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# INTERLIB

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## Handmaids Against Netanyahu - 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023

**SUDAN**

**CHINA**

**ED DAVEY AT YORK**

**VLADIMIR KARA-MURZA**

**CHARLES I**

# EVENTS

**26<sup>th</sup> -28<sup>th</sup> May** ALDE Congress, Stockholm

**23<sup>rd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> September** Liberal Democrats Federal Autumn Conference, Bournemouth.

**21<sup>st</sup> October** Liberal Democrat Town & Parish Councillors Conference, free event, online, provisionally 10am-1pm.

**28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> October** Scottish Liberal Democrats Autumn Conference, The Town House, Hamilton.

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Photographs – Sam Churchill, Liberal International, Liberal Democrats

Cover Photograph – Stewart Rayment.



Women dressed as Handmaids, from Margaret Atwood's book and the TV series *The Handmaid's Tale* have been a prominent feature in demonstrations against Netanyahu's attempts to curb the Israeli Supreme Court and the independence of the judiciary. We hope to have more on this matter soon.

# APPEASEMENT IN KHARTOUM

## The tragedy in Sudan was predictable – here’s what Liberal Democrats must do now

**Rebecca Tinsley**

### **The King comes calling**

In March, King Charles III invited himself to Waging Peace, the NGO I founded nineteen years ago after visiting Darfur. Buckingham Palace said he wanted to meet our friends, the British Sudanese community, in the same week the government introduced its Illegal Migration Bill to Parliament. (Make of that what you will). An hour before His Majesty arrived, Foreign Office people appeared, instructing our forty bemused British Sudanese attendees “not to be political.” They were followed by the King’s emissary who told us to be as political as we liked.

This anecdote illustrates where the UK has gone wrong in Sudan (“don’t be political”) and why the Sudanese now face a catastrophe. Instead of learning from the disastrous diplomatic process that midwifed South Sudan, the Quad negotiators (UK, US, Saudi and the UAE) repeated those mistakes north of the border.

It was entirely predictable that the Sudan military would never voluntarily hand power to a civilian authority unless that was the best option facing them. It was also clear that the Islamists who have run Sudan for decades would provoke the two warring generals to fight each other, thus stopping the transition to civilian authority. A window of opportunity to transfer power peacefully has been lost.

For years, the UK has treated the architects of Sudan’s decades of violence (the men with guns) as their partners in the search for sustainable peace, rather than holding them accountable for their crimes. Liberal Democrats in Westminster and our friends in the European Parliament should be calling for concerted and robust action against the warring generals including targeted smart sanctions, asset freezes, excluding them from future peace talks, and proscribing the terrorist groups involved. But first, some context:

### **The making of the Deep State**

Since independence in 1956, Sudan has mostly been ruled by military juntas. The army’s brutal network of security and intelligence agencies enriched itself while turning an ethnically diverse country into an authoritarian, fundamentalist Arab-Islamist regime. The generals continue to be supported by Saudi Arabia and Egypt, neither of which want a democratic civilian government in the neighbourhood.

Over three decades, the ruling Arab junta led by Field Marshall Omar Bashir attempted to eliminate the sizable Black African minorities living in the peripheries, (Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile) on the cheap, by arming local Arab tribes who coveted the increasingly scarce land of Black African farmers. It didn’t take much to incite Arab militias like the Janjaweed to loot, rape and kill hundreds of thousands of Black Africans (whom they regard as racially inferior, akin to slaves). An estimated two million died in the south which broke away in 2011 to form South Sudan: the UN stopped counting the dead in Darfur in 2005, at the Khartoum regime’s request, at 300,000.

Islamists controlled Sudan’s civil service, education, judiciary, media, security services and a web of commercial interests, creating a deep state. The international community never acknowledged their ideological motivation. Hence diplomats parrot glib nonsense about how climate change is to blame for the “competition for resources.” They also favour the “ancient ethnic hatreds” narrative as if this absolves the international community of concern for Sudan’s persecuted minorities.

## **The rise of Hemedti**

Mohamed Hamhan Dagalo, nicknamed Hemedti, rose to power through his leadership of the Janjaweed militia, responsible for ethnically cleansing Black African communities in Darfur. An Arab from the Darfur region, Hemedti made a fortune from gold mining and renting out the services of the Janjaweed, rebranded as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and paid to fight the Houthis in Yemen on behalf of Saudi Arabia. In 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea, Putin needed a way to circumvent Western sanctions. The answer was illicit gold smuggling, \$4 billion or 16 planes worth of it, from Sudan. His friend Yevgeny Prigozhin, founder of the Wagner Group of mercenaries, went into business with Hemedti, supplying mining equipment through a company called M-Invest and refinery capacity through another Russian-operated firm called Al Sawlaj. Wagner also supplies the RSF with weapons, as does another Wagner client, General Haftar of the Libyan National Army in Benghazi (who is trying to overthrow the UN-supported government in Tripoli).

## **Partners in crime**

For years, Hemedti and Burhan worked together to ethnically cleanse Darfur. In 2019, a popular uprising on the streets of Khartoum threatened the thirty-year dictatorship of their boss, Bashir. Hemedti and Burhan astutely joined the people, overthrowing Bashir.

Then, the international community made a fundamental mistake: they believed Hemedti and Burhan when they said they would support a transition to a civilian-led government. Anyone familiar with the track record of the RSF and the SAF knew both would never willingly hand over either their power or their grip on sundry lucrative commercial interests. Moreover, Hemedti and Burhan knew from the flawed negotiations that gave birth to South Sudan that all they had to do was tell the international community what it wanted to hear, make vague promises they never fulfilled, and then drag out talks for as long as possible.

After the 2019 popular uprising, a worthy but powerless technocrat civilian, Abdalla Hamdok, was appointed as head of the transitional council, charged with overseeing the move from military to civilian rule. With the economy collapsing after decades of kleptocracy, Hamdok juggled the interests of Sudan's discredited political parties, while the civil society groups (who had bravely confronted Bashir's forces on the streets) were marginalised. However, an Empowerment Removal Committee dismantled the Islamists grip on the deep state and charged the elite with corruption. This prompted Hemedti and Burhan together to stage a coup in 2021, taking control of the government.

Since then, like Lucy promising Charlie Brown she will hold the football still while he takes a running kick, Burhan and Hemedti have assured diplomats they would transfer power to a civilian government. They have faced no sanctions for staging the coup, dragging out negotiations, or indeed for ethnic cleansing in Darfur from 2003 onwards.

## **The Islamists get the band back together again**

No sooner was Burhan at the helm of the transitional council, with Hemedti as his deputy, than the Islamists, banished at the fall of Bashir, re-emerged. After the 2021 coup, the Empowerment Removal Committee members were arrested and the Islamists let out of jail.

Women were once more abused and beaten on the streets by security services and civilian men demanding strictly interpreted sharia. (During Bashir's rule, 42,000 women and girls a year in Khartoum state alone were publicly flogged for indecency, which meant daring to go to school). The media, opposition figures, Christians and human rights advocates were once more intimidated, tortured and arrested. Hundreds were killed in Darfur as disgruntled Arab militias took Black African land.

The international community registered muted disapproval, but did not threaten to sanction Burhan and Hemedti, or set benchmarks to guarantee a transition to civilian rule. Sudanese civil society repeatedly pointed out that without justice mechanisms there could be no sustainable peace.

## **To Russia with gold and love**

When Putin invaded Ukraine in February 2022, Hemedti went to Moscow to express solidarity. He assured Putin that Sudan would stand by a deal, made in 2017 by Bashir, that Russia could station four warships and hundreds of military personnel in Port Sudan. This would potentially let Russia harass global shipping, including oil tankers, going through the Red Sea to the Suez Canal. Even this development did not sound alarm bells among the diplomats overseeing the transitional deal arrangements.

Back in Sudan, as the economy imploded, Hemedti flirted with “the street,” distancing himself from the Islamists whom he previously embraced. He got Russian weapons via Libya and Syria, and when Burhan made a move against the Russians running his gold business, Hemedti surrounded a contingent of Egyptian air force planes, knowing the Egyptians would back Burhan and the SAF. Then, on April 15<sup>th</sup>, the fighting began.

Hemedti thought the people would rise up to support him, but he is as detested as Burhan and the SAF. The RSF has fewer soldiers and weapons than the SAF, but they have experience fighting in Yemen, whereas the SAF is skilled only at persecuting civilians. The SAF jets bomb anywhere it believes the RSF may be, irrespective of the cost in civilian lives. This alone should convince the international community that Burhan belongs in jail, and not at the negotiating table deciding Sudan’s future. The RSF shows similar contempt for civilians, with allegations of widespread looting and rape. Both sides have bombed and shelled hospitals and other infrastructure, unconcerned by the impact on non-combatants.

Hemedti may retreat to Darfur where he will no doubt slaughter those Black Africans he hasn’t killed in the past twenty years. At the time of writing, 200,000 Darfuris are on the road to refugee camps in Chad. Darfuri civil society fears the international community will settle for a cessation of violence that leaves the SAF in charge of most of Sudan while Hemedti rules Darfur.

## **What should the international community do?**

Here is a policy shopping list for Liberal Democrat MPs and our MEP friends:

- The US has already proscribed the Wagner Group as a terrorist organisation, and the UK should follow suit. The RSF should also be classified as terrorists.
- The US has threatened to apply targeted smart sanctions on Burhan and Hemedti, and so should the UK and EU.
- The EU and UK should freeze and seize Hemedti and Burhan’s extensive business interests and bank accounts (including accounts in London), and confiscate their overseas properties.
- An EU member country should threaten to refer Hemedti and Burhan to the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity in Darfur – unless both sides immediately return to barracks.
- The Quad and Troika negotiating teams must be extremely cautious about treating Burhan and Hemedti as their partners in the search for peace. The FCDO is already hinting they expect both men to return to the negotiating table, as if nothing has happened.
- The military must be removed from Sudanese politics for good by empowering civil society groups (and not the discredited old parties). This means supporting and creating resilient institutions in Sudan enabling accountability and transparency.
- The international community must pay attention to Sudan long enough to ensure there are severe consequences for Burhan and Hemedti if they break their promises. This means enforcing deadlines and benchmarks.
- The international community must oversee and fund a justice mechanism to end the impunity of the military and the Islamist deep state actors who have destroyed what should be a prosperous and diverse country.

## ***Rebecca Tinsley***

Rebecca Tinsley is Director of Waging Peace, who have been working in Darfur. her novel about Sudan, *When the Stars Fall to Earth*, is available in English and Arabic from Amazon.



*King Charles III visiting Waging Peace's Sudanese refugees on Holocaust Memorial Day (as the Government was pushing through their Illegal Migration Bill. - Photo Sam Churchill.*

## LI HRC Calls for Dialogue and Humanitarian Assistance in Sudan

On 27<sup>th</sup> April the Liberal International Human Rights Committee (LI HRC) condemned the violent military clashes in Sudan and calls on the opposing armies to end hostilities and to open a dialogue for the sake of the Sudanese people who are the primary victims of this violence.

The Committee is closely monitoring the current situation in Sudan and expresses its deep concern about the ongoing bloody conflict that started on April 15. There has been an increase in protests and violence in the country amidst political tension and fragmentation.

The HRC implores the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) to immediately resume discussions to undertake genuine reforms in military institutions and begin the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of all armed groups and paramilitary forces. The existence of many armed groups and militias defeat Sudanese hope for democratic transition and threatens regional peace and security.

LI HRC stands in solidarity with the Sudanese people and urges the African Union and the United Nations Security Council to provide immediate humanitarian assistance to those who cannot be evacuated, especially internally displaced persons, and to call for a cessation of hostilities for the sake of peace and security in the region.

# Picturing Regicide: The Execution of Charles I

## Stephen Brogan

*As well celebrate the accession of Charles III, we look back at the demise of Charles I, who brought the nations to civil war, and like so many in power nowadays, simply couldn't be trusted. A warning to tyrants.*

On display in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery is a remarkable contemporary oil painting of the execution of Charles I, that took place on 30 January 1649, just before two o'clock in the afternoon, outside the



Banqueting House in Whitehall (see Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> The artwork is very impressive: it is huge, measuring 163 x 297 cm; it is a vivid, grisly depiction; and it has a lot going on within it. A narrative portrayal, it consists of a large central scene showing the death of the king on the scaffold, around which are four cartouches, one in each corner, illustrating important events immediately before and after the beheading. Reading the painting chronologically, in the roundel in the top left corner we see a portrait of Charles I as he appeared in public during the last ten days of his life, at his trial and execution. In the bottom left cartouche, the king is shown arriving at the Banqueting House under armed guard on the morning of his death. Then our attention is drawn to the large central field in which we see the scaffold, draped in black; the king has just been beheaded by the executioner, whose assistant holds up the severed head, showing it to the crowd. Bright red blood pours from Charles' neck onto the block and scaffold. The large throng of people who gathered to see the unprecedented act of king killing includes a woman in the foreground who has dramatically fainted. We then turn to the top right cartouche in which we see the executioner holding both the head of the dead king, the royal eyes closed, and the bloody axe. Lastly, in the bottom right roundel we see the aftermath of the gruesome spectacle. The scaffold is cleared of all but the king's coffin, which is draped in black; in the foreground three relic hunters are soaking cloth in the king's blood. A parallel to this activity is found in the large central image, in which to the left we see a young boy in the crowd, dressed in pink, who is being held up, holding out his right hand, trying to catch some of the blood that drips from the king's head.

The painting is obviously a spectacular piece of royalist propaganda that broadcasts the horror of regicide. Thus, it is no accident that the central field depicts the gruesome act of Charles' bloody head being

displayed, rather than, say, the king praying on the scaffold moments before kneeling at the block. From the monarch's vivid red blood, to the woman fainting, to the relic hunters, the painting is concerned with the impact of the regicide: as my friend the late Professor Justin Champion was fond of telling the undergraduates that we taught, the 30 January 1649 was as shocking to most contemporaries as were the terrorist atrocities of 9/11 to most of us. Charles had lost the Civil War to parliament, after which he sabotaged numerous attempts to broker a workable settlement, hoping to divide his opponents; seeing no other option, a radical minority of them pushed through the king's trial and execution even though, crucially, they lacked a popular mandate. For most contemporaries the king was still the king, even if he was an untrustworthy one, and a desirable outcome from the wars was a political situation in which Charles kept the throne albeit with his prerogative powers curtailed.

The painting will be recognised by many readers, I am sure, because it is often reproduced. Yet it is rarely discussed. We will begin with some context regarding the creation of the artwork, although it should be noted at the outset that our knowledge of this is frustrated by a lack of sources. We do not know exactly who painted the image and so it is said to be by an unknown artist who was probably Dutch. It used to be attributed to Jan Weesop (fl. 1640-53), the Flemish artist domiciled in London, known for producing portraits of royalist aristocrats. This was based on Weesop's signature in the lower right corner; but in the 1970s conservation work revealed that this was in fact a later addition and so it was removed and the artwork de-attributed.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Kate Anderson, the Senior Curator of Portraiture Pre-1700 at the National Galleries of Scotland, is of the view that the style and technique of the painting are not consistent with Weesop's works.<sup>3</sup> When it comes to dating the painting, thankfully we are on firmer ground: there is agreement amongst scholars that it is from c.1649. There are two reasons for this. First, the painting is based on Dutch and German engravings of the beheading, which were themselves based on eyewitness accounts, that date from 1649 or soon after (see Figure 2). Indeed, the first engravings of the king's execution were produced on the continent within weeks of it happening, so great was the demand for news of the regicide (in



Fig. 2



the Republic's censorship meant that such images were not produced until the mid 1650s).<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, the clothes worn by the crowds of people in both the painting and the prints are contemporary to the execution -- had the painting been produced later it is likely that fashions of the day would have crept in.<sup>5</sup> The clothes are also somewhat Dutch, hence the view that the painter was too. This all means that the artwork was probably made in The Netherlands as well, and it is tempting to assume that it was commissioned by a royalist exile. Frustratingly, this cannot be confirmed, not least because of our lack of knowledge regarding the provenance of the painting. It is first recorded as being sold in 1865 and then again 'sometime before 1869', to the fifth earl of Rosebery,<sup>6</sup> later Liberal Prime Minister. It has been in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery since 1951, on loan from the earl's descendant, Lord Dalmeny.<sup>7</sup>

Moving from the context to the messages and themes within the painting, a strong leitmotif within it is the representation of the king as a Christ-like martyr. Its narrative composition corresponds to the stations of the cross, although here we have five stages rather than the fourteen associated with Christ's Passion; the fainting woman in the foreground is analogous with paintings of the Virgin Mary swooning at the foot of the cross (see, for example, Rogier van der Weyden's *Descent From the Cross*, c. 1435). The fainting Virgin was a trope that developed in late medieval art and theological literature, quickly becoming popular as it conveyed the terrible impact of the death of Christ.<sup>8</sup> The presentation of Charles I as a Christ-like martyr was a popular idea that appeared to have a solid providential foundation discernible on the morning of the king's death. Charles was a devout man, and he spent much of the the three days between being sentenced and executed preparing for his ordeal through prayer and reading the Bible, during which he was attended by William Juxon (1582-1663), the Bishop of London. Early on the morning of 30 January Juxon read the lesson for the day, the 27<sup>th</sup> Chapter of St Matthew, relating Christ's Passion. Charles assumed that Juxon had chosen this, but the bishop explained that it was the set reading for the day as defined in the Calendar. Charles was greatly affected by this, 'it so aptly serving as a seasonable preparation for his death that day.'<sup>9</sup> Royalists who later meditated on the martyrdom of their king were equally impressed.<sup>10</sup>

Within days of the king's death *Eikon Basilike* was published, the book in which Charles was presented as a saint and a moderate man. Hugely popular, it was said to be written by the king himself, and it went through thirty-five editions in 1649 alone. Its title page is a masterpiece of propaganda. It depicts Charles kneeling in a chapel, wearing his royal robes; his earthly crown has fallen to the ground, and he reaches for a crown of thorns (symbolising martyrdom), whilst gazing at a heavenly crown.<sup>11</sup> Sermons and printed works that promulgated the similarities between the death of Charles and of Christ drew attention to them both being kings who were rejected by their people; they were both 'men of sorrows' who were imprisoned and abused, who suffered their agonies with patience.<sup>12</sup> For defenders of the new English Republic such as John Milton, this was blasphemy; but the cult of the royal martyr quickly became popular. From the first year of the Restoration until 1859 the 30<sup>th</sup> January was commemorated by the Church of England in its liturgical calendar as a day of fasting, prayer and atonement for the regicide.<sup>13</sup>

A second theme within the painting is its portrayal of Charles as a regal figure. This is a response to the way in which the king was treated by his enemies during the last two months of his life. His living standards were reduced, his captivity became stricter, and he was desacralized at his trial, being referred to throughout by his name Charles Stuart, with no deference. Charles' regality is evident in the portrait of him in the roundel in the top left corner (see Figure 3). Although he is dressed somberly, all in black, including his hat, with white lace collar and cuffs, his dark clothes are accented by the bright ornamentation of the Order of the Garter. On the one hand, Charles deliberately wore subdued clothing as was fitting for his trial and execution: the last ten days of his life were played out in public, by contrast to much of his recent captivity, and Charles dressed appropriately for them. Yet this contrasted with the Garter ornamentation: the star is prominently displayed on his right side, on his velvet mantle, while around his neck is the ribbon of the Order on which hangs the Lesser George. The Order of the Garter is the oldest and most senior Order of Chivalry in Britain, having been founded by Edward III in 1348; the monarch is its highest-ranking member, being the Sovereign of the Garter. Charles had always shown great enthusiasm for the Order, and by wearing its insignia at both his trial and execution he proclaimed his royal status.<sup>14</sup> The artist Edward Bower

Hollar's memorial engraving that was published in Antwerp (see Figure 4).<sup>15</sup> Commenting on these images of the king, the historian Helmer J. Helmers<sup>16</sup> has noted that Charles looks pensive and inscrutable, qualities that allowed the king to appeal to a range of audiences.



Fig. 3

Returning to the cartouche beneath the portrait, where we see the king arriving at the Banqueting House on the morning of his execution, again regality can be detected (see Figure 5). Charles is shown at the head of his armed guard almost as though this is a normal royal event rather than his progress to the scaffold. And he walks with Juxon and Colonel Matthew Tomlinson (1617-81), one on either side of him just as the written sources attest, both of whom were present by royal request.<sup>17</sup> Charles had asked parliament that Juxon attend him from the beginning of his trial, given that both were



Fig. 4

Laudians who knew each other well. The bishop is identifiable in his long clergyman's robes, to the right of the king, and he (Juxon) indicates with his right-hand which way to proceed and in doing so gestures towards the large execution scene. Tomlinson stands to the left of the king; he was the parliamentary army officer and politician who was responsible for the monarch's security during the last five weeks of his life, at Windsor, and during his trial and execution.<sup>18</sup> Charles had asked Tomlinson to accompany him to the scaffold because he trusted the soldier to ensure that he was treated properly. Charles had commended Tomlinson as a civil man to Henry Seymour, the page who visited the king on 28 January: not all Charles' guards treated him suitably and the king sought to avoid his last hours being marred with hostility.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, the king is the only person in the vignette wearing his hat: that everyone else is uncovered suggests a final mark of respect.

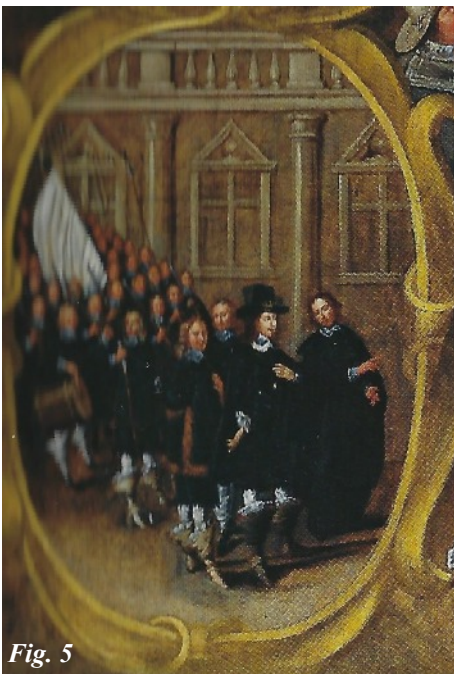


Fig. 5

In reality, of course, the king was surrounded by enemy soldiers as he marched from St James' Palace, where he had been held, across the park to the Banqueting House. It was standard practice for soldiers to accompany the condemned to the scaffold to keep order and to prevent any rescue attempts. Sir Thomas Herbert (1606-82), the loyal parliamentarian who nevertheless served Charles I with respect and courtesy during the king's captivity and who wrote a memoir of it, recorded that 'The Park had several companies of Foot drawn up, who made a Guard on either side as the King passed, and a Guard of Halberdiers in company went some before, and othersome followed; and drums beat, and the noise was so great as one could hardly hear what another spoke.'<sup>20</sup> This explains the drummer, visible in the roundel to the left, while the prominent white flag must no doubt be the Colonel's colour of The White Regiment of Foot of the London Trained Bands.<sup>21</sup> We also get a sense of the noise and the atmosphere on this unprecedented occasion.

Turning to the large scaffold scene, it is worth recalling some useful context concerning the practicalities of the execution and the conduct of the king before we take stock of the depiction. As mentioned, the regicide was masterminded by a minority of Charles' opponents; many of them were radical soldiers from the New Model Army, including Henry Ireton (c.1611-51), Edmund Ludlow (c.1617-92), Henry Marten (1602-80), and Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658). Executing the king in public was a risk – as was holding the trial openly – but one worth taking in order to make an example of him. The dangers on the 30 January included the king appealing to the crowd, a rescue attempt, and the king not submitting to death. The last one must have seemed particularly likely, given that at his trial Charles had refused to enter a plea and had often got the

of John Bradshaw, the President of the High Court of Justice, during their exchanges. These dangers were mitigated by careful planning. The scaffold was erected outside the Banqueting House rather than a usual location such as Tower Hill as the house faced a small square which was overlooked on three sides by the buildings of Whitehall and so was easier to guard. Many of the local buildings had also become army headquarters. The scaffold was surrounded by soldiers and mounted guards, with the crowd held back. All local buildings and streets were also guarded, while there were approximately six soldiers on duty on the scaffold, too. The block was lower than usual, and four staples were driven into the platform around it, along with pulleys, in order to force the king to yield if necessary.<sup>22</sup> In the end, of course, matters went exactly as the king's enemies wished, but nevertheless the precautions are very revealing.

Charles made a good death. Throughout his last day he behaved calmly, with patience, dignity, and resignation that impressed spectators. No doubt he had two role models: Christ, who taught salvation through suffering, and Mary, Queen of Scots, the king's grandmother, who had countered decades of adversity by presenting herself on the scaffold as a Catholic martyr. But there were also moments when Charles, who was renowned for his love of order and decorum, exercised agency and took control of small aspects of the drama. He did this because he knew that by making a good death, he could bolster the royalist cause and hopefully pave the way for a Stuart restoration. Charles had always taken care with his appearance and his last day was no exception. He told Herbert 'This is my second marriage day: I would be as trim today as may be, for before tonight I hope to be espoused to my blessed Jesus.' Charles famously wore two shirts lest he shiver in the bitterly cold January weather, and it be mistaken for fear; he had an orange stuffed with cloves in his pocket, which could revive him if he faltered or fainted; and he chose to wear a nightcap at the very end, so that his hair did not impede the axe.<sup>23</sup>

On the scaffold Charles adhered to some of the execution customs of the day, but not all as this was such an exceptional beheading. As expected, he made a speech, but he could not address the crowd as was usual, because there were too many troops between the scaffold and the people. Disappointed, the king instead spoke to the fifteen or so men on the platform, notably directing much of what he said to Tomlinson. Charles followed tradition in that he forgave his enemies (though not by name as he claimed not to know who exactly was responsible for his destruction) and proclaimed that he died a good Christian.<sup>24</sup> But he deviated from convention by declaring his innocence rather than his guilt. Typically, the condemned person made a last minute, public confession of guilt and repentance, along with a remorseful acceptance of their sentence; these were essential components in 'the grisly morality play' that was taking place.<sup>25</sup> By contrast, Charles died asserting his innocence which he explained providentially: as he had allowed an 'unjust sentence' to be carried out on the Earl of Strafford, so God was now doing the same to him.<sup>26</sup> By stating that he was not guilty, Charles emphasised that he died a victim for his cause. Accordingly, he even claimed to be 'the martyr of the people'. The king's interactions with the executioners were also unusual. When a member of the elite was about to be executed, it was customary for the headsman to ask them for forgiveness, and for this to be given; sometimes the prisoner would also give the executioner some money in the hope that the headsman would dispatch them with one strike and not botch the job.<sup>27</sup> None of this appears to have happened. Although one newspaper reported that Charles took the initiative and forgave the headsman as soon as he saw them on the scaffold, none of the other sources mention an interaction like this, so on balance the newspaper was probably mistaken; as for the exchange of money, we have no record of this taking place. It is possible that the key players may have all forgotten their parts due to the immense pressure they were under, or given Charles' belief that he was innocent he might have silently abandoned these customs.<sup>28</sup> But at the very end, Charles took control in the expected manner, telling the executioner not to strike until he gave him an agreed sign, in this case that he would stretch out his hands.<sup>29</sup>

In the painting we see three men standing on the scaffold next to the dead monarch who are, left to right, Juxon, Tomlinson, and Colonel Francis Hacker (d.1660), all of whom were indeed present. These identifications are borne out by comparing the painting to one of the prints on which it is based, the German etching *Abscheulichste Vnerhörte Execution, an ... Carl Stuart ... Vorgangen* (1649) which includes a useful key that identifies the men in question (see Figure 2).<sup>30</sup> In the painting, the bishop holds his dead master's hat and cloak, and in the engraving the Lesser George medallion too: Charles' last act had been to give this to Juxon, saying 'Remember', thought to mean 'remember to give this to the Prince of Wales.' Hacker was present as he was given the job of supervising the execution, having overseen the custody of the king during his trial;

according to Herbert, Hacker was one of the soldiers who had treated the king 'roughly'.<sup>31</sup>

Turning to the depiction of the executioners: in reality of course, they were very heavily disguised with wigs, masks, and false beards, so unpopular was the regicide.<sup>32</sup> The painting omits the wigs and false beards, but on close inspection the artist has depicted the headsmen wearing masks that match the colour of their skin.<sup>33</sup> A strange detail, this is not visible in reproductions of the artwork in books and on websites, nor does it follow any custom concerning executioners' apparel of which I am aware. The appearance of the headsmen is one of several inaccuracies that will be discussed next. The identities of the two men were uncertain, and as is well known, this remains the case. Urban myths of the time suggested candidates including Thomas Fairfax (1612-71), the commander-in-chief of the New Model Army; Cromwell; and the fiery Puritan preacher Hugh Peter (1598-1666). The most likely, however, was the official executioner Richard Brandon (d.1649), given that Charles was beheaded with one stroke of the axe and Brandon was known for his dexterity; Brandon was at Whitehall on the day; and after his death three pamphlets published his confession.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, the cartouche in the top right corner is a portrait of the axeman, who resembles Fairfax, and an engraving was published in Europe showing Fairfax in an identical pose (see Figures 6 and 7).<sup>35</sup> This is unfair as the general was opposed to the king's trial and execution, and he had even lamented 'Oh Lett that Day from this time be blotted quite'.<sup>36</sup> Yet Fairfax's depiction as the headsmen signified the extent to which the regicide was driven through by the army,<sup>37</sup> and to that extent it works.



Readers versed in the period will no doubt have already noticed that the scaffold scene in the painting contains several inaccuracies. Further to those just mentioned concerning the executioners' apparel, we have also noted that on the day there were some fifteen men on the scaffold (the soldiers and the reporters who noted the king's speech are not in the painting), while the platform itself was surrounded by mounted guards; the block is also too high, and the staples and pulleys are omitted. Other issues include that in fact the scaffold was railed to



waist-height, and the railings hung with black cloth, which hid the view of the beheading for most people; the Banqueting House is not shown accurately in terms of its architecture; nor do we have any spectators crammed into its windows, as was the case.<sup>38</sup> These 'mistakes' are also found in the prints on which the painting is based; it is also worth noting that the bottom left cartouche is also wrong in that Charles made his way to the Banqueting House through the buildings of Whitehall, he did not arrive outside it under armed guard. How serious are these imprecisions? No doubt they are irritating for purists, but on reflection it seems to me that they do not add up to much; some of them even serve a useful purpose and so were probably deliberate. Had the scaffold been depicted as railed, we would not see much of the grisly scene, which would lessen the horror of the painting. The low block and staples would look undignified for the royal martyr. Similarly, if the executioners were depicted in their heavy disguises, they would seem carnivalesque, which would also be inappropriate.

Lastly, in the painting we see a large crowd of men and women thronged together in front of the scaffold, as indeed they were; their dress suggests that they are mostly from the middling sorts. The reactions of the crowd fall into two categories. A small number of people convey Christian horror at what has happened. We have noted the woman fainting and her symbolism; less dramatically, shock is also evident in the figure of the woman standing close to the roundel in the bottom left corner who wears a pink dress and looks away from the execution, her hands clasped in prayer. Similarly, an old man in the foreground stands bent over, his hands also clasped (he is to the right of the woman who helps the fainting woman). And then there are the relic hunters (see Figure 8). Their depiction signifies the charisma of the royal office and even the ability of Charles' blood to work miraculous cures. The cloths soaked in it were said to cure scrofula after they were rubbed on the swellings and sores of the sufferers, and to sometimes cure blindness if rubbed on

eyes. This was a radical innovation because up to then it was thought that only the royal touch could cure scrofula, not royal blood.<sup>39</sup> Yet not surprisingly, other sources reveal that not everyone had a reverential attitude towards the relics. The royalists might have claimed that Charles' blood had supernatural healing powers, but the soldiers who guarded the scaffold saw the opportunity to make money and charged a fee to whoever wanted to access the blood. Likewise, the guards also charged people to see the dead king in his coffin. Indeed, the soldiers did so well financially out of the execution that one newspaper reported with disdain that one of the troops was heard to say 'I would we had two or three Majesties to behead'.<sup>40</sup>



Still, most people depicted in the crowd appear to be responding in a subdued manner. Apart from the fainting woman, no one appears to be expressing great distress or anguish at what has just happened; similarly, no one is communicating any glee. One person who witnessed the execution and wrote about it

graduate with royalist sympathies. He famously reported that 'The Blow I saw given, & can truly say with a sad heart; at the instant whereof, I remember wel, there was such a Grone by the Thousands then present, as I never heard before & desire I may never hear again.'<sup>41</sup> Bearing this in mind, it is possible that the restrained responses of most of the crowd in the painting are meant to convey people's shock and disbelief as expressed by the great groan. The regicide left them numb.

This essay has provided a gloss on the painting of the execution of Charles I that places the artwork within the cult of the royal martyr. Books, pamphlets, sermons, printed images, paintings, prayers, and relics all commemorated the dead king, within his three kingdoms and across Europe. The cult was popular because, as mentioned, for most contemporaries the regicide was a step too far; the defenders of the English Republic were never able to convince the public to change their minds on this issue; the royal actor played his part with skill; and memento mori portraits of the king presented him as pensive and inscrutable, which broadened his appeal. Charles had never been a particularly popular monarch, nor had he been an effective ruler; he had then lost the Civil War. But for the bulk of the nation these issues receded when compared to the king's fate. The painting provides a narrative of Charles' last hours and the impact of his beheading. Its enormous size means that it must surely have been made for public display, possibly in the manner of an altarpiece that aided meditation. Whether its first home was that of a royalist in exile in Holland, a Dutch noble household, or a civic building, only further research can tell.

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Dr. Brogan's article also appears in the journal *Cromwelliana*

<sup>1</sup> Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 'The Execution of Charles I', by an unknown artist, c.1649. Accession number PGL 208. On the painting see Jonathan Brown and John Elliot (eds), *The Sale of the Century: Artistic Relations Between Spain and Great Britain, 1604-1655* (2002), 223-24; B. van Beneden and N. de Pooter (eds), *Royalist Refugees: William and Margaret Cavendish at the Rubenshuis* (2006), 112-13; Margaret Lincoln (ed), *Samuel Pepys: Plague, Fire, Revolution* (2015), 43. I wish to record that I am indebted to Kate Anderson, the Senior Curator of Portraiture Pre-1700 at the National Galleries of Scotland, who has discussed many aspects of this painting with me.

<sup>2</sup> Brown and Elliot, *Sale of the Century*, 224; Beneden and Pooter, *Royalist Refugees*, 112; National Galleries Scotland: <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/8785>. One clue concerning the artist is the man in the painting standing next to the bottom right cartouche, looking directly at the viewer. Artists sometimes painted themselves into crowds in this pose.

<sup>3</sup> Kate Anderson, email correspondence with the author, March 2023. For Weesop's works see: [https://rkd.nl/nl/explore/images#filters\[kunstenaar\]=Weesop%2C+Johan](https://rkd.nl/nl/explore/images#filters[kunstenaar]=Weesop%2C+Johan)

4 Jane Roberts, *The King's Head: Charles I: King and Martyr* (1999), 32; Helmer J. Helmers, *The Royalist Republic: Literature, Politics, and Religion in the Anglo-Dutch Public Sphere, 1639-1660* (2015), 125.

5 Brown and Elliot, *Sale of the Century*, 224; Beneden and Pooter, *Royalist Refugees*, 112; National Galleries Scotland: <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/8785>

6 Beneden and Pooter, *Royalist Refugees*, 112; the Scottish National Portrait Gallery has no further information on the provenance, though this is a subject that I intend to research further.

7 Lincoln (ed), *Samuel Pepys*, 43.

8 Beneden and Pooter, *Royalist Refugees*, 112; Roberts, *The King's Head*, 32; Helmers, *The Royalist Republic*, 125.

9 *The Trial of Charles I: A Contemporary Account Taken From the Memoirs of Sir Thomas Herbert and John Rushworth* (1974), ed Roger Lockyer, 128.

10 C.V. Wedgwood, *The Trial of Charles I* (1964), 181.

11 Good introductions to the *Eikon Basilike* include Hugh Trevor Roper, 'Eikon Basilike: The Problems of the King's Book', *History Today*, 1.9 (1951), 7-12, on authorship; and Andrew Lacey, *The Cult of King Charles the Martyr* (2003).

12 Lacey, *Cult of King Charles*, 15.

13 Kevin Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule: The Restoration and Revolution Monarchy, 1660-1714* (2013), 40-41.

14 Angus Haldane, *The Face of War: Portraits of the English Civil Wars* (2017), 32.

15 For Bower's portrait see Oliver Millar, *The Tudor, Stuart and Early Georgian Pictures in the Collection of her Majesty the Queen* (1963), no 208; Haldane, *The Face of War*, 32-3; *Charles II: Art and Power* (2018), ed Rufus Bird, 24-5. For Hollar's engraving, see Graham Parry, *Hollar's England: A Mid-Seventeenth-Century View* (1980), no 27; Richard Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Work of Wenceslaus Hollar, 1607-1677* (1982; reprint, 2002), no 1432; John Peacock, 'The Visual Image of Charles I', in *The Royal Image: Representations of Charles I*, ed Thomas N. Corns (1999), 176-239, 209. See also Pauline Gregg, *King Charles I* (1981), 436.

16 Helmers, *The Royalist Republic*, 122.

17 *The Trial of Charles I*, ed Lockyer, 129; *King Charls, His Speech Made Upon the Scaffold at Whitehall-Gate* (1649), 3; Wedgwood, *Trial of Charles I*, 179-80.

18 Toby Bernard, 'Tomlinson [Thomlinson], Matthew, appointed Lord Tomlinson Under the Protectorate', *ODNB* (2004); Wedgwood, *Trial of Charles I*, 68.

19 Wedgwood, *Trial of Charles I*, 168-9, 179.

20 *The Trial of Charles I: A Contemporary Account Taken From the Memoirs of Sir Thomas Herbert and John Rushworth* (1974), ed Roger Lockyer, 129.

21 I am grateful to Dr David Appleby for clarifying this, and to Professor Andrew Hopper for suggesting that I contact Dr Appleby. See Stuart Peachey and Les Prince, *ECW Flags and Colours 1: English Foot* (1991), 48-49; The British Civil War Project: <http://wiki.bcw-project.org/trained-band/london/white-regiment>

22 J. G. Muddiman, *Trial of King Charles I* (1928), 141-3; Wedgwood, *Trial of Charles I*, 189

23 *Memoirs of Sir Thomas Herbert and John Rushworth*, ed Lockyer, 126, 130; *The Confession of Richard Brandon the Hangman (Upon his Deathbed)* (1649), 2.

24 *King Charls, His Speech Made Upon the Scaffold*, 5, 7.

25 Daniel Szechi, 'The Jacobite Theatre of Death', in *The Jacobite Challenge* (1988), ed Eveline Cruikshanks and Jeremy Black, 57-73, p. 57. For a useful analysis of last speeches see J. A. Sharpe, ' "Last Dying Speeches": Religion, Ideology and Public Execution in Seventeenth-Century England', *Past & Present*, 107 (1985), 144-67.

26 *King Charls, His Speech Made Upon the Scaffold*, 5.

27 See the case of William Laud on the scaffold. Laud gave the executioner some money, saying 'do thy office upon mee in mercie', see *The Arch-Bishop of Canterburie his Speech, or, His Funeral Sermon Preached by Himself on the Scaffold* (1645?), 12.

28 The omission of the executioners asking for forgiveness is discussed in Wedgwood, *Trial of Charles I*, 192 and 241, n. 48. The contemporary sources are a bit confused on this subject. *King Charls, His Speech Made Upon the Scaffold* makes no mention of the issue. Muddiman, *Trial of King Charles*, quotes the *Perfect Weekly Account* which says that the king forgave the executioners as soon as he saw them on the scaffold, rather than waiting for them to ask pardon. Brandon's confession states that the king refused to forgive him (p. 6) but this is thought to be an unreliable account, and it does not sit well with Charles forgiving his enemies in his scaffold speech.

29 *King Charls, His Speech Made Upon the Scaffold*, 8. Thomas Wentworth and Laud also negotiated last signs with their executioners regarding when to strike, see Rushworth and John, 'Historical Collections: May 1641', in *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State: Volume 4, 1640-42* (London, 1721), pp. 239-279. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/rushworth-papers/vol4/pp239-279> [accessed 23 April 2023]; *The Arch-Bishop of Canterburie ... on the Scaffold*, 12.

30 *Abscheulichste Vnerhoite Execution, an ... Carl Stuart ... Vorgangen* (1649), catalogued at The National Portrait Gallery, London, as *The Execution of Charles I (1649)*, NPG D1306. For the German and Dutch prints of the execution see Helmers, *The Royalist Republic*, 122-30; Roberts, *The King's Head*, 32-33.

31 Barry Coward, 'Francis Hacker (d.1660)', *ODNB* (2004).

32 *Calendar of State Papers Venetian, 1647-52*, 91.

33 I am grateful to Kate Anderson for pointing this out to me.

34 Wedgwood, *Trial of Charles I*, 184-5.

35 Beneden and Pooter, *Royalist Refugees*, 112. The face of the axeman on the scaffold is too small for it to be a recognisable likeness of Fairfax, hence the portrait of the general in the cartouche.

36 Beneden and Pooter, *Royalist Refugees*, 112

37 Beneden and Pooter, *Royalist Refugees*, 112.

# World Health Day: all women need access to safe abortion

The 7<sup>th</sup> April marked the United Nations World Health Day and the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the World Health Organization. The right to health is laid out in many international human rights treaties, the most prominent one being the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Article 12 (1) states that:

“The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health”.

However, there are millions of people for which the right to health is merely a distant goal. This year on World Health Day, Liberal International wished to highlight the millions of women whose human right to health is not being fully recognized.

Restricting women’s access to abortion poses an extreme risk to the woman’s physical and mental health. Unsafe abortions are the leading cause of maternal death and morbidity according to the WHO. In countries that have severely restricted the right to have an abortion, women resort to unsafe manners to terminate the unwanted pregnancy which in turn will have detrimental effects on their health. They may seek the help of untrained people lacking the necessary skills of performing the abortion or women may try to perform the abortion themselves.

The unsafe methods used include, but are not limited to, inflicting trauma to the abdomen by hitting, sharp objects inserted into the vagina or ingesting toxic chemicals. These methods may not even terminate the pregnancy, but they will have detrimental, or even fatal, health effects on the woman including infection, heavy bleeding, or incomplete abortion. The WHO estimates that around 45% of all abortions carried out are unsafe and that 97% of them occur in developing countries. These unnecessary deaths can be prevented by ensuring that women have access to safe abortion and not restricting them by law, with policy, and social stigma.

The inaccessibility of abortion care is a violation of women’s right to health. Women cannot fully enjoy their human rights without access to safe and timely abortion, and post-abortion care. Reproductive rights are inherent to the right to health and therefore, women should be able to freely make decisions about their bodies. As a matter of fact, if a woman is faced with an unwanted pregnancy, no legislation, policy, or social stigma is going to stop her from having an abortion.

“We have to recognize, in our laws, this fundamental right of women to be able to decide, because it should be understood that this is a policy regarding public health” said Vlado Mirosevic, President of the LI full member the Liberal Party of Chile.

On World Health Day, LI reaffirmed that access to safe abortions is a human right.

## *Notes to Picturing Regicide continued from page 14*

38 Muddiman, *Trial of King Charles*, 143, 149-50.

39 See Stephen Brogan, *The Royal Touch in Early Modern England: Politics, Medicine and Sin* (2015), 93-96 for an analysis of the relics and their cures, and their place in a Protestant culture.

40 *Mercurius Elencticus*, 7 February 1649, quoted in Muddiman, *Trial of King Charles*, 155.

41 *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry, 1631-96* (1882), ed Matthew Henry Lee, 12.



# ED DAVEY AT YORK – THE INTERNATIONAL BITS

*Ed Davey has made some mistakes over Europe, post-Brexit... lets face it your average Brexit-Bunny 'knows' where the Liberal Democrats 'really' stand, so why hide from it? Ed redeemed himself at York. Read on from his conference speech.*

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And there's another historic, longstanding difference between the Liberal Democrat economic vision – and those of others. More relevant today than ever. I call it the elephant in the room of British politics. An elephant we always point to, even though other parties daren't even whisper its name.

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So let me shout it, yet again: if you want to boost our economy, you have to repair our broken relationship with Europe. Conference, you don't need me to tell you what a disaster the Conservatives' botched deal with Europe has been for our country. You see it every day in your communities: The businesses strangled by red tape. The farmers, fishers and factories, unable to sell to their customers on the continent. The empty shelves in local supermarkets. It's why we campaigned against it. Why, when Boris Johnson brought his terrible deal to Parliament, when even Labour supported it, Liberal Democrats stood alone and voted against it.

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And why now Liberal Democrats are the only ones with a real plan to fix Britain's trade. To tear down the Conservatives' trade barriers, rip up their red tape, and rebuild the ties of trust and friendship with our European neighbours. Because as liberals we are proud internationalists. Who understand that our country thrives most when it is open and outward-looking. When it stands tall in the world, instead of shrinking back from it. We understand that no nation – even one as resourceful and resilient as our great United Kingdom – no nation can afford to cut itself off. And we know that our country can be an incredible force for good when it plays an active role on the world stage –

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Guided by our fundamental British values of equality, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It's why our country has stood united in solidarity with the brave Ukrainian people in their struggle against Putin's illegal invasion. I am so proud that throughout the last year we have been Ukraine's strongest ally – And we must continue to stand with them, until Putin's aggression is repelled for good.

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Like the Covid pandemic before it, the war in Ukraine shows the folly of thinking that events outside of Britain's borders simply aren't our concern. Their enormous impacts on the everyday lives of the British people show what Liberal Democrats have always known: Foreign policy is not secondary to economic and social policy. Good, ethical foreign policy is good economic and social policy. That's why we stand for human rights everywhere in the world – from Xinjiang to Tehran.

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Why we work for peace everywhere in the world – from Kyiv to Kinshasa. Why we seek to end poverty and hunger everywhere in the world – from Delhi to Darfur. Why we oppose Suella Braverman's appalling anti-refugee bill – nothing more than a criminal traffickers' charter. And Conference, it's why we Liberal Democrats increased the UK's overseas aid to 0.7 percent of national income, and fought to enshrine that global promise into law. It was our party that fought for that law. Our party that introduced it. And our party that has always stood by it. Conference, that makes me so proud.

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Our zero-point-seven commitment survived three Conservative Chancellors. But then along came Rishi Sunak. Ripping up that proud commitment for the UK to lead the world on aid for the poorest. How cruel. How counterproductive. How unpatriotic. So Liberal Democrats, we will restore it. We are the only party committed to restoring it. We will put the UK back where it belongs: Leading the fight against poverty, hunger and disease – everywhere in the world. These fights are never easy and rarely popular. But we must continue to fight them. Because if we don't, who will? Conference, this is who we are.

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We are the internationalists who take on the nationalists in England, Scotland and Wales. We are the champions of universal human rights, against those who seek to tear them up. We are the environmentalists who stand against those who don't understand the value of our wonderful natural environment. Against those who refuse to face up to the existential threat of climate change. We are the people who support diversity as one of our country's greatest strengths – and oppose those who stoke fear and division. We are the reformers – challenging the concentration of power in anyone's hands. Reformers who will always seek to hand more power to people, and to hold the already powerful to account.

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We are the party of hope over fear.

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*From Ed Davey's Conference Speech at York*

## Vladimir Kara-Murza 2023 Prize for Freedom Winner

Imprisoned Russian dissident Vladimir Kara-Murza was awarded the Prize for Freedom at Liberal International's 206th Executive Committee meeting in Ottawa. The journalist, activist, politician, historian, and filmmaker is currently serving a 25-year prison sentence in Russia.

“Vladimir Kara-Murza has without sparing himself fought for democracy and human rights in the Russian Federation. He has successfully advocated for targeted Magnitsky sanctions on human rights offenders,” notes Human Rights Committee Chair Astrid Thors. “At the expense of his own security and health he has continued to work for democracy in Russia.”

Kara-Murza is one of Russia's foremost opposition figures. He was the deputy leader of Russia's People's Freedom Party and the founding chairman of the Nemtsov Foundation. He served as vice president at Open Russia and the Free Russia Foundation and devoted his writing and research to ?? As Senior Policy Advisor at the Institute of Modern Russia,

In 2015 and 2017 Kara-Murza survived two attempted assassination attempts that left him in a coma. Despite great personal risk, he remained a leading outspoken critic of Putin's regime and more recently Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

After publicly condemning Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, Kara-Murza was arbitrarily detained and sentenced to 20 years in a





“strict regime” labour camp in March.

In his nomination letter LI Human Rights Committee member and former Canadian Minister of Justice Irwin Cotler wrote, “Vladimir Kara-Murza gives expression to the very best of what the concept of freedom represents, and whose heroism stands as an abiding example for all those who share a commitment to human rights, democracy, and the advancement of peace.”

Kara-Murza’s nomination was submitted by the Canadian Group of Liberal International, the Liberal Democrats of the United Kingdom and the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights.

The Prize for Freedom is awarded annually to a well-known personality of liberal conviction who has made outstanding efforts for the defence of freedom and human rights.

Back in April, Liberal International’s Human Rights Committee condemns the verdict of the Russian court on the charges against Vladimir Kara-Murza. •Kara-Murza was charged with treason and spreading false information about the Russian army and has been sentenced to 25 years in prison.

“We are appalled but not surprised by the hard prison sentence with which Kara-Murza has been convicted today. It is showing that the courts in Russia are just a weapon in the hands of the authorities who do not refrain from any means in cracking down on anyone expressing different views and defending democracy,” says HRC Chair Astrid Thors. ••“We are gravely concerned for Vladimir Kara-Murza, and we call on all our partners in the global liberal network and all concerned with human rights in Russia to work hard to get him freed from this unlawful imprisonment.”

Evgenia Kara-Murza, Vladimir Kara-Murza’s wife, addressed the membership at LI’s Executive Committee Meeting in Ottawa. This was an important opportunity to coordinate vocal support for Russian dissidents and outrage towards the denial of their human rights.

## **Liberal Democrats in Parliament – Iran and Palestine**

At their Spring Conference in York, during a Q&A session with party leader, Ed Davey (MP for Kingston and Surbiton) answered a question by Shiva, a British-Iranian woman. Shiva explained how hopeless she felt, watching the awful scenes in Iran and the brutal repression of those brave women who have taken to the streets. She asked what we were doing, and whether there was any more we could do.

Following this exchange, Liberal Democrats tabled a motion in Parliament calling on the UK Government to take a stronger stance against the Iranian regime. As an internationalist party standing up for human rights around the world, the Liberal Democrats will stand up for Iranian people being persecuted by the regime. Layla Moran (MP for Oxford West and Abingdon and Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs) has been leading calls in Parliament to get the UK Government to do more as part of her continued campaigning on this issue.

Layla has also been working hard on another important international matter - recently putting forward a Bill which would ensure the British Government formally recognises the sovereign and independent state of Palestine.

# The threat of the new China order towards Liberalism.

## Larry Ngan

**The ALDE Congress at the end of the month has a resolution on China policy entitled ‘A Liberal Strategy for Europe’s Relationship with China’ for debate. Here is a briefing.**

Back in Sept 2022, I wrote an article titled ‘Geopolitics – The Conflict of the Pan Pacific Region, and the Liberal Democrats’ position on China Affairs’ <sup>1</sup>. I have explained what kind of area we should cover when we discussed about China affairs, how China exerted its influence through Belt Road Initiatives, and how we should cooperate with our allies in order to take more robust and well thought through sanctions. It was almost 9 months since it was published, and a lot has been changed, including the dynamics of Sino-Russian relations, China’s role in Russo-Ukraine war, and President Xi consolidation of power within Chinese Communist Party.

### **Recent development in China: The consolidation of President Xi’s power within China:**

I remember when I wrote the review of Vince Cable’s book *‘The Chinese Conundrum: Engagement or Conflict’* on Oct 2021, I once described the Chinese Communist Party as ‘a collective of factions’ <sup>2</sup>. To a certain extent it is still the case, certain factions (dominated by the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of the former senior CCP officials) are still lingering. However, since the 20<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (Held on Oct 2022), all the remnant of Jiang, Hu and Wen factions were expelled from the Politburo. The most iconic moment was when Hu Jintao tried to read the final version of the Politburo, he was pulled from his seat and escorted out of the hall by the staff in the congress venue. That was widely regarded as the end of Jiang faction within the CCP decision making circle, so do the collective leadership within the party.

The most important change was who were admitted to the Politburo Standing Committee. Most are not only close ally of Xi, but they were promoted mostly because they followed Xi’s instructions blindly instead of the meritocracy. Li Qiang the new premier, for example, was widely criticised for his handling of the 2 months lockdown of Shanghai during COVID; so did Cai Qi, the former Beijing CCP secretary.

These developments have a major impact to Chinese diplomatic policies. Until recently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was dominated by the Pro Western faction within the CCP. Wang Yi, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, was once regarded as a moderate figure comparing with figures like Zhao Lijian the former Deputy Director-General of the Information Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the icon of the ‘war-wolf’ diplomacy. President Xi did not replace Wang Yi from power, indeed he was admitted into the Politburo and became the top foreign affairs officials in the government. Nevertheless, Wang Yi changed his stance since then and became more hardline approach towards the United States and its allies.

### **‘United front’ and ‘Befriending the far and attacking the near’: President Xi’s goals in Foreign Affairs:**

Before we discussed how liberal parties tackle China, we should first understand what President Xi tried to achieve in Foreign Affairs policies.

Based on the recent speeches from Xi, we can classify his goals into short term and long term: In short and medium terms he would want to:

1. Annex Taiwan by using the one country two systems model (adopted in Hong Kong since 1997) by either infiltrating the political spectrum or by military force, and eventually neutralise the threat from liberal faction within the territory.
2. Take advantage of the Russo-Ukraine War in order to consolidate its sphere of influence in Central Asia and Russia, despite Putin's effort to maintain status quo in terms of the dynamic between Xi and himself;
3. Bring Global South under its influence through the Belt Road Initiatives and other diplomatic means, and turn the United Nations to be its platform/mechanism against the world order dominated by the United States and its allies. (Which is a Mao Legacy back in 1970s when PRC took over Republic of China seat in the UN security council)
4. Resolve the territorial disputes on South China Sea and Kashmir with hard line approach and try to force its neighbours to give up their claims, even by the means of limited military clashes.

In long term, sounds terrifying but he did mention, he would like to install a new international order by replacing liberalism and democracy with authoritarianism as the core value on the international stage.

The New York Times once referred Xi as the second coming of Mao Zedong, not only he had a massive territorial ambitions but he also had antipathy towards Western Powers. As a long term member of CCP, he followed the essence of Mao's 'United Front policy' : 'To unite/join hands with secondary enemies in order to defeat the principle enemies'. One of the key features of the United Front is like what the strategist Fan Ju proposed to the Qin Emperor in the Era of Warring States of Ancient China: 'befriending the far and attacking the near'.

If we reviewed those short and medium terms objectives I mentioned earlier on, we can see a pattern of Chinese diplomatic policies particularly in recent years. Taiwan and South China Sea are always Chinese top priorities, in the case of Taiwan, they tried to isolate Taiwan on the international stage: They tried to persuade those who still had diplomatic ties with Taiwan to cut ties with them, such as Honduras recently. In the case of South China Sea, until recently Chinese remained restraint over the dispute with Philippines, but since Philippines increasingly steered its diplomatic stance towards the United States, Chinese Navy engaged cat and mouse sea chase with Philippines, in particular over Second Thomas Shoal by forcing Philippines to withdraw their troops on the island.

The same can apply to the dynamics of Chinese diplomatic policies towards EU and the United States. During the recent Russo-Ukraine war, the member states among NATO took a rather united stance on supporting Ukraine. Taiwan was once again put under the spotlight, particularly after US became more supportive towards strengthening its national defence infrastructure. In order to sideline Taiwan in the international stage and soften the impact of US sanctions, China tried to persuade EU member states by offering trade deals under the condition of not supporting Taiwan. President Macron in particular fell into the trap and signed the economic deals (Ranging from Airbus orders to 5G technology) with China, and call for peace in Ukraine with China during his visit in Beijing. It was later exposed that Macron warned against being drawn into any Taiwan conflict.

China also tried to use the economic and cultural programs like Belt Road initiatives, 1000 people project, and Confucius institute in order to promote its soft power. There are a lot of articles elaborating on these projects so I am not going to repeat on here, but it is important to emphasise it is a part of 'united front policy' to bring other countries under its sphere of influence, and in a lot of case, it had adverse impact to their economy and, to make it worse, the political system.

### **The dangerous consequences of Chinese diplomatic policy: Liberalism and economic power being undermined**

Unfortunately, a lot of countries in the world, in particularly Global South, hadn't fully understood the danger of the Chinese diplomatic tactics. Some may say Taiwan is on the other side of earth, some other

said China is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest economy in the world so we should strengthen our economic ties with them. A good example would be the recent Paraguay election as one of the Presidential candidates proposed he would cut ties with Taiwan in order to sign trade deals with China once he would be elected (And thankfully failed). Unfortunately there are already countries that have suffered from the negative impacts of the Chinese diplomatic tactics.

A lot of political pundits in Asia and some in Europe already highlighted the negative impacts of Chinese Belt Road Initiatives, but some did not realise that the negative impacts are more serious than just causing the supposedly beneficiaries debt-ridden, or unfinished or white elephants public projects. Most contracts of these projects had a lot of small prints which will make China to be, in fact, the sole beneficiaries. Some pundits in Asia even branded these contracts as the ‘modern era unequal treaty’.

The prime example would be the Standard Gauge Railway between Nairobi and Mombasa. According to the reports from Wall Street Journal and Voice of America News, since the contract was signed, all materials required to build the railway were imported from no other countries than China, and it was the Chinese Road and Bridge Corporation who built the projects, hence most job vacancies for the projects goes to the company. The clause of the contract also clearly said that any major dispute over the railway would be decided in Beijing, not Nairobi, and the contract also showed that Kenyan government was legally bound to keep the details of the deal secret. Hence the contract could not be properly scrutinised by the public or even the parliament.<sup>3</sup>

Wall Street Journal published an article on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan 2023 titled ‘China’s Global Mega-Projects are falling apart’. In that article, it provided some prime examples of how China Belt and Road infrastructure projects caused environmental damages to the supposedly beneficiaries. One of the examples it quoted was the Coca Codo Sinclair Dam in Ecuador. Ecuadoran government signed a loan agreement with China in order to build the project, which was the largest energy project in the country. It was constructed by Sinohydro Corporation for USD\$2.7 billion and became fully operational in November 2016. Unfortunately 2 years later, 7648 cracks were identified in the generator hall and in surrounding equipment. The investigation by the government found out the erosion not only caused the cracks but also caused the oil pipelines along the river to lose their footings, hence led to 2 oil spills. To make the matter worse, the erosion from the reservoir already destroyed Ecuador largest waterfall and is destroying the village of San Luis nearby. Rene Ortiz, the former energy minister even went far by blaming the cracks were mostly caused by the sub-standard Chinese building materials and equipments.<sup>4</sup>

In the worst scenario, Chinese authorities even infiltrated democratic regime and brought them into authoritarianism. It actually happened recently in Solomon Islands. In 2019, Solomon Islands government formally recognised China instead of Taiwan, and signed the 5-year Security Pact with China on 2022. According to the agreement, Beijing had agreed to send armed police, military personnel, and other law enforcement force to assist the government in ‘maintaining social order, protecting people’s lives and property, and providing humanitarian assistance.’ The Chinese army can also, under the consent of the Solomon Islands government, use its forces to protect Chinese personnel and projects, and for its ships to stopover and carry out “logistical replenishment” in the Solomon Islands. With China increased its business and military presence on the islands, some politicians become critical to the Chinese diplomatic policy. It caused protest within the country, and a no-confidence vote was called by the opposition parties. Prime Minister Sogavare survived the vote but Australian national broadcaster ABC published a report that cited documents it obtained showing that “a Chinese slush fund was activated twice last year and dispersed nearly \$3 million directly to members of parliament loyal to the Prime Minister” prior to last year’s no-confidence vote.<sup>5</sup>

Since then the Chinese influence became so dominant and some critics on Chinese government were forced out from office. One of the most prominent critics, Daniel Suidani, the Premier of Malaita, was ousted after a no-confidence vote by the provincial legislature on 7<sup>th</sup> Feb 2023, only because he had banned Chinese companies from the provinces and accepted development aid from the United States.<sup>6</sup> The change of

Solomon Islands raised the concern from some political pundits. The Telegraph even went far by referring the Solomon Islands became ‘Ground Zero in the fight to contain China’.<sup>7</sup>

### **What we should do as a Liberal party and democratic nation:**

Being a member of Liberal International, we strongly believe in internationalism as one of our core values. We also believe in taking actions to protect civil liberties and liberalism of our country and our neighbours. Back in September last year I mentioned ‘we need to take drastic measures on our national security policy, in order to safeguard our values on being a liberal democracy, and our neighbours who shared our values. Diplomatic isolation is not an option and we need to work with our ally to achieve our aims. We need to have a clear policy on authoritarian regime, and act swiftly in the time of crisis.’<sup>8</sup> I would repeat the same call, particularly when China took a more hard line approach on its foreign policy.

We should also not forget those who once fought for freedom in places like China, Hong Kong and Macau. Plenty of civilians fought for their civil liberties in these regions against the authoritarian regimes, even a gesture would remind the rest of the world they were not forgotten.

During the 2023 Executive Committee meeting of the Liberal International, a motion tabled by DPP from Taiwan was passed in order to support Taiwanese initiatives in increased participation in international affairs and further collaboration with World Democracies.

In the upcoming ALDE Congress, a resolution on China policy titled ‘A Liberal Strategy for Europe’s Relationship with China’ will be tabled for debate. It was co-signed by 8 member parties and the members of the ALDE Policy Advisory Group on China. Some key points in the resolution included:

1. for Europe continuing to speak out in support of universal values and stand firm against the CCP-led challenge to the world liberal democratic order and human rights;
2. maintaining robust unity in European countries’ response towards China and stand up jointly for the defence of human rights, the rule of law and a free and open market economy;
3. Europe to intensify cooperation with democratic partners to counter China’s and Russia’s “friendship without limits” while redoubling efforts to counter their influence and activities, especially in Africa and Latin America;
4. Supporting moves for governments to screen security-sensitive investments from China into Europe as well as security-sensitive and high-tech European companies’ trade and investment into China, to ensure they are not used against Western security interests.

We should keep in mind it will take some time before these policies to take effect. It required long term policies and firm stances with our partners, particularly among NATO member states. This resolution is the first step for ALDE to take a position to defend liberalism in Europe, and it could also be the step forward to protect liberalism in other countries outside Europe against the China initiatives.

### **Larry Ngan**

Larry Ngan is a member of the Liberal Democrats Federal International Relations Committee (& delegate to the ALDC Congress), but writes here in a personal capacity.

Sources:

<sup>1</sup> <https://libg.co.uk/en/document/interlib-september-2022.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://libg.co.uk/en/document/interlib-2021/interlib-october-2021.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.voanews.com/a/kenyan-lawmakers-want-more-details-on-5b-railway-loan-after-contract-partially-released-/6825661.html> ; <https://www.wsj.com/video/series/george-downs/kenyas-chinese-built-railway-shows-why-belt-and-road-is-being-reworked/582FF1C2-E80C-45E7-8C8C-62E80AE5D0D1>

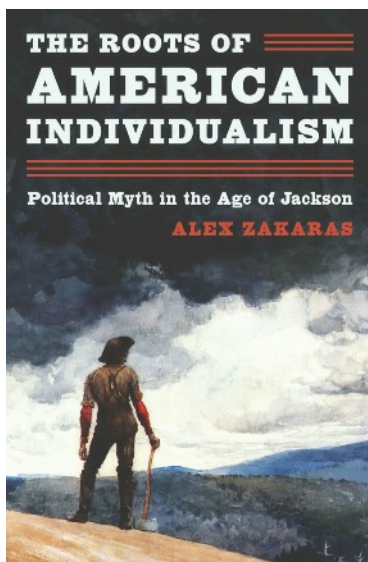
# reviews

**The Roots of American Individualism, political myth in the Age of Jackson, by Alex Zakaras.**  
Princeton University Press 2022 isbn 9780691226316

Individualism is a philosophical position that sees the individual as the core element of society, realising its goals through independence and self-reliance. As such it can be found across a wide spectrum of non-collectivist and non-corporatist ideologies and philosophies, though it may be a strange bed-fellow with some. It pervades Classical Liberalism and remains central to modern Liberalisms. It occurs naturally where circumstances nurture it, and the United States, having ostensibly thrown off feudalism and privilege would be a perfect seeding ground.

Political labels in American politics can be confusing when contrasted with those in the more stable European experience. Are Democrats or Republicans on the progressive or conservative side of the political spectrum, and has that always been the position? Indeed, it has been a state of flux since the political groupings of the aftermath of the War of Independence, and primarily in the following Age of Jackson. Politicians had to address an electorate of primarily white male farmers, of necessity, largely self-sufficient and hence primarily focused on their own immediate concerns. The individualism that stems from that will colour most political persuasions and lives on in the background mythology of the American psyche to this day.

American history is not widely followed in Britain, we pay scant attention to our own history in education these days. The period between the end of the Napoleonic wars and the American Civil War, is particularly neglected. Jackson came to our attention when Donald Trump was elected as President, Jackson being the first of a line of presidents after the founding fathers that few had heard of, until you get to Lincoln. His



presidency, 1829-1837 is noted for its belligerence and the destruction of Native American communities.

Jefferson, not alone amongst the founding fathers, as a proto-liberal, fails to see the contradictions in that as a slave owner and as an elitist does not fully grasp the implications of democracy. Industrialisation is a new kind of feudalism, otherwise not yet thrown off in Europe.

As an agrarian economy, land-plenty, the American farmer owns his land and is self-sufficient on it. Jackson speaks to them against the elites, banks and like collective agencies. The economic cost of this is paid by Black slaves and Native Americans of course; does this lead to some of the darker overtones of American politics? Though beloved of Trump, Jackson is a Democrat, but is a mass democratic sense, no longer patrician. You can see the links, though the

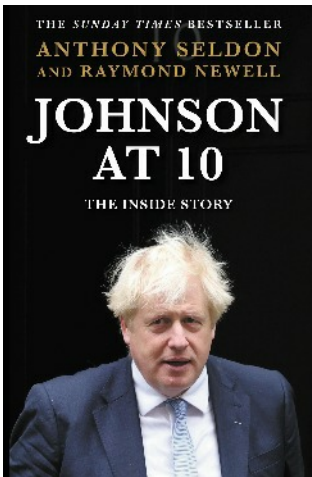
**Footnotes to *The threat of the new China order towards Liberalism*, by Larry Ngan, continued:**

- <sup>4</sup> <https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-global-mega-projects-infrastructure-falling-apart-11674166180>
- <sup>5</sup> <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/08/09/solomon-islands-china-security-pact-beijing-policing-democracy/>
- <sup>6</sup> <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/02/07/solomonislandsoustsofficialcriticalofcloserelationswithchina.html>
- <sup>7</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2023/04/20/solomon-islands-china-control-asia-pacific-security-treaty/>
- <sup>8</sup> <https://libg.co.uk/en/document/interlib-september-2022.pdf>

Democrats, as a modern party, can equally trace their roots back to Jackson and this period. Against the elites, who it turns out, acted in their own self-interest, egalitarian politics simply required common sense and a personal integrity. Where did Trump go wrong?

A detailed study of the period, Zakaras shows us the roots of what one might call the American mind-set and the apparent paradoxes of political support.

*Stewart Rayment*



**Johnson at 10, the inside story, by Anthony Seldon and Raymond Newell**  
**Atlantic Books 2023 £25.00**  
**isbn9781838958022**

Never in the history of this country's post-Enlightenment politics has so much damage been caused to so many by one man in so little time. If that's Seldon's assessment of Johnson, I can't wait for his blockbuster on Liz Truss. The problem is, why so few people saw this coming?

But since we are primarily concerned with the international stage, the book does accept that Johnson performed well over Ukraine. It was an easy win: visit Kyiv, say the right things and give Zelensky what he asked for. But Johnson was in the vanguard of building international support for Ukraine and deserves credit for that. I remember Kira Rudik saying the Ukrainians view him in very different eyes to ours. But hey, why waste time on yesterday's man; get out there and deliver those thank you Focuses and make sure he stays that way.

*Saeed Rahman*

**Return of the Junta, why Myanmar's military must go back to the barracks, by Oliver Slow.**  
**Bloomsbury Academic 2023 isbn 9781350289659**

A useful background to the situation in Myanmar, where the expectations of western political correctness doesn't always match the situation on the ground. One might question a 'return' of the Junta, the Tawmadaw; did they ever really go away, with their entrenched positions in Parliament; the NLD probably deserves better.

One might be inclined to see a coup d'état as a better armed robber baron simply taking over, but the Myanmar military, effectively a caste in itself, sees its role as a protector of the country, which (forgetting imperial boundaries) it created. Initially siding with the Japanese in World War II, they switched sides to the British, who never really regained control of the country, although it wasn't formally independent until 1948. Burma did not join the Commonwealth.

The problem with this is that after years of military rule, the Tawmadaw has its fingers directly or indirectly in most sectors of the economy; cronyism and corruption are rife, much of it linked to Communist China.

Hence the stalemate at the UN. China and Russia will veto any western proposals, but that is no reason for not making them, nor pursuing the matter through ASEAN member states. Armed rebellion has, to some extent, always been endemic, particularly amongst the freedom loving ethnic minorities of the country, now joined by pro-NLD groups, leaving a situation where the army has little or no control over areas of the country and increasingly asserts itself through air power – hence the Burma Campaigns focus on banning Britain's role in the supply of aviation fuel, particularly through insuring the tankers. Sanctions were imposed by the government in January 2023, but are perhaps, not as meticulously targeted as James Cleverly, the Foreign Secretary would like to think. Worry your MP on this – there's an election coming.

*Stewart Rayment*

