Salisbury's book deals primarily with Minton's graphic work, his painting is largely incidental to this. There is nothing wrong with this approach, especially for such an industrious artist. Minton should be particularly acclaimed for his grasp of new techniques that were appearing in commercial graphic reproduction throughout his career.

I first became aware of him through his illustrations to the works of Elizabeth David – *A Book of Mediterranean Food* (1950) and *French Country Cooking* (1951), yummy. *The Snail* in question is Minton's main sally into the realm of children's illustrated books (if you exclude his sumptuous *Treasure Island* of 1947). This was a collaboration with Paul Odo Cross, a former ballet dancer, whose portrait by Sir Cedric Morris hangs in Amgueddfa Cymru – the National Museum of Wales. Cross emigrated to Jamaica and reputedly Minton visited him there in 1950 on an assignment for *Vogue*. It seems a pity that Minton didn't receive the *Treasure Island* commission until after this visit, powerful though the work is, as the quality of his execution of tropical forests increases dramatically thereafter, as is seen in many of the book jackets that were designed around such themes. Classics aside, only two of the novels for which Minton provided covers are widely read these days – Ray Bradbury's *The Illustrated Man* (1952) and John Braine's *A Room at the Top* (1957). Most of the other novels are more likely to be collected for their dustjackets than themselves and Salisbury thus provides a service to the bibliophile in this book. *The Snail* itself, commands very good prices these days.

Salisbury doesn't comment on Minton's politics (if he had any). In 1951 Minton illustrated a pamphlet by the then Labour MP Woodrow Wyatt (whose politics are not unreasonably in greater doubt), *The Jews at Home*, though Wyatt and Minton seem to have visited Israel separately. The Labour Party's views on Israel were somewhat different in those days...

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Reviewed interLib 2018-02



Unfortunately, I didn't get to last year's exhibition at the Pallant House Gallery in Chichester (the roads are terrible, and the railway tedious) but their catalogue, by Simon Martin & Frances Spalding (also Minton's biographer) will fill the gap on his paintings.

Who could resist a book with a title like this? Who could resist a book as attractive as this? It will serve us well for many years on John Minton's graphic work.

Stewart Rayment

International Abstracts

Briefing for Africa-China Forum

Choosing between China and the West is no joke for DR Congo, by Medard Melangala Lwakabwanga. Huffington Post 25.5.2011

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/choosing-between-china-an_b_788221.html

Anti-Semitism

Jewish Power at 70 years, by Bret Stephens. New York Times 20.04.2018

Since Anti-Semitism has raised in ugly head in British domestic politics over recent months, Bret Stephens provides a useful over-view of the problem from a Jewish perspective in this article.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/20/opinion/israel-70-anniversary-jews.html?action=click&module=Associated&pgtype=Article®ion=Footer&contentCollection=Bret Stephens>



John Minton from The Jews at Home



LIBG FORUM



Chinese Influence in Africa; Who Benefits?

Monday 21st May

Speakers : Rebecca Tinsley (Waging Peace) and Paul Reynolds.

More speakers to be announced.



National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE

(Tube: Charing Cross or Embankment)

Doors open 6.30, debate at 7. 00pm



Liberal International British Group. www.libg.co.uk

200th EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL BERLIN

THURSDAY 21 JUNE

Time	Session	Location
09:00 – 12:00	Human Rights Committee administrative session <i>By invitation only</i>	FDP Berlin
14:00 – 16:00	Human Rights Committee study visit <i>By invitation only</i>	TBD
16:00 – 18:30	Bureau meeting of Liberal International <i>By invitation only</i>	FDP HQ
18:30	Welcome cocktails	FDP HQ Atrium
20:00	Bureau of Liberal International working dinner <i>By invitation only</i>	TBD

FRIDAY 22 JUNE

Time	Session	Location
09:00 – 09:45	Executive Committee opening Welcoming remarks by <i>Juli Minoves</i> President of Liberal International <i>Christian Lindner</i> Chairman of the Free Democratic Party - Germany <i>Wolfgang Gerhardt</i> Chairman of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom <i>Jürgen Martens</i> President of the German Group of Liberal International	FDP HQ Plenary
09:45 – 10:15	Launch of the publication of the Andorra Manifesto	FDP HQ Plenary
10:30 – 11:30	A conversation with Christian Lindner	FDP HQ Plenary
12:00 – 13:30	Lunch reception Hosted by FDP Bundestag Parliamentary Group	Bundestag
14:30 – 16:00	Human Rights Committee political session	FDP HQ Plenary
16:00 – 19:00	Executive Committee administrative session	FDP HQ Plenary

Evening at delegates' disposal

DELIVERING CLIMATE JUSTICE

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DEADLINE FOR AMENDMENTS

The deadline for submitting amendments to draft resolutions is approaching

DEADLINE: FRIDAY, 18 MAY 2018



Städt. Bureau STIFTUNG FÜR DIE FREIHEIT



SATURDAY 23 JUNE		FDP HQ plenary
09:30 – 10:30	Liberal Conference on Climate Change and Sustainability – Opening	
10:45 – 11:45 Change's	Competition and Innovation – Liberal Answers to Climate	FDP HQ plenary
12:00 – 13:30	Lunch	FDP HQ Atrium
13:00 – 14:00	Climate Change and COP – A delegate guide Organised by the International Federation of Liberal Youth	FDP HQ
14:00 – 15:30 People's	Sustainable Cities – Environmental Policies that Change	FDP HQ plenary
16:00 – 17:30	Present and Future of the Energy Market	FDP HQ plenary
17:30 – 18:30	Closing session Remarks by <i>Nicola Beer</i>	FDP HQ plenary
19:00	Farewell dinner Hosted by Friedrich Naumann Foundation	Restaurant

200EXCOM REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN.

Go to <https://liberal-international.org/>

Registration is open from 2 May until 1 June and available here: <https://200ec.eventbrite.co.uk>
Please note: the password needed to access the registration page has been communicated to the international officer of your party or organisation