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Liberal Democrat Conference Reports

March for a People's Vote, 20th October London

EVENTS

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23rd-25th November IFLRY 44th General Assembly, Barcelona.

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

December LIHRC, Copenhagen

7th February 2019 Scottish Group meeting with Baroness Alison Suttie. Details to be announced. Contact paul.edie@blueyonder.co.uk

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Photographs: Stewart Rayment, Lib Dem Friends of Israel, Phil Bennion, Jonathan Fryer.

The US justification for withdrawing from the JCPOA (nuclear agreement).

An assessment of validity

Paul E M Reynolds

Under the Trump administration in the USA, the Iran nuclear deal known as the 'Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action' (JCPOA) has been considered by the White House a poor deal for the USA. Before Donald Trump was elected President, he and many of his supporters described this agreement as President Obama's worst act as president. Hence it was no surprise when the US decided earlier this year to withdraw the US from support of the JCPOA, and to impose unilaterally a series of new primary and secondary economic sanctions, in contrast with the gradual lifting of UN sanctions (imposed under UNSC resolutions) as part of the JCPOA agreement.

The new Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and his new National Security Adviser John Bolton are both stridently anti-Iran and anti-JCPOA, and both of whom have at some time advocated war with Iran. This factor raises suspicions that the ultimate goal of the US administration is a war with Iran conducted in order to establish a more pro-US regime. This suspicion has been enhanced by the list of 12 demands from the US government, which are phrased in such a way as to appear improbable or impractical to meet.

The US sanctions have not been fully implemented yet. The most damaging are due to come into force on November 4th 2018. These aim to block Iranian sales of oil. The US has been putting strong pressure on Allies and other nations to participate in this blockade. Iran says all the unilateral secondary and primary US sanctions are a breach of UNSC resolutions, and that an oil blockade will be an act of war under international law.

If war does ensue it will not be like the US attack on Afghanistan, a poor country with barely any military assets, or Iraq after 13 years of sanctions, or Libya with a small population and outdated Russian and Chinese equipment, or Somalia, a country without a government since 1991. Iran is well-equipped and supported by Russia and China, and now Turkey, and survived a devastating war with a Western-backed Iraq in the 1980s. Thus given the impact of such a war - on Europe, the Mid East and on global trade & oil prices - it is important to assess the validity of the US claims - claims that the world may be going to war over.

There is not one basic position of the US government on the JCPOA; there are different statements and documents from the White House and the list of 12 demands. There are two groups of claims; one is that Iran has an 'arc of influence' from Afghanistan to the Mediterranean, via Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. The other is that Iran has secret weapons programmes aimed at destroying Israel.

Based on the stated specific reasons for the JCPOA withdrawal, more specifically they might be summarised as follows:

- * Iran is causing instability by supporting the Assad government in the Syrian conflict, and ...
- * Backing the Houthis in Yemen, resulting in an Iranian presence on the Saudi border
- * Is the primary influence in the Iraqi government, and part-controls the southern governorates
- * Secretly developing nuclear weapons, unseen by the IAEA
- * Developing an extended nuclear-capable ballistic missile delivery system
- * Supporting Hizb Ullah in Northern Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza

I will comment briefly on these justifications, except the last, which I will leave for later discussion.

- * Iran is causing instability by supporting the Assad government in the Syrian conflict

I would give this justification 8 or 9 out of 10. There are Iranian military installations, trainers and some soldiers in Syria, supporting the Assad government.

For example in the remaining rebel stronghold of Idlib Governorate, inside the border there are many Turkish military posts, and around the Governorate outside of the perimeter there are Iranian posts.

I don't give 10/10 for the claims however because the claims are often exaggerated, especially claims that Iran has assets intended for an attack on Israel. An Iranian attack on Israel would be suicidal for Iranian assets in Syria, regardless of their support from the Russian Federation.

* Backing the Houthis in Yemen, resulting in an Iranian presence on the Saudi border

This claim deserves a 2 out of 10. At LIBG at one of our Forums we had the pre-eminent Western expert on Yemen who has lived there for 18 years and has very good contacts among the Houthis, as well as Hadi and Saleh loyalists. We have engaged with British diplomats and EU officials who know the country well. From my own work too - a fair conclusion is that the epithet 'Iranian-backed Houthis' is misleading at best. The Iranians in some senses have struggled to establish stable relations with the Houthis. The Houthis are not considered 100% Shia by the Iranians (They are Zaidis)

Claims that the Iranians are supplying long range missiles to the Houthis are highly questionable. The Houthis have been reported as acquiring such missiles from their control of Yemeni armed forces' assets. The jury is still out on this question.

* Is the primary influence in the Iraqi government, and part-controls the southern governorates

After the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq Iran did have its proxies in Iraq and some had a level of popularity in the southern governorates. I myself negotiated directly with the Fudullah. Most of the post-2003 militias south of Baghdad however had tenuous or no links to Iran.

In this year's election the victorious Shia bloc was led by Muqtada al Sadr, who is resistant to Iranian influence.

The claims from the USA imply that the arc of influence is a deliberate long term strategy of Iran, established after the religious leaders took power in 1979. The problem with that in the Iraq case is that the primary reason for increased *potential* Iranian influence in Iraq is the US invasion in 2003.

Thus I give 3 out of 10 for this claim.

* Secretly developing nuclear weapons, unseen by the IAEA

The IAEA inspection and monitoring regime in Iran is the most intrusive and detailed ever implemented, including 24/7 camera recordings on nuclear and some non-nuclear sites. It is so embedded in the system, with factory inspections and daily reporting.

In response to such a situation the US administration claims that there is evidence that there is an underground facility. The IAEA disagree. Then it is said that it is impossible to monitor every square inch of the large mountainous county, and so facility could be somewhere undetected. This is a misunderstanding of how technology and expertise works. Such a facility would need extraordinary expertise and advanced engineering, the lack of which played a part on Iran pulling back from its weaponization programme.

If there is an undetected facility despite skill shortages and 'micromanaging' IAEA involvement, then any country in the world might have such a facility ... Saudi Arabia, Brazil, South Africa ... who knows?

For these reasons I would give these claims 1 out of 10.

* Developing an extended nuclear-capable ballistic missile delivery system

The Iranian government has a long term ballistic missile development programme, and indeed they admit to it and conduct tests. They state a clear policy that such missiles will be limited to a 2000 km range. This would reach several US military facilities and Israel, although not with good accuracy. The Iranian government announced in 2018 a willingness to negotiate over a 2000 km limit. There is also a space programme.

No country has ever converted a space launch vehicle into a ballistic missile vehicle, and one reason is the need for re-entry technology and related design aspects

The key question is are Iranian ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons ? This is a technical question for which the required detailed answer would be too long to deal with here, and there are different views of this. There are provisions in the JCPOA about this. Ultimately according to the IAEA the level of technology for miniaturisation of weapons plus the detailed design of the ballistic missiles rules this out - for now.

Certainly there is no technology in Iran (or intention, it seems) to develop intercontinental ballistic missiles (more than 5500km range). This is accepted by the USA, apparently.

Therefore I would give this claim 4 or 5 out of 10.

One has to look at the recent Iranian history and the constant level of threats since the Iran-Iraq war, especially in the last 7 or 8 years, to understand why Iran has a ballistic missile programme. Iran suffered from having no such missiles in the Iran-Iraq war and tens of thousands of people died in Iranian cities as a result. Having such missiles as an obsession is easy to understand.

As the British negotiator of the JCPOA, Sir Simon Gass, said with respect to Iran and all the claims referred to above, 'know your enemy'. This applies well to Iran's ballistic missile and nuclear weaponisation policies.

Paul Reynolds

Liberal International British Group Policy Forum 'Iran and JCPOA; Jaw Jaw or War War ? Assessing the threats and opportunities' was held on Sept 17th 2018 at the Liberal Democrat Conference in Brighton

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Re-imposition of Nuclear-Related U.S. Sanctions Against Iran - An Assessment of the Policy Implications. Bahram Ghiassae

It is important to discuss openly the policy implications of the U.S. unilateral withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Agreement, or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), because it has far-reaching implications.

It is timely too. Today 15 Judges of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), in The Hague, are deciding on a legal Case brought by Iran against the United States.

The Case is the first 'legal fallout' from the 'nuclear fallout' instigated by the Trump Administration on 8 May 2018 - withdrawing unilaterally from the JCPOA, and re-imposing the nuclear-related US sanctions which had been previously lifted, pursuant to the JCPOA.

On 16 July 2018, Iran instituted legal proceeding before the ICJ against the U.S., contending that the re-imposition of sanctions was in contravention of the 'Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations and Consular Rights', concluded between the two countries in 1955.

It is noteworthy, that Iran invoked the 1955 Treaty, and not the Nuclear Agreement (JCPOA), or the UN Security Council resolution 2231, which, in October 2015, endorsed the JCPOA and transformed the political obligations under the JCPOA into international legal obligations.

The Treaty of Amity was abided by both countries until 4 November 1979, where a group of Muslim fanatics invaded and occupied the American Embassy in Tehran, holding 52 diplomats and staff hostage for 444 days. This provocative act has, to date, cost Iran \$2.5 billion in compensation payments. Overnight, the Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations and Consular Rights, was transformed into the *Treaty of Animosity, Economic Regression, and Consular Plights* !

In response, President Carter signed three Executive Orders, freezing Iran's assets in the U.S., banning certain imports from Iran, and expelling Iranian diplomats. This was the very first set of 'Primary' sanctions against Iran, which banned U.S. persons (individuals & entities) from entering into certain commercial transactions with Iran.

In January 1984, President Reagan imposed further 'Primary' sanctions against Iran, following the 1983 Hizbollah attack on the US base in Beirut, which killed 241 U.S. Marines. Iran was, also, added to the "States Sponsor of Terrorism".

In 1995 & 1996, President Clinton passed two Executive Orders, and signed into law the 'Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996', imposing further 'Primary' sanction against Iran. For the first time, 'Extra-Territorial' sanctions ('Secondary' sanctions) were, also, imposed against Iran, prohibiting non-U.S. persons from conducting specific transactions with Iran, including investment in excess of \$20million in the country's Oil Industry.

In reaction to the 'Extra-Territorial' sanctions, and to protect the European entities, the European Union (EU) adopted the 'Blocking Statute (Regulations) 1996', following which the Clinton Administration conceded, offering exemption for European entities.

The Sanctions regime was strengthened under President Bush Jr, following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001.

In 2002, at a press conference in Washington D.C., an Iranian dissident group revealed that Iran was clandestinely developing a 'Heavy Water' plant and Gas Centrifuges for uranium enrichment. A new chapter was, thus, opened in the already fragile relationship between Iran and the West, leading to a fact-finding visit by the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Dr ElBaradei, to Iran

In 2003, following 'nuclear negotiations' between France, Germany, UK and Iran, the 'Tehran Agreement' was signed, whereby Iran agreed to voluntarily implement the 'Additional Protocol' to its 'Comprehensive Nuclear Safeguards Agreement' with the IAEA, thus, allowing intrusive inspections of its non-disclosed sites. Mr Rohani, the current President, was at the time the head of the Iran negotiating team, and 'Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council'.

In 2005, Mr Ahmadi-Nejad was elected President, and following cessation of nuclear inspections by the new President, the IAEA in 2006 formally referred Iran to the UN Security Council (UNSC) for non-compliance with its Nuclear Safeguards Agreements.

In 2006, China, Russia, U.S. and the EU joined the trio – France, Germany & UK – in the nuclear negotiations with Iran. The first of seven UNSC resolutions were adopted in 2006, imposing missile-related and nuclear-related sanctions against Iran. Oil, Energy and Financial sectors were, however, excluded from the UN sanctions regime.

The EU nuclear-related sanctions were imposed in 2007; Human Rights sanctions in 2011; and draconian sanctions affecting the Oil, Petro-chemical, Banking and Finance (including SWIFT) in 2012.



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In June 2013, Mr Rohani was elected President. The nuclear negotiations started in earnest, leading to the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) – the precursor to the JCPOA - in November 2013, in Geneva. Partial easing of nuclear-related sanctions was effected.

Pursuant to the finalisation of the JCPOA in July 2015, and adoption of the UNSC resolution 2231 in October 2015, the EU and UN nuclear-related sanctions were lifted. The U.S. Secondary sanctions were suspended, but the U.S. Primary sanctions remained in place.

However, President Trump's unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA, on 8th May 2018, and the re-imposition of US sanctions, scheduled for 6 August and 4 November 2018, reversed the process of nuclear-related sanctions relief.

It is worthy of note, that 4 November 2018 falls on the 39th anniversary of the 'Hostage-Taking Crisis', on 4 November 1979.

The U.S. imposition of nuclear-related 'Extra-Territorial' (Secondary Sanctions) - which prohibit non-U.S. persons (individuals & entities) from entering into commercial transactions with Iran - have already impacted on the trade policies and practices of countries which have commercial ties with both the U.S and Iran.

The U.S. unilateral action has also had major foreign policy implications for the remaining participants in JCPOA - China, France, Germany, Russia, UK and the EU. The EU has now extended the '1996 Blocking Statute (Regulation)', as a policy instrument, to protect the European entities; notwithstanding, major European companies are ceasing their commercial activities in Iran.

The U.S. sanctions, over the past four decades, have not significantly altered the foreign and security policies of the Iranian regime, and it is unlikely that it would lead to a regime change. Cuba, Venezuela and Zimbabwe remind us that economic sanctions, per se, do not lead to regime change.

Iran and the other JCPOA participants will be closely monitoring the U.S. Mid-Term Elections in November, as the U.S. political landscape may change considerably. Iran is, also, advised by the other JCPOA participants to meet its political commitments under the JCPOA, and fulfil its international legal obligations under the UNSC resolution 2231, and await the outcome of the 2020 U.S. Presidential elections.

The crippling U.S. sanctions, which have already impacted upon Iran's economy severely, might force Iran to abandon the JCPOA, and rekindle its nuclear programme. However, Iran is a Party to the NPT – unlike India, Israel, Pakistan and North Korea - and subject to the IAEA inspections. Also, imposition of a stringent and comprehensive sanctions regime would curtail Iran's capabilities in procuring the requisite material, equipment and instruments for an enhanced nuclear programme.

Notwithstanding, the escalation of hostilities, the risk of military confrontation, the increased risk of nuclear proliferation, and threat to regional and international peace & security remain, and the policy implications of which needs to be addressed by the EU and the UK.

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Donald Trump and the Middle East: potential peace maker or dangerous loose cannon?

The Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel hosted a debate on the impact of Donald Trump on the Middle East to date and what the future might hold. The fringe also considered what opportunities the most maverick US President in recent history may present for Middle East peace. It was a packed meeting at The Hilton Hotel, chaired by LDFI Chair Gavin Stollar, with panellists Sharon Bar-Li, Israel Deputy Ambassador, Baroness Sarah Ludford and Lord Monroe Palmer.

In Gavin's opening remarks he said "Many felt that Trump's approach may actually give him more leverage when it comes to Israel and a viable peace plan, in particular after the embassy move." He added that thoughts had later turned to how the Party may best reach out to Labour voters. "There are many who are disillusioned, and the thought was that we should be saying the Lib Dems could be your natural home."

Monroe stated, to applause, that the Party policy was still a two-state solution. He didn't think President Trump was helping matters by re-siting US Embassy in Jerusalem. Although to his mind there is no dispute that the capital of Israel is Jerusalem. "US cutting aid to UNWRA and Palestinians may seem justified but it will make things much more difficult for the people of West Bank and Gaza. Other nations including UK need to step in. Perhaps using aid to get both sides to negotiating table.

Sarah, the Party's Lords spokesman on the EU and Brexit, said that the Middle East should use the EU as a trading model. She spoke about the Trump negotiators led by Jared Kushner, and asked whether there was a practical plan from Trump's representatives, or whether it was unrealistic. "Israel needs peace more than ever", she said, "And the new Nation State law was not helpful",

Sharon gave a detailed summary from the Israeli Government. US is Israel's closest ally. Trump is sticking to his election promises, which were promises by previous Presidents. She spoke about the shuttle diplomacy and the need to be open to any initiatives. The need to have defensible borders. The possibility of harnessing regional changes as a move towards PEACE.

She and Monroe emphasised the responsibility of Hamas for the suffering in Gaza. They both spoke about the need to provide adequate drinking water in Israel, West Bank and Gaza. The aquifers could no longer be relied upon. Israel was now relying mainly on desalination plants. This and other technological solutions were needed to avert drought and undrinkable water particularly in Gaza. Monroe said it can be done but Hamas must change its policy aim of removing Israel from the map.



The Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel Fringe Meeting Donald Trump and the Middle East: potential peace maker or dangerous loose cannon? was held on the 16th September at the Brighton conference.

*Lord Monroe Palmer,
Sharon Bar-Li, Israel
Deputy Ambassador,
Baroness Sarah
Ludford and LDFI
Chair Gavin Stollar.*

“What Hope for Palestine in the Era of Trump?”

More than 100 people packed the Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine fringe meeting at the Brighton Conference to listen to Jewish writer and blogger, Robert Cohen, and the CEO of the Cordoba Foundation, Anas Altikriti, assess the current situation in Israel-Palestine.

In a moving personal testimony, Robert Cohen said in part, “I am one of those awkward Jews who question the Jewish nationalist project of Zionism, one of those Jews who believes that through Zionism we have committed a terrible injustice to the Palestinian people, while convincing ourselves that we were pursuing a just and righteous endeavour in response to our own persecution.

“I wasn’t always like this, by the way. I used to be a very ordinary Jewish boy from Bromley in South London who had no difficulty in accepting the narrative that Israel was a worthy and noble cause, justified by our 3000-year connection to the land and necessitated by our experience of anti-Semitism, which of course culminated in the Holocaust of the mid-20th Century. It took me many years of reading and reflection and of travel and conversations, of listening and learning, to get where I am today.

“My journey to a Jewish solidarity with the Palestinian people began 30 years ago, when I was a student at Manchester University, trying to understand the uprising on the streets of Gaza and the West Bank that became known as the First Intifada. That event taught me that the Palestinians were a people with a history and a culture as important to them as mine was to me. They were not terrorists. They were not would-be terrorists, who just hated us for no reason – in fact, they didn’t hate us. But they did hate what had been done to them in the name of Jewish security.

“That uprising led eventually to the Oslo Peace Process, we remember the famous handshake between the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, and the PLO Leader, Yasser Arafat, on the White House lawn on September 13th, 1993, with a beaming Bill Clinton looking on... It was the start of what we got used to calling the Middle East Peace Process.

“There were some people who had doubts about Oslo from Day One. The late Professor Edward Said – probably the most articulate and respected advocate of the Palestinian people – wrote a scathing assessment of Oslo, just days after the accords were signed, and continued to chart its failings throughout the 1990s. The first volume of his collected writings on Oslo, called “Peace and Its Discontents” is still very much worth reading. So, Said, writing in October 1993, wrote of what he said were the vulgarities of the White House ceremony and of the degrading spectacle of Yasser Arafat thanking everyone for what in fact was the suspension of most of his people’s rights.”

Anas Altikriti, who is also President of the Muslim Association of Britain, argued that it is wrong to think of the Israel-Palestine situation as extremely complex. “In reality, it is quite a simple issue. Most moral issues are fairly simple. One of the challenges that we face as campaigners who want a just outcome for what is really the issue of our time is to restore it to its basic fundamentals; then we will find out that actually it’s not that difficult...

“The biggest challenge that we face is the issue of the narrative that surrounds Israel-Palestine with what I would suggest are false dichotomies. We are told that any kind of criticism of Israel means that there is support for terrorism or extremism. We are told that any criticism of Israel means that there is sympathy with fascism and the like. That often wards off people who aren’t of that inclination, simply because, sadly, the mainstream narrative has taken on those false dichotomies to the extent that it has become quite intimidating.

“People I know from all sides cannot now go and attend a function that wishes to present a case of Palestine, Israel, the outcome of peace and justice as such, in any academic forum and enjoy any kind of healthy, constructive debate. That’s been closed down...

“The problem is, it’s not just how we engage on an intellectual level, it’s how we present the case in order for people to become even interested in something that is essentially quite simply a human, humanitarian issue...

“We live in times in which we find greater polarisation on virtually every subject that we touch on. And that is something to the detriment of everyone. No case gets to win when we have the level of polarisation that we see today.”

Jonathan Fryer

The Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine Conference Fringe “What Hope for Palestine in the Era of Trump?” was held on Sunday 16th September.



Vince Cable speaking at the inaugural meeting of the Liberal Democrat Friends of Pakistan.



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LDFP fringe meeting notes an IHRA elephant in the room. Jonathan Coulter

At the recent conference, Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine (LDFP) invited two speakers, one of Jewish and the other Arabic background, to speak about ‘What hope for Palestine in the era of Trump’. The meeting might equally well have been called ‘Israel and Palestine in the era of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism’. It would be very difficult for the speakers to avoid discussing this topic which had been the source of constant and across-the-board media coverage during recent weeks, followed by both the Labour Party and the Lib Dem Federal Board signing up to the full version of this definition. Here is the gist of what they said.

As a Jewish boy growing up in Bromley, **Robert Cohen** saw Israel as a just and noble cause, given Jews’ 3,000 year connection to the territory and their experience of antisemitism in Europe, culminating with the Holocaust. However, over a period of 30 years he has become a highly articulate critic of Israel. ‘The first intifada’ of 1987 to 1992, and the Oslo Accords of 1993, were critical road-markers on Cohen’s difficult journey. At first, he believed these Accords were the end of the conflict, but he read widely and learned from others who were critical from the outset, notably Edward Said (“Peace and its discontents”, 1993). Said saw them as an act of capitulation, whereby the Palestinian Authority became the enforcer of Israeli domination. Worse still, the Oslo Accords let Western Governments off the hook. Instead of facing up to their own responsibility for the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, they could normalise their relationship with Israel and engage in arms trade and do nothing to stop the illegal settlements, while paying lip service to a ‘peace process’ that lacked ‘balance or equality of agency’ between the two sides.

The peace process is now effectively finished, and President Trump is treating it as no more than a real estate deal in favour of Israel, with the aim of eliminating Palestinian claims of right of return. And with Trump behind him, there is no reason why President Netanyahu should desist from murderous acts such as have been evident in the repression of the Gazan Great March of Return. As for the British role, the recent royal visit has nothing to do with peace but much to do with the development of our post-Brexit trade.

While not dismissing the existence of antisemitism in Britain, Cohen described the IHRA definition as an unhelpful document that Israel supporters have turned into scripture, and made it harder to voice criticism of Israel. However, a younger generation of Jews is increasingly questioning this narrative and trying to understand Zionism from a Palestinian perspective. Here, I should add that Cohen has a blog called *Writing from the Edge*,¹ in which he has advised Jewish people to dump the Zionist doctrines that have hitherto guided Israel, and warned that the media-orchestrated campaign to portray the Labour Party as antisemitic may end up generating the ‘real thing’.

Anas Altikriti is the Iraqi-born founder and CEO of the Córdoba Foundation, which describes its aim as ‘bridging the gap of understanding between the Muslim World and the West’. He started by supporting Cohen, and went on to contradict the many commentators who claim that the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is ‘extremely complex’. Far from that, the dispute was not beyond the comprehension of ‘the majority of rational and fair-minded people around the world’.

The underlying problem was the dominant narrative in the mainstream media, one that involved ‘false dichotomies’, whereby criticism of Israel was presented as support for terrorism, fascist sympathies and extremism. This had been preventing British people from attending meetings on the situation in Israel and Palestine, effectively closing down healthy and constructive debate on the subject. Altikriti had experienced this in the flesh, finding himself labelled as a critic of Israel, someone ‘who might be antisemitic’ (a view confirmed by the IHRA definition), and barred from speaking at most Universities.

Presidents Netanyahu and Trump shared a particularly problematic feature, that of talking to their own right-wing bases, rather than reaching out to others. It is this that has led to the declaration of Jerusalem as capital of Israel, destroying years of dialogue between the two sides.

On the other hand, Altikriti thought that Trump's extreme measures might prove useful in precipitating resistance. The millions of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, the two million Gazans in the 11-year old (Gaza) 'prison' are an embarrassment to both Israel and the United States, while the situation presents the World with a series of uncomfortable questions as to its own responsibility. It was therefore time that we in the West contended with what is going on our own societies and pushed back against the pro-Israeli narrative. In the case of the UK, he felt that the Lib Dems were well placed to take the lead.

Noting this upbeat comment, I asked Altikriti a question. How could one expect the Lib Dems to push back against the pro-Israeli narrative given their electoral vulnerability, and their fears of being wiped out by a chorus of media smears on grounds of antisemitism in advance of up-coming by-elections or a general election? He gave an interesting answer, asserting that the Lib Dems enjoyed more support in the period up to 2010, when their policies on Middle-Eastern matters were bolder, but had lost some of this in the coalition years. Speaking generically, he said that politicians of the centre sometimes lose out because they cling to 'safe' wishy-washy narratives.

What are the implications for this country - - - and Lib Dems?

Both speakers spoke of pro-Israeli narratives tending to close down debate in the UK, and pointed to the IHRA definition being used for this purpose. This begs the question as to why our Government, the Labour Party and the Lib Dems have all 'adopted' this definition which is helping Israel with this subversive project. Shouldn't they be defending our hard-won freedom of expression?

And shouldn't Labour and Lib Dems have acted consistently with the bold stances they have of adopted in favour of the reform of the press, and its regulation in accordance with Lord Leveson's recommendations? It is after all the same abusive press that has unremittingly bullied the Labour Party, and intermittently, the Lib Dems, over alleged antisemitism.

The weaponisation of antisemitism is probably the UK's worst case of media abuse, given the absence of plurality across media outlets, i.e. press, broadcasting, 'heavies', tabloids, print and online editions. Other lobbying groups manage to get right-wing newspapers to make fiercely propagandistic and pejorative arguments, but get very limited support elsewhere. The case for Brexit is particularly instructive, being militantly expounded in the Mail and The Telegraph, but failing to get strong support in Murdoch outlets like The Times and Sky News, let alone in the BBC and the Guardian.

By contrast, those promoting the message about antisemitism in the Labour Party have managed to get favourable coverage across the board. A recent in-depth survey by the Media Reform Coalition² found myriad inaccuracies and distortions in the media coverage of the Labour Party; significantly, this survey did not show the right-wing press to have played a dominating role in this, but that the BBC and the Guardian were responsible for some of the worst reporting.

In their own statement on the adoption of the IHRA the Lib Dems referenced two caveats designed to ensure free speech³. However, these offer very limited protection in a propagandistic media environment that puts the onus on critics of Israel and its supporters to prove a lack of antisemitic intent or, as expressed by one of those attending the fringe meeting (Michael Meadowcroft), to put them in the unenviable position of having to prove a negative.

I conclude that we Lib Dems need to adopt a much bolder narrative about the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. In particular the Federal Board should ditch its support for the IHRA definition, and instead of this, treat antisemitism on a par with other sorts of racial prejudice, calling it ‘prejudice or hatred towards Jews because they are Jews’, or words to that effect.

Jonathan Coulter

Jonathan Coulter, had a career in overseas development but is now retired. Until recently he served as Newsletter Editor for Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine (LDFP) – www.ldfp.eu/palestine-post-newsletter. However the conclusions he expresses here are entirely his own.

¹ Writing from the Edge. <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/writingfromtheedge/>

² Media Reform Coalition. <http://www.mediareform.org.uk/blog/new-mrc-research-finds-inaccuracies-and-distortions-in-media-coverage-of-antisemitism-and-the-labour-party>

The Media Reform Coalition was set up in September 2011 to coordinate the most effective contribution by civil society groups, academics and media campaigners to debates over media regulation, ownership and democracy in the UK.

³ Could not locate this on the Liberal Democrat website, but President Sal Brinton’s article on LibDem Voice is at <https://www.libdemvoice.org/federal-board-decision-on-the-readoption-of-the-international-holocaust-remembrance-association-definition-of-antisemitism-58512.html>



Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

It was very much the Liberal Democrats For Seekers of Sanctuary’s conference. It was courageous of the Liberal Democrats to debate Migration and LD4SOS undoubtedly played a major role in bringing a frequently timid Conference Committee to this point – LIBG might take note. LD4SOS put it this way:

Well it was busy! The Migration policy motion, an AGM, a fringe meeting and our stall all took up time and energy, but it was well worth it. We had a well-stocked stall, with not only a lot of information leaflets for people, but a lot of people stopped by to ask questions or to have a chat about work they were doing in their area. We had several “distinguished visitors” so we were on the map for tours of the Exhibition.

Our AGM was very lively, being the night before the Policy Motion debate. We had a great line up of speakers, Ed Davey, Tim Farron, and Shas Sheehan. We also managed to get through the mechanics of the AGM, approving accounts, and a new committee has been agreed.

The fringe meeting was addressed by Tim Farron, Jon Featonby from British Red Cross, and our own Ruvi Ziegler on the subject of the need for Refugee Family Reunion.

You can see the write up on pages 16 & 17 of this *interLib*.

The Policy Motion, F16, A Fair Deal for Everyone: Prosperity and Dignity in Migration¹, was both controversial and interesting, the result is that the Liberal Democrats have now by far the most progressive asylum policy, with concrete targets, than any other UK political party. You can see a write up of the debate on pages 18 & 19 of this *interLib*.

So what are those policies? They are posted on our website² at but as so important to our work, they are below. Please note that the “new policies document” includes just the new ones.

We have also rewritten several information leaflets, and added some new ones, so that all are up to date. The following are now posted on our website, under “documents” – Detention, Right to Work, Decision Making, ‘Hostile Environment’, When the Decision is Made, Life as an Asylum Seeker, and Refugees. They are there to be used (!) please feel free to download, share, print, and lobby with to raise awareness and campaign. They may change when we have more time to edit, so please come back to us with any views <http://libdemfocus.co.uk/ld4sos/contact-us>.

Policies adopted at the Federal Conference September 2018 relating to seekers of sanctuary

A SAFE AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

- **Ensure that victims of trafficking are supported** so that they can give evidence against their traffickers and never be returned against their will to their country of origin where their traffickers would have access to them all over again.
- **Retain, alongside refugee status, humanitarian protection status** and reiterate our commitment to the principle of *non-refoulement* as applied in international and European human rights law.

DECISION MAKING

- Review and reform all aspects of current asylum rules and operations that offend basic measures of fairness and justice. We particularly seek to **change the culture of disbelief that affects all people applying for asylum**.
- **Establish a new dedicated unit for asylum applications**, independent of central Government, to improve speed and quality of decision-making, ensuring better decisions, right the first time. The new unit would work with local authorities on dispersal and settlement issues.
- **Take political influence out of decision-making** on applications for visas and sanctuary.
- **Provide better training for staff** particularly those who deal directly with more vulnerable groups such as victims of torture or trafficking, mentally ill people, pregnant women, children and LGBT+ people.
- **Review and reform all aspects of current asylum rules and operations**, with an initial focus on how the rules affect LGBT+ applicants, child-led family reunification applications and those who fled because of their religious or non-religious beliefs, or who are at risk if returned because they have since converted to another faith or belief. Never, in any circumstances, refuse an LGBT+ applicant on the basis that they could be discreet. Have a presumption in favour of family reunification except in those rare cases where it is not in the interests of the child.

At the end of all the processes, when people have been dealt with justly, fairly, and with compassion, and have to be removed from the country, we will only do so with humanity, and following the National Independent Commission on Enforced Removals recommendations on how removals should take place, seeking to keep families together, allow people to exhaust appeals in-country and secure safe destinations for people to go to.

DETENTION

We have reaffirmed our pledge to **end indefinite detention with a maximum time limit of 28 days**.

- A new policy of **detention as last resort**, using community alternatives to detention such as more case-work in the community, thus allowing the closure of eight of the UK’s ten immigration detention centres.

- **No detention for vulnerable people**, such as pregnant women and those who have mental health problems or been subject to torture, and that no one is detained more than 72 hours without judicial oversight.

BEING PART OF OUR COMMUNITY

- **Increase the timescale for asylum seekers to find accommodation from 28 to 60 days** after receiving a decision and **remove the time limit entirely for vulnerable people**.
- **Provide free basic English lessons to any seeker of sanctuary**. We would start these lessons at the earliest opportunity, so that they would be able to integrate and work in the UK as soon as possible.
- **Endorse The Refugees (Family Reunion) Bill**.
- **Support restoring the arrangements for legal aid** for seekers of sanctuary that existed before *The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012*.
- **The level of support** for asylum seekers should be at the same level for all, and all should be able to use the Aspen Card to withdraw cash.
- **All asylum seekers should be granted the right to work**, if they wish, 3 months after applying for asylum. The new unit would be required to assist the asylum seeker exercise this option through facilitating access to training and accreditation of relevant qualifications. Asylum seekers able to work would be required to do so 6 months after applying for asylum. Safeguards will be in place to ensure that no one is compelled to work who is unable to do so. It would give them dignity, ability to use their skills, and be better able to find a job when given the right to remain.
- **All future government-tendered contracts for asylum-seekers' housing** should be rewritten to ensure that a local authority or group of local authorities can compete for them; that housing conditions which compromise human dignity, will be grounds for termination; that existing specific laws on rental housing standards will be fully applicable.
- **We would abolish all forced bedroom sharing of unrelated adults**. It is completely wrong that an asylum seeker has no place for privacy. Also, it is wrong that those with no shared language, country, culture, or faith share bedroom space.

REFUGEES

- **Offer safe and legal routes to the UK for at least 10,000 refugees each year** by expanding the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, both to help a greater number of people from that region and to cover other conflict zones such as Myanmar.
- Provide an effective mechanism to implement in full Section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 that commits the UK to welcoming unaccompanied refugee children, this scheme to be expanded to **welcome 10,000 unaccompanied refugee children over a period of 10 years**.

¹ <https://www.libdems.org.uk/autumn-18-fl16-a-fair-deal-for-everyone-prosperity-and-dignity-in-migration>

² <http://libdemfocus.co.uk/ld4sos/archives/1436>



Tim Farron MP speaking & panellists at the LD4SOS fringe meeting.

‘How should the UK change its refugee family reunification policies?’: LD4SOS at Brighton Fringe meeting

There were plenty there to hear our panel of speakers and enjoy the refreshments provided courtesy of Lib Dem Voice despite us clashing with a big consultation on the Liberal Democrats’ supporters scheme.

Tim Farron MP started off with a review of the overall position and welcomed the approval earlier in the day of policy motion F16 with all 5 amendments, most notably amendment #1 (LD4SOS). He reminded us that in debates we are not just talking about policies but real people who are affected. He talked about the experience of visiting Calais, where it was clear that what people were looking for was safety, not a nice life on benefits.

Then there were people entering Europe. When he was helping on a Greek Island as a boat full to overflowing of refugees landed, one woman told him “Stop handing out bottles of water and accept some ***** refugees.” Hearing stories from a family with good job and business back in Syria he asked himself “What makes such a family flee and put their much-loved children at risk?”.

The refugees then hit a wall. In Thessaloniki they could get no further.

Baroness Sally Hamwee has piloted the Refugees (Family Reunion) Bill through the Lords, and Tim hopes to see it through the Commons; it may be that a similar Bill, proposed by Angus MacNeil, which passed second reading in the Commons on 16th March, will ultimately prevail: it is the end result for those affected that matters most.

In Cologne he found quite a different from pictures painted from what was portrayed in the media recently, and he wished that our country could be the same in accepting refugees – they were contributing to society in different ways, and it is us that are missing out here.

Tim further spoke of the broad breadth of experience people brought to the UK (in contrast to the shame of UK expats in southern Spain not integrating!) and how much more they could do if given the right to work and were able to learn the English language.

Jon Featonby from the British Red Cross told us how they help people through the process of applying for asylum, and then when they are successful, they want to know how to unite with others in their family.

Because of the set rules that we have, there are very difficult decisions to make when a family leaves a war-torn area. What to do with siblings, under and over 18 years old? Leave them at home or bring them with them?

Jon noted that, whilst 6 months ago that day, there was a victory in Parliament, families are still apart. Amnesty, Oxfam and the Refugee Council all have petitions and campaign details on their websites. Amnesty are working on a giant photo album to show to the Home Office about the impact of Family reunification.

He argued that the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme has been huge success so far, but it should not be cut off in 2020, but extended and more countries be included (as in the F16 Policy paper).

Finally, Jon noted that, the current rules that restrict state assistance in housing and welfare to 28 days post-recognition, is a huge issue for those that are given leave to remain. He similarly lamented the fact that refugees are only granted temporary rather than indefinite leave to remain.



Jon Featonby



Dr Ruvi Ziegler

Dr Ruvi Ziegler (Associate Professor in International Refugee Law at the University of Reading) discussed the UK's policies on family reunion in European and international perspectives. He emphasised that the absence of safe and legal routes to asylum in Europe inevitably leads individuals to seek refuge and subsequently wish to reunite with their family and noted that the number of persons resettled globally is dismal – less than 1% of the total refugee population.

He suggested the European human rights law, especially the right to family life, as well as the principle of the 'Best interests of the Child' in the Convention on the rights of the Child could help bring about policy change in the UK.

He argued that, a liberal (and Liberal) policy for integration and family reunion is desirable, including extending political rights to refugees. In respect of the European refugee 'crisis', Ruvi noted that the fault lies in

large part with the "Dublin" system, under which the 'burden' is borne by economically weaker states in Southern Europe, and that part of the solution for the EU lies in extending intra-EU freedom of movement to refugees and other beneficiaries of protection.

The meeting ended with a Q and A session – never enough time for a good discussion, sadly, and thanks for the food, LDV!

Ruvi Ziegler

(note, the new policies in the Policy Paper 131 and LD4SOS amendment #1 as adopted as part of F16 mean that we do now have policies on Family Reunion, restoration of Legal Aid, the Right to Work, Learning English, extension of the SVRPS scheme, and having 60 days grace to move out of accommodation when granted leave to remain.)

This article was published on Liberal Democrat Voice, where you can join in the discussion.

Making our policy on Asylum and Refugees excellent.

LD4SOS and the debate on Policy Motion, F16, A Fair Deal for Everyone: Prosperity and Dignity in Migration

After explaining our position on the policy motion on Migration and Asylum, LD4SOS Council member Suzanne Fletcher moved an amendment to the policy motion we had worked hard on, submitted on our behalf by local parties in Stockton; Wigan, Leigh & Makerfield; and Bromsgrove.

You can see the whole debate here <https://youtu.be/tgScArR958M?t=6768> and Suzanne speaking here <https://youtu.be/tgScArR958M?t=7455>

She spoke of our deep ANGER about how government treats ALL migrants, and the terrible and inhumane way that those asylum seekers who seek sanctuary in the UK are treated. Suzanne then went on to explain some of the main points of our amendment, some of which were an expansion of what was already in the policy paper, and some additions.

“Our amendments include:

Workable solutions to real social, infrastructure and financial problems and place blame on government indifference and underfunding, NOT those who are here from elsewhere for whatever reason.

We shouldn't be using teachers, health professionals, landlords and banks in civil society as border guards. Detention for immigration purposes is bad enough for many reasons, not least that it is indefinite and we welcome the paper affirming our policy having a time limit of 28 days as a maximum. but our amendments go further and make it explicit that detention is NOT AS IT IS NOW, FIRST RESORT, BUT absolutely a last resort, no vulnerable people should be detained at all. Pregnant women, those with mental health problems, those who have been subject to torture should NEVER be detained for immigration purposes, and nobody AT ALL for more than 72 hours without judicial oversight. There must be community alternatives to detention with casework. This is about stopping lives being wasted, not just wasting money better spent.

We are reaffirming our unqualified commitment to principle of no reformer which prohibits the UK from sending anyone to any place where their life or freedom would be at risk

Culture of disbelief must END. There are Christians, people of other faiths, people of no faith, fleeing for their life. There are those who have converted to Christianity since coming here. There are LGBT + people.

ALL these are so often not believed and have impossible levels of proof to give. We need to Review and arbitrate decisions before reaching appeal.

Over 40% of appeals taken are won, what does that say about bad decision making. Costs of appeals should go from ministry of justice to a new dedicated unit for asylum applicants to make incentives for decisions to be right first time.

Family reunion bill must go through, and HUGELY IMPORTANTLY, the restoration of legal aid to what it was before 2012.

We demand Safe and legal routes for at least 10,000 each year in expansion of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme to not just from Syria but other conflict zones such as Myanmar. Next time you see something on T V about horrors elsewhere and think "what can I do". You can start by voting for this.

We demand deeds not words from government on existing schemes for welcoming refugee children, and an expansion of it too.

Victims of trafficking need more than warm words, their exploitation leaves them feeling very insecure and they need to be supported so they can give evidence against. It is so important that they are not returned to country of origin where they can be trafficked again.

AS LIBERALS WE MUST LEAD THE WAY TO HAVE A WELCOMING SOCIETY THAT WE TREAT PEOPLE WITH COMPASSION AND HUMANITY, AND GIVES THEM JUSTICE AND DIGNITY. MOST OF ALL WE MUST VOTE TODAY TO GIVE THEM HOPE.

FOR ALL SUFFERING FROM ISSUES I HAVE MENTIONED, NOW, AND NOT NEXT YEAR. VOTE FOR OUR AMENDMENT AND THEN THE MOTION."

There were a series of interventions in the debate, and you can hear Janet King and Jacqui Bell here <https://youtu.be/tgScArR958M?t=10004>

We were extremely pleased that we didn't see anyone at all voting against our amendment, and that along with other good amendments the whole of the policy motion was agreed. You can see it here [Prosperity and Dignity in Migration final form in word](#), and the original policy paper is at <https://www.libdems.org.uk/autumn-18-policy-paper-131>

Now the hard work begins of campaigning on all of these, and more, of the issues, and persuading the other parties to back us.

CALLS FOR INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLASTICS

A legally binding international treaty on plastics is the call from the Liberal Democrats following a major debate at their Party Conference. The treaty would encompass phased reductions in the production, consumption and trade of virgin feedstock. It would also include a financial mechanism providing aid and capacity-building assistance to developing countries.

Tim Pickstone, the Liberal Democrat Group Leader in Bury Council, said:

“The problem with plastics is not only on our shores. It is a problem that impacts the environment, communities and wildlife across the globe. The Government therefore has a duty to lead from the front and start weaning the world off plastics. But instead of leadership on the environment, all this Conservative Government offers is empty words.”

The Liberal Democrats are calling for real international action to save our environment from the scourge of single-use plastics.

- Banning the use of non-recyclable single-use plastics that have affordable alternatives
- Implementing a deposit system for all container products.
- Requirement all packaging to include recyclability options.

Tim Pickstone

Guatemala’s President Morales slammed on suppression of basic human rights.

Chair of LI LGBTI Rights Working Group Frank Van Dalen has slammed Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales’ latest move to curb the rights of women and the LGBTI minority in the country by pushing for the adoption of the Life and Family Protection Bill.

The bill expands the criminalization of abortion and could subject women who have miscarriages to prosecution – or at least to questioning by law enforcement authorities. It also includes definitions of “family” and “sexual diversity” that are openly discriminatory and run counter to basic rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people.

Calling on Guatemalan legislators to reject the bill, Frank van Dalen, Chair of Liberal International’s LGBTI-Workgroup, has condemned it as undermining for the rights of women and LGBT people in the country. “Instead of adopting a law further discriminating women and LGBTI-people and fuelling religious -based hatred, Guatemalan legislators should create equal rights for all and stop cherry-picking on international human rights legislation which is binding for Guatemala” he said.

“INSTEAD OF ADOPTING A LAW FURTHER DISCRIMINATING WOMEN AND LGBTI-PEOPLE AND FUELLING RELIGIOUS -BASED HATRED, GUATEMALAN LEGISLATORS SHOULD CREATE EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL AND STOP CHERRY-PICKING ON INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION WHICH IS BINDING FOR GUATEMALA”

The proposed legislation has been approved twice by Congress and needs a third approval, in addition to a final approval of each individual article, before being sent to the president and signed into law. Earlier this year the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled in support of same-sex marriage, which is also binding on Guatemala.

The move to push through the discriminatory Life and Family Protection Bill follows an announcement from President Morales that he is due to expel the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) on the grounds of internal interference as the Commission has been investigating corruption in his country.

Human Rights Watch says the bill expands the criminalization of abortion and could subject women who have miscarriages to prosecution – or at least to questioning by law enforcement authorities. It also includes definitions of “family” and “sexual diversity” that are openly discriminatory and run counter to basic rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people.

LI does not have a member party in Guatemala currently, the Partido Patriota, was dissolved in 2017 having lost support in the wake of the La Linea corruption scandal. There is a general lack of stability in political parties in the country. Morales was a member of the Frente de Convergencia Nacional, FCN-Nación, the National Convergence Front, which had its roots in veterans of the civil war (1960-1996), but appears to have been dissolved earlier this year. President Morales was something of a political outsider, having previously been a television comedian. His government is backed by military officers and a block in Congress known derisively as *el pacto de corruptos* for their efforts to grant immunity against charges of corruption and other crimes. Rather than back the corruption investigations of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, Cicig, the New York Times reports (21.9.2018) that President Trump remains silent. This is possibly because Morales followed suit in moving the Guatemalan embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, but also fear of Chinese influence.

NO PASSPORTS TO PIMLICO

The founder of Pimlico Plumbers, Charlie Mullins, is to be congratulated for not submitting to pressure from (Labour) Lambeth Council to remove the giant sign over his company HQ saying Bollocks to Brexit! He has argued persuasively that Britain’s leaving the European Union — which it is scheduled to do on 29 March next year) will be bad for his customers and bad for his workforce, which has benefited from the Freedom of Movement that is part and parcel of the European Single Market.

Rather than take down the sign he has instead invested in many more advertisements with the slogan posted near stations and other prominent places around London. After all, the Leave campaign was allowed during the EU Referendum campaign in 2016 to get away with driving a bus round with the lying slogan that the money the UK sends to the EU (itself a dodgy statistic) could be spent on the National Health Service instead. No surprise to learn now that that is not going to happen. In fact, Brexit is already costing this country hundreds of millions of pounds each week, and it hasn’t even occurred yet. And any increase in NHS funding (indeed needed) will probably have to come from higher taxation instead.

Charlie Mullins says ‘It’s blunt, which is something for which I make no apologies for. This is a momentous and hugely damaging thing we appear to be about to do. And I for one will not stop fighting to stop Brexit. In 10 years’ time hopefully I will be able to look at the events for the past few years and say ‘pshaw, that was a damn close call!’ But if not, I want to know that I did everything possible to stop the calamity that is Brexit. Truth is Brexit is not a done deal. We can step back, and those pushing for it know this to be true, which is why they are fighting all the harder to keep their ill-gotten gains.’



Despite Brixton Kremlin’s objections it was good to see comrades from Clapham Town Labour Party and Lambeth UNISON on the Peoples’ Vote March on 20th October. Labour whips apparently forbade Shadow Cabinet members from attending, so better watch your backs.

International Abstracts

Liberal Democrats.

A horror story to chill Vince Cable's blood, by Paris Gourtsoyannis. The Scotsman, 11th September 2018
There has always been a danger of the Liberal Democrat's leadership wanting to be a centre party, whatever that is. A look at the pros & cons from Scotland.

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/paris-gourtsoyannis-a-horror-story-to-chill-vince-cable-s-blood-1-4797791>

Liberator 392

Rebecca Tinsley writes on Iraq & Kurdistan, Trevor Smith on Britain's international role, and Marisa Fernando on Malaysia (also in interLib 2018-07). There is also the usual Brexit stuff from Paul Hindley, Andrew Duff and Naomi Smith, and Marianne Magnin writes on the lessons the Liberal Democrats might learn from France's LREM. Vince Cable writes on his visions for the Liberal Democrats (I can't think when a leader of the Liberal Democrats last wrote for the magazine, though David Steel did upgrade in from 'a trashy rag run off on a duplicator in north London' to 'still a trashy rag, but now run off on a decent laser printer' or words to that effect – as Paddy Ashdown put it, 'if Liberator wasn't there we'd have to invent it'). Caron Lindsay writes on their Brighton conference Immigration paper – the Liberal Democrats are courageous to debate the subject. Tony Greaves writes on the problems of the Labour party, not least anti-Semitism (on which, Radical Bulletin raises the shameful treatment of David Ward, still unresolved). William Tranby writes on industrial democracy. Lord Bonkers attends a reception by 'some Central American ambassador'.

Journal of Liberal History Issue 100 Autumn 2018

Nothing specifically international, unless it is Kenneth O. Morgan's History of Parliament Trust lecture 7 December 1916: Asquith, Lloyd George and the Crisis of Liberalism. However 25 years and 100 issues is quite an achievement. One of the evolving strengths of JLH is that it seeks to provide raw materials for historians to work with, and in this issue is an interview with Tim Farron on his leadership of the Liberal Democrats. Equally pertinent are Michael Meadowcroft's closing remarks in his assessment of the failures of party Whips in the 1924 Labour government; one remains sceptical as to whether the Labour party can ever be trusted. Duncan Brack reviews David Laws' books on the recent Coalition and Michael Meadowcroft & David Steel each discuss Jeremy Thorpe in the light of the BBC's A Very English Scandal, clearing up a few errors made in the name of drama. There are also reports on the History Group's meetings on Votes for Women and the 1918 Coupon Election.

The Skripals

U.S. spies rush to protect defectors after Skripal poisoning. New York Times 5th September 2018
The case of the Skripals is something that could have been handled more diplomatically by all parties concerned, possibly with more positive results; but then, we did have that buffoon Boris Johnson masquerading as Foreign Secretary at the time.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/13/us/politics/russian-informants-cia-protection.html?action=click&action=click&module=In+Other+News&module=News&pgtype=Homepage&pgtype=Homepage>

The Channel Islands - Brexit

Brexit: Islands ask if France would be able act for them. Jersey Evening Post 11th October 2018
Something else the Brexiteers hadn't thought about.

<https://jerseyeveningpost.com/news/2018/10/11/brexit-islands-asked-if-france-would-be-able-to-act-for-them/>

Cameroon

The Old Man and the Insurgency, by Paul Biya. The Economist 6th October 2018.

An unhopeful look at forthcoming elections in another casualty of Britain's bolt from imperialism.

USA at the UN

Quantum politics and a world turned upside down, by John Thornhill, and editorial Trump, the UN and the fracturing of the west. Financial Times 29th September 2018

reviews

Christianity in the Twentieth Century: A World History by Brian Stanley
Princeton University Press 2018 £27.00
isbn 9780691157108 e-book isbn 9781400890316

This is an outstanding book. As someone who has read many books about twentieth Christianity, I rather thought that I would be reading all too familiar history. Yet Brian Stanley, Professor of Divinity at Edinburgh, has written a book which is far more than a simple chronological narrative of twentieth century Christianity. Although familiar names appear in the narrative (the significance of faith for the Presbyterian Woodrow Wilson and the Anglicans Eleanor Roosevelt and Steve Biko, for example), it is more the story of Christian communities around the globe in their different cultural, social and political contexts. Focusing on the multiple and complex ways in which the world's largest faith has engaged with the challenges of the twentieth century – be that nationalism, secularism, the need for social justice, war and genocide, mass migration and the rise of the human rights agenda – he narrates and analyses the different ways in which these challenges have been faced in different contexts.

Different geographical locations are paired. Thus, the Christian responses to nationalism are compared in Korea and Poland, responses to the First world War in Britain and the United States, aggressive secularism in France and the USSR, church attendance in Scandinavia and the United States, genocide in Germany and Rwanda, church life in Islamic majority countries in Egypt and Indonesia, liberation theology in Latin America and Palestine and human rights in South Africa and Canada. These chapters are but examples. What becomes clear are the differences of response according to context. This book is a genuine world history and reminds us that Christianity is a truly global faith whose epicentre is no longer Western Europe. The missionaries are now coming to us.

The mid-twentieth century 'secularisation thesis' held by some sociologists that religion would eventually wither away under the pressure of modernity is no longer held in that form. Instead we are seeing ways in which secularity and post-modernity are effecting changes in the forms and expressions of religious faith. In 2009 John Micklethwait, then editor of *The Economist*, co-wrote a book (with Adrian Wooldridge) entitled *God is Back*. This was not a theological riposte to Richard Dawkins but a demonstration that religion is as significant as ever as a major factor in the global politics of our century. Stanley's volume illustrates Micklethwait's thesis in relation to Christianity in the century which still casts its shadow over the politics of the present.

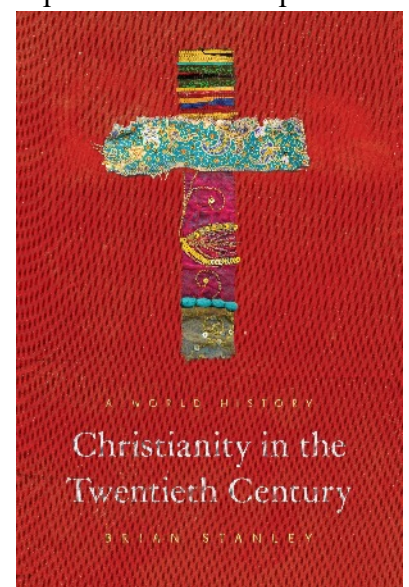
An understanding of religion in its many cultural forms is essential for anyone who truly wishes to understand the world in which we live. Professor Stanley's book (which perhaps should have been titled *Christianities in the Twentieth Century*) makes for an excellent and absorbing start.

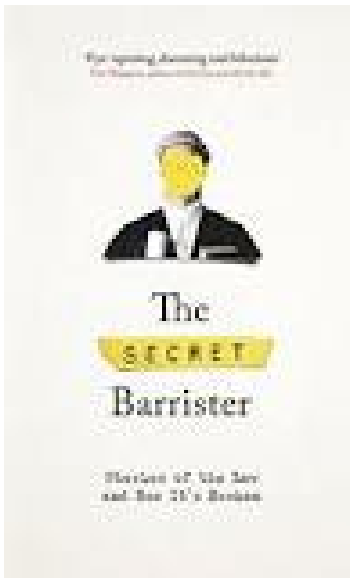
Paul Hunt

The Secret Barrister: Stories of the Law and How It's Broken
Macmillan 2018 £16.99 isbn 9781509884742

"If the criminal justice system were the NHS, it would never be off the front pages." That was the Secret Barrister's motivation in writing this book, and the reason for a crowd funding campaign saw a copy sent to every single MP.

You might have heard politicians claiming that "we have one of the most expensive criminal justice systems in the world", but did you know that the entire Crown Prosecution Service budget is eclipsed by the annual





cost of subsidised TV licences for the over-75s? The recent flurry of collapsed rape trials hints at a concerning reality.

The Secret Barrister: Stories of the Law and How It's Broken is a frank, witty and furious assessment of a criminal justice system at breaking point. The system's failings are brilliantly illustrated with examples taken from the Secret Barrister's own cases; desperately sad, darkly comic and often outrageously unjust. This honest and accurate account offers an understanding of what really goes on in our criminal courts. Tabloid myths about legal aid 'fat cats' and 'out-of-touch judges' handing down 'soft sentences' are explored and dispelled. "How can you defend someone you think is guilty?" "Why do they wear wigs?" and other popular questions are answered.

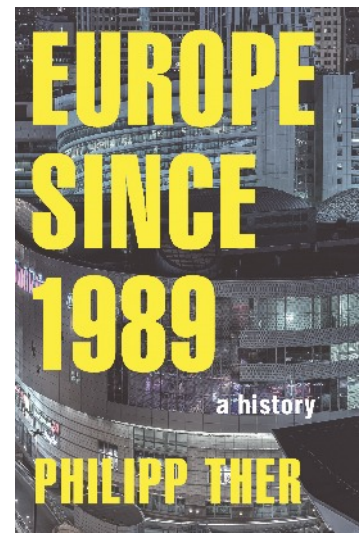
This book comes at a time when the criminal bar is under immense strain. Four years ago, for the first time in history, criminal barristers refused to work in protest. Earlier this year, we did it again. Despite the popular misconception of a legal aid gravy train, many barristers are leaving crime for better functioning, privately funded areas of law. Amongst those of us who remain, in robing rooms across the country, this book inspires a sense of vindication, catharsis and pride; one of ours is telling it like it is.

Peter Gilmour

Europe Since 1989, a history, by Philipp Ther.
Princeton 2018 £20.00
isbn 9780691167374

Isn't it typical that the smaller minds of these islands choose to turn their back on Europe just when a decent textbook on the recent of some its parts becomes available? Philipp Ther's *Europe Since 1989* was reviewed in *interLib* 2017-06 (pages 23-25) and what was written there still stands. The book is at its best on Germany and Eastern Europe, of which the author is most familiar, less so on the rest. Because it is not our specific story, some of the economics can be heavy going, but worth the challenge, especially in understanding different courses of action that were taken in response to the 2008 crisis, particularly since British governments have yet to learn. Keynesian solutions have fared better.

What is particularly exciting in this paperback edition is the new preface by Ther. The English language edition came out just after Brexit (having originally been published in German in 2014) and before Trump. Ther now has the opportunity to visit those events and doesn't mince words. Disparities between East and West in the EU remain, but are diminishing; the EU is basically working, although at the electoral level, in the East in particular, it is the right wing populists who benefit. Is this a reversion to type if you consider the pre-Communist era? Too many people lack the means to thrive under a neoliberal order (which wasn't meant for them anyway) so it is time to restore some equilibrium in the economic system. So far as the UK is concerned this is primarily a battle to be won in the Conservative party (one would hope, at least that Liberals and Labour have woken up to their senses). Whilst this book won't win any arguments in the short term, it does equip you for the coming struggle.



A brief note on Latvian immigration, which was severe in the wake of the 2008 crisis. Whilst canvassing in May's elections, I came upon a small Latvian community, spread over a number of flats in one street. They ranged from old to young – some would have been infants under Communist imperialism and all had been in the UK for some time - probably in the wake of 2008-9. They did not vote – they were simply not accustomed to voting -even in Latvia, and did not understand the process. Similarly, with Lithuanians - if they followed any-thing in the British news, it was football; some were engaged about Brexit, but not at a deep level. The Liberal Democrats were, naturally, targeting EU voters, (a significant number in our target ward) and I hope I persuaded them to vote, if not for me. From Ther we have a better understanding of why

Voices of Kristallnacht



HAMPSTEAD ARTS FESTIVAL

Marking the 80th anniversary of the Kristallnacht pogroms, this commemorative concert showcases the voices of the pogroms' victims, featuring unfamiliar gems by German-Jewish composers as well as witness testimonies, alongside works by Ravel, Bloch, and Bruch. Curated by Shirli Gilbert, Professor of Modern History at the University of Southampton, with a stellar line-up of young performers. Presented by the Sir Martin Gilbert Learning Centre in partnership with the Hampstead Arts Festival.

Voices of Kristallnacht

Saturday 10 November

7.30PM, St John's Downshire Hill

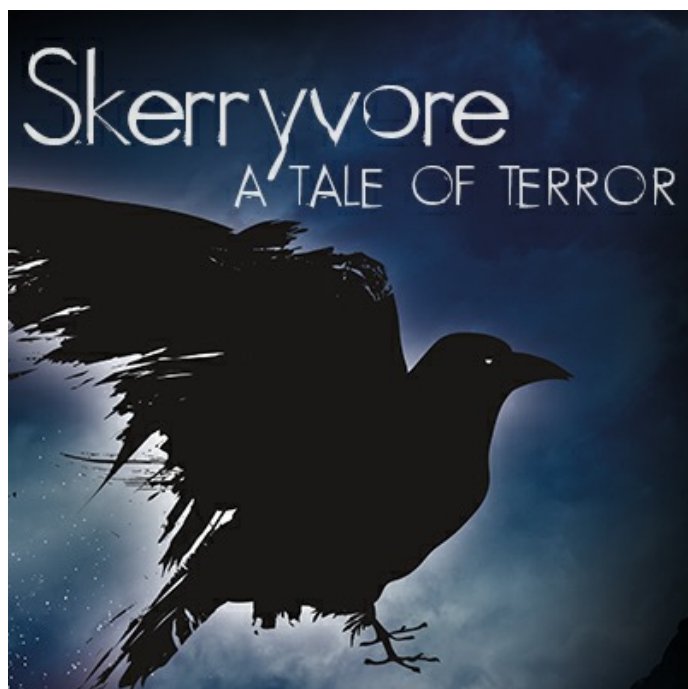
Hampstead, London NW3 1NU

TICKETS: £30 , £22 , £15 , £10 (student)

Europe Since 1989, a history, by Philipp Ther.

economic migration became a necessary option, not the superficial assumptions of the right-wing; what its impact has been on labour-depopulating areas of eastern Europe and how they are transforming. Little Britain, little anywhere, has scarcely paid attention to the world outside of its particular goldfish bowl, and it remains difficult to convince the sceptical man in the street. However, arm yourself with the facts, they will ultimately prevail.

Stewart Rayment



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