



2025-04 June

INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



Israel/Palestine Bangladesh Philippines

EVENTS

16th June LIBG Forum on Canadian General Election – see page 3

17th-18th August Young Liberals Conference, Cambridge

20-23 September Liberal Democrats Autumn Conference, Bournemouth

25th October 2025 Isaiah Berlin Lecture: Prof. John Gray on Liberalism, Populism and the Sense of Reality. National Liberal Club & online

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Photographs – Sarah J Lloyd, Stewart Rayment, Daniel Hartlaub.

Cover Photograph:

Field Marshall, the Viscount Alanbrooke presides over the peaceful condemnation of the seizure of the UK-flagged yacht *Madleen* by Israel as it attempted to deliver much needed aid to Gaza, 9th June 2025. It is time for HM Government to step up on this humanitarian crisis.
Photograph: Sarah J Lloyd.



Deadline for next issue: 1st July 2025.

Deadline for Conference issue: 25th August 2025
(Bank Holiday Monday)



LIBG Forum



The Canadian General Election. Monday 16th June 2025 at 18.30, UK time

Canada's election on 28 April brought the Liberal Party back to power for fourth successive term - just short of an overall majority, and with a new leader in Mark Carney. Join us on Monday 16 June at 6.30 PM UK time to discuss what happened, why it happened, and what it means for Canada, not least for its relationship with the US and its place in a changing world. Chaired by Sir Graham Watson, our panel will include:

Mario Canseco is Vancouver based President of Research Co. and leader in public opinion research and Canadian politics. Mario holds a Masters of Journalism from the University of British Columbia and a Bachelors in Communications.

Emerson Csorba is located in Montréal, Canada and focuses on the deep tech investment space following leadership roles in geopolitics and energy in the UK, as well as founding and leading a consultancy with clients in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Israel. He is originally from Edmonton, Alberta and is an alumnus of the University of Alberta (BA), the University of Cambridge (M.Phil), and the University of Oxford (PhD).

Dr Christine Cheng, Senior Lecturer in War Studies at King's College London, teaching on the MA in Conflict, Security & Development. In 2009, she was the Cadieux-Léger Fellow at Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Join the meeting at:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83396804492?pwd=EoWZa5ZegyhsPEnesoMN2Fb8f2ULGs.1>

Meeting ID: 833 9680 4492

Passcode: 20314

Israel/Palestine – why we spoke out.

Philip Goldenberg

I am a Zionist. I love Israel - the state, the land, and its people. But my Israel is the one conceived by Herzl and designed by Weizmann – a pluralist liberal democracy upholding Jewish ethical values. Sadly at present it has a government which instead runs by the Trump playbook: denigrating the country's Judges, firing senior civil servants, attacking media outlets which express disagreement, and creating hate figures out of those who oppose it. It was Hitler's playbook too.

So I was one of the signatories of the open letter from 36 members of the Board of Deputies of British Jews (effectively the UK Jewish community's Parliament) published by the *Financial Times*¹ recently condemning the Israeli Government's resumption of the war in Gaza.

I have not opposed the war from the beginning. Israel has a right to defend itself and, after the atrocities of October 7th, had to remove Hamas from power in Gaza. And much of the blame for the horrendous suffering in Gaza must be laid at the door of Hamas, who use its civilians as human shields and care not one bit about the loss of innocent Gazan lives.

However, the resumption of fighting last month was a cynical attempt to cling to power at the cost of bringing back a racist bigot into Government. Other options on the table could have resulted in all the hostages being returned. Instead, it seems as if they have been abandoned. And there was the framework of an agreement with Arab states to rebuild Gaza without Hamas.

The debate in much of the Western world is dispiriting and simplistic. If you speak out against the actions of the current Israeli government, you get called a 'self-hating Jew' or tarnished as an anti-Semite. And if you try to defend Israel's right to exist and to defend itself, you get called a baby-killer or other insults which are resonant of centuries of antisemitic abuse

Which is why I want to stress that I am a passionate Zionist AND opposed to this cynical resumption of military activity. I believe in Israel's right to defend itself AND I now want to see a diplomatic solution that brings the hostages home and moves towards a path for peace. That is why I joined other Jews in putting our heads above the parapet, and I have been heartened by the emails of gratitude arriving in my inbox from distinguished Jews and non-Jews alike.

Philip Goldenberg

Philip Goldenberg is a member of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and fought Woking (where he was also a local councillor) for the Liberals and Liberal Democrats in the 1980s & 90s.

¹ <https://www.ft.com/content/6a506d98-40a0-48e7-8e98-2882beb30914>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/apr/16/members-of-leading-british-jewish-body-condemn-israels-latest-actions-in-gaza>



Democracy After Dictatorship: Bangladesh's Generational Reforms Demand Global Partnership

Farhana Sultana

While we are watching the rollback of democratic institutions and norms in America, there are burgeoning democracies like the one in Bangladesh. Here are the five things that the international community can do support its democratic evolution and learn from it.

Bangladesh recently once again rose from the ashes of authoritarianism to reclaim its democratic soul. In August 2024, a student-led mass uprising in Bangladesh brought down a fascist regime¹ that had gripped the nation for 15 years. The fall of Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League's autocratic rule marked more than a political shift – it opened a historic window for democratic renewal. This civic movement, now widely referred to as the “July Revolution,” ended an era marred by political repression, surveillance, violence, and systemic corruption.

Yet as history shows us, the collapse of an authoritarian regime is only the prologue. The real challenge lies ahead: building the democratic architecture that was so systematically dismantled.

Under the leadership of Nobel Laureate Dr. Muhammad Yunus, the new Interim Government has been navigating that complex terrain. In a region where democratic backsliding has often been normalized, Bangladesh is attempting a rare and ambitious path forward. But reforms – no matter how visionary – face real resistance from entrenched interests and are fraught with obstacles, both internal and external, that threaten to derail Bangladesh's progress.

Reforming a Hollowed State

The Interim Government has initiated comprehensive reforms aimed at restoring democratic governance and the rule of law. Eleven reform commissions have been established, focusing on critical areas such as the constitution, electoral system, police, judiciary, anti-corruption measures, and public administration. Notably, six of these commissions have already submitted their reports², outlining actionable steps for systemic change.

For instance, the Constitutional Reform Commission³ proposed significant changes, including the introduction of a bicameral legislature, limiting the prime minister's tenure to two terms, and an independent judiciary oversight board. Meanwhile, the Electoral Reform Commission⁴ made over 100 recommendations, such as empowering the Election Commission to suspend flawed elections for up to 90 days, contingent on Supreme Court approval, and disqualifying candidates accused of serious human rights abuses.

To ensure these reforms are rooted in broad consensus, a National Consensus Commission⁵ – comprising 26 political parties and 100 national leaders – was formed to co-develop a national charter of short- and long-term reforms. This approach, emphasizing dialogue over decree, marks a notable departure from Bangladesh's often confrontational political culture.

The Reform-Election Dilemma

Timing the next national election has become a central debate. The Interim Government has proposed elections between December 2025 and June 2026⁶, arguing that key reforms must precede voting to avoid a reversion to illiberal governance. By contrast, the largest political party currently, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), insists elections be held within six months, citing democratic legitimacy.

Without structural changes, an early election risks repeating the cycles of cronyism and clientelism that led to democratic collapse in the first place.

Without structural changes, an early election risks repeating the cycles of cronyism and clientelism that led to democratic collapse in the first place. Political responsibility at this critical juncture must mean prioritizing reformed and strengthened institutional foundations over opportunistic timelines.

Geopolitical Fault Lines: India and China

The regional geopolitical context adds further complexity. India, long aligned with Sheikh Hasina's government, has refused to extradite her⁷, despite evidence from a recent investigation by the United Nations that documented widespread corruption and human rights violations⁸ under her regime. India's support for the Awami League has come at the cost of its credibility among Bangladesh's democratic reformers.

Furthermore, there is credible evidence of coordinated disinformation campaigns⁹ originating from both Indian state actors and Awami League affiliates. Over 3,000 false claims were debunked¹⁰ in 2024 alone. These campaigns aim to delegitimize the Interim Government and sway international opinion against Bangladesh's democratic resurgence.

On the other side of the geopolitical equation, Bangladesh's relationship with China is evolving¹¹. China has offered support to the Interim Government, eyeing Bangladesh as a potential logistics and manufacturing partner in a shifting global economy. But while Chinese investment may offer economic lifelines and infrastructure development opportunities, the terms of such engagement must be transparent, equitable, and preserve Bangladesh's strategic autonomy.

Economic Rebuilding: Between Recovery and Risk

Economic recovery has been central to the current rebuilding in Bangladesh. Despite uncertainty, investor sentiment has improved. At the Bangladesh Investment Summit 2025, over \$260 million in FDI was pledged. Investor sentiment is improving as political stability returns, evidenced by a renewed appetite for capital markets and infrastructure projects. Remittances remain strong, bolstering foreign exchange reserves. The central Bangladesh Bank recently emphasized¹² the need for enhanced regulatory oversight, particularly in banking, to stabilize economic expectations amid global slowdown.

Justice must not only be symbolic, it must be materially restorative.

Yet true recovery requires accountability. The Interim Government has launched a global asset repatriation initiative to recover \$234 billion looted during the Awami League era¹³, as documented in a 397-page official report¹⁴ released in December 2024. These funds, when returned, are intended for critical public services, including education, healthcare, and infrastructure¹⁵. Justice must not only be symbolic, it must be materially restorative.

A Call to the International Community

Global superpowers such as the UK, US and the EU must resist the temptation to fall back on India-centric diplomacy when engaging with Bangladesh. This is a pivotal moment for principled partnerships – not realpolitik.

Here's what global partners can do:

1. **Endorse the Reform Roadmap:** Recognize and support that the Interim Government is undertaking complex structural and systemic reforms that go beyond surface-level change but aim for sustainable democracy with strong institutions.
2. **Support Accountability:** Urge India to end safe harbour for alleged war criminals and push for international mechanisms to counter disinformation. Support fact-checking and ground-truthing narratives around Bangladesh.
3. **Invest Equitably:** Facilitate investments and collaborations that align with Bangladesh's development goals while upholding democratic principles. Prioritize investments in labour-friendly, climate-resilient sectors aligned with Bangladesh's long-term goals.
4. **Assist in Asset Recovery:** Provide legal and diplomatic frameworks for repatriating stolen public wealth.
5. **Listen to Bangladeshis:** Foster people-to-people engagement to cut through misinformation and understand what's truly at stake.

A Final Reflection

Democracy is not restored with the fall of a dictator – it is rebuilt in the ruins of what authoritarianism hollowed out. Bangladesh's journey will be long and messy. But it is also deeply hopeful. Let us support and honour the phoenix rising from the ashes – lifted by the courage of thousands of young people who gave their lives for a freer, fairer, and stronger Bangladesh.

This is not just a Bangladeshi moment. It is a global one. Let the world confirm that solidarity with democratic transformation means more than press statements. It means investment in reforms, justice, and truth.

Farhana Sultana

Farhana Sultana is a Professor at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs of Syracuse University and participated in April's Bangladesh Forum (*interLib* 2025-03)

This article first appeared in *LA Progressive*, May 10, 2025. The opinions expressed are solely the author's and do not reflect the opinions or beliefs of the *LA Progressive*. <https://www.laprogressive.com/foreign-policy/democracy-after-dictatorship>

Liberal Party's resurgence in the Philippines

Liberal International celebrates the inspiring resurgence of liberal democracy in the Philippines, marked by the significant gains of our full member party, the Liberal Party (LP), in the May 12th 2025 midterm elections.

Led by former Vice President Leni Robredo and emboldened by the courage of Senator Leila de Lima, LI Prize for Freedom laureate, the LP has shown that integrity, resilience, and hope continue to resonate deeply with the Filipino people. De Lima's unwavering stand for human rights and justice, even in the face of political imprisonment, has become a powerful symbol of liberal resistance.

This resurgence is underscored by the triumphant return of Senator Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan and Senator Bam Aquino to the national legislature — a victory not just for the LP, but for every Filipino who believes in a politics grounded in justice, democratic accountability, and human dignity. Their campaigns — anchored on food security, climate responsibility, and honest governance — offered a bold and credible alternative to the politics of fear and dynastic control.

This electoral breakthrough, achieved under the energising "KiBam" alliance with the support of Abkayan and ML Partylist, signals a growing demand — especially among the country's youth — for change that is progressive, participatory, and principled. The people of the Philippines have spoken clearly: they reject the creeping normalisation of authoritarianism and are ready to reclaim democratic space.

In an increasingly challenging political environment, where power remains concentrated and critical voices are often sidelined, this result is a beacon of democratic resistance. The LP's success in the Senate race represents a critical opportunity to challenge illiberal forces, expose corruption, and champion a rights-based legislative agenda that uplifts all sectors of society.

Mabuhay ang Partido Liberal!

Notes to Democracy After Dictatorship

¹ <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/4839027-bangladesh-student-protests-overthrow/>

² <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/b0899e98f8d7> - Bangladesh News

³ <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/370929/reform-commissions-suggest-dropping-secularism>

⁴ <https://images.thedailystar.net/opinion/editorial/news/new-chapter-the-nation-3801036>

⁵ <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/charter-reforms-next-govt-3824916>

⁶ <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/ca-address-nation-morning-victory-day-1019616>

⁷ <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/354676/hasina-to-remain-in-india-for-now>

⁸ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ohchr-fact-finding-report-human-rights-violations-and-abuses-related>

⁹ <https://thediplomat.com/2025/04/reimagining-the-bangladesh-china-strategic-partnership/>

¹⁰ https://www.newagebd.net/post/trade-commerce/261831/bangladesh-has-conducive-scenario-for-investment-prof-yunus#google_vignette

¹¹ <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/economy-faces-headwinds-3821286>

¹² <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/234-billion-siphoned-during-al-rule-3766246>

¹³ <https://www.tbsnews.net/features/panorama/white-paper-committee-report-how-goes-reform-1115056>

¹⁴ <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/expedite-repatriation-process-our-stolen-assets-3707366#lg=1&slide=0>

¹⁵ <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/expedite-repatriation-process-our-stolen-assets-3707366>

International Abstracts

Journal of Liberal History Issue 126 Spring 2025

International content comes from Tony Little's *Politics, Principles and Priorities: Gladstone and the Chinese opium trade*, which opens well, with Gladstone, still a Tory, condemning the 1840 first Opium War and the statement of Chinese Peoples' Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the matter. Gladstone was right, for once the Chinese Communist Party is right, but the GOM aside this is not the most glorious moment in British, nor Liberal history. In an early edition of JHL there was a review of a biography of John Bowring, Radical MP, British Consul in Canton (now Guangzhou) 1859, Governor of Hong Kong 1854-1859, where whatever reforms he may have implemented, he also initiated the second Opium War, 1856-1860. We don't talk about that much, one of the most disgraceful acts of imperialism by our hands, maybe, also because the British defeat at [second battle of] the Taku forts, which Gladstone cites, was considered our greatest military disaster since the retreat from Kabul.

It all goes wrong of course, Gladstone accepts ministerial posts under Palmerston, who has won an election on the issue accepting the will of the British people. This will in turn, colour his approach to the opium industry. British policy was formed, firstly on a misunderstanding of the Chinese position - mutually incompatible perhaps? Second of the scant information of those on the ground, before any of the telecommunications we take for granted were in place. Telegraphy was introduced in India from 1850, but did not link up with Britain until 1870. The fastest journey by sea from Hong Kong to London by sail in 1850 was 97 days. The question is, do we understand the Chinese position today?

An aside, the Daily Express reported on 9th June that China may harbour ambitions in Russia's Primorsky Krai (Vladivostok), lost to them in the enforced Treaty of Peking of 1860; this is an old chestnut that comes up from time to time.

Otherwise, there are articles about Roy Jenkins and the Race Relations Act, the National Liberals of the 1930s-1960s, David Laws' account of relations between Liberals and Labour and the Liberal Democrat performance in the 2024 election. There are obituaries of Jenny Randerson and Adrian Slade and a review of Ann Shukman's *44 Days in Prague*, Lord Runciman's mission to prevent a Nazi German invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Liberator 429

Sometime in 2017 or 2018 Ed Lucas wrote an article in the Daily Mail (we all have ours bills to pay) speculating on a Russian attack following Trump's first administration withdrawing from NATO; it wasn't a Baltic state, but Ukraine where this became prophetic. The horror story continues in *If minds meet in Moscow*. Let us hope this remains fiction rather than fact, on which, Kiron Reid talks to Kostiantyn Koshelenko about Ukraine and Will Foster MP report on his visits there and to Gaza and Israel. Rebecca Tinsley's article on the Canadian General Election (*interLib* 2025-03) appears alongside Stephen Yolland's on the Australian elections. David Grace sees the UK and EU talking again after Brexit. Radical Bulletin clarifies the position of Baroness Falkner and the Liberal Democrats.



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Each issue is packed with articles on Lib Dem policy and strategy, international issues and news from light shone into dark corners of the party. There are also Lord Bonkers' Diary, letters and reviews.

Recent contributors include MPs Martin Wrigley, Sarah Green, Paul Kohler, Marie Goldman and Calum Miller and peers Liz Barker and Claire Tyler. But you don't have to be in parliament – we welcome all contributions.

Go to <https://liberatormagazine.org.uk> to sign up to be emailed each time a PDF issue comes out.

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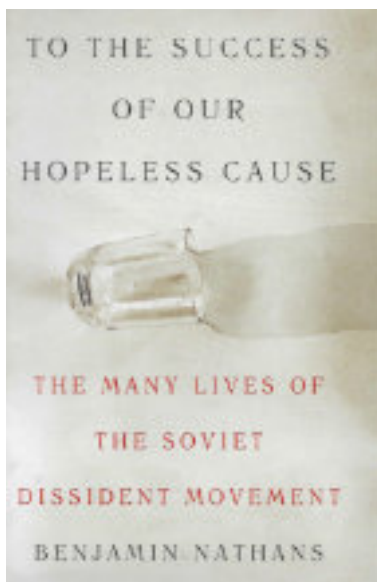
liberatormagazine.org.uk

Reviews

To The Success of Our Hopeless Cause, the many lives of the Soviet Dissident Movement, by Benjamin Nathans.
Princeton University Press 2024
isbn 9780491117034

Why are books on the late Soviet period such door-stoppers? The answer is that there is so much to be recorded in the hope that lessons be learnt and it might never happen again, though the photographs at the end tell us that Comrade Putin is little different to the red tsars who preceded him (not that that will be a surprise to regular readers of interLib over the years).

Back in the dark days of the 1970s the Young Liberals became interested in supporting Soviet dissidents, the young Vladimir Bukovsky particularly catching their imagination, though there were many others whose names I now forget – members of Baptist churches with no political axe to grind, in particular. YL branches were encouraged to elect Bukovsky &/or others as their president and to write to the Soviet embassy requesting his attendance at AGMs and the like. I don't suppose these invitations, birthday cards etc. ever reached them; did they have any impact on the person handling the post at Kensington Palace Gardens? Probably not.



We didn't know much about these people – a duplicated A4 page and perhaps a flyer from Amnesty International. It was indeed Amnesty's dialogue with the dissident movements of the Soviet Empire that honed much of their modus operandi in the 1960s & 70s. So, the blow-by-blow details of the careers of Bukovsky et al are quite an adventure story and quite gripping as such; I hope Nathans doesn't think it belittles his work to describe it as a page-turner, it will certainly be put to more serious use in Ph.Ds to come.

One area that remains fertile is the history of the nations of the Russian empire post-1945. I was aware that it took the Red Army a good decade to pacify Ukraine, even longer in Lithuania it turns out.

Our Bukovsky story had a disappointing turning. When he was finally released and expelled to the West, we were of course, over the moon, it

was just before Christmas. There was a local evening paper at the time, and we rushed out a press release; not one of those rags picked up the story for some reason, even though we had cultivated friendly relations with journalists over the years. One told me the story had no local context. This indeed is part of the problem for many political prisoners after expulsion. Even Solzhenitsyn found his celebrity status waned and we no longer had an address by which to invite the president to our next AGM.

The 1975 Helsinki Accords weren't worth the paper they were printed on, I think small groups such as ours hoped for more from them than certainly our governments were committed to (if anything). To some extent the KGB put up with dissidents while they were internal and with little impact but when they interacted with foreign agents, they became a threat and were rapidly shut down in one form or another. Thus, by the time of Gorbachev they were largely forgotten, a small number even served under Putin in his earlier days.

Nathans thinks that because the Communist Party monopolised the body politic of the Soviet Union there was a lack of civic institutions for the dissidents to relate to, hence their attempt to make Russia live by its stated constitution. He quotes Alexander Zinoviev, expelled from Russia in 1979, *'Because of their way of life, the overwhelming majority of citizens in a communist society feel no need for civil liberties and precisely for this reason they don't have those liberties'*. I regret and I have argued with Russians, albeit living comfortably in Latvia, Who say Don't interfere in politics, get on with life and politics won't

interfere with you. At the other end of the scale, I encountered members of the Latvian community in my hometown who said that they did not look vote because something that just communists did. Not voting was an expression of resistance to Russian occupation and they had brought for habit with them to England.

Extrapolate this to the present, opposition to Putin's war against Ukraine, even in its most neutral forms is suppressed, gaol or worse. Holding up a blank poster or pretending to hold up a poster can get you arrested. Putin has gone full circle back to Stalin.

Stewart Rayment

**Africa and the backlash against International Courts – Peter Brett and Line Engbo Gissel.
Zed Books 2020
isbn 978178 6992970**

Here is a refreshingly honest look at the ways in which the African elite manipulates gullible donor nations into paying for justice mechanisms that are either ignored or undermined in practice. In the 1990s, there was global enthusiasm for supranational courts such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) to bring accountability following human rights atrocities. In theory, if individuals could not find justice through their own national court system, they could appeal to regional or international courts. However, this book shows that in practice, those in power in Africa tended to use the courts to secure their own legitimacy and to persecute their political opponents, often following a coup.

When it came to prosecuting the likes of Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Sudan's Omar Bashir, and Gaddafi of Libya, elite solidarity guaranteed their immunity. African leaders offered excuses such as "prosecution would imperil the peace process or stability". The fact that in the case of Sudan there was no peace process was overlooked. Mugabe, on the other hand, played the liberation struggle hero card effectively; Gaddafi was untouchable because Libyan oil bankrolled projects across the continent including the Organisation of African Unity.

From 2008 onward, "the ICC and universal jurisdiction were increasingly conflated as new weapons of choice of former colonial powers targeting weaker African nations." The fact that African nations had signed up to those courts and been given generous funding to prepare for working with those courts was forgotten. Once the ICC began indicting African tyrants, leaders asserted that at stake was nothing less than the need "to preserve and safeguard the dignity, sovereignty and integrity of the continent."

The authors make the point that non-Africans fail to appreciate that the assertion of "sovereign equality" is the language of morality for the African elite, given decades of humiliation by colonialist nations. The desire to reject neo-imperialist legal interference would be more credible had African regimes treated their own regional courts with respect. However, whenever these regional judicial systems were tested, sovereign equality and elite immunity usually took priority over the human rights of long-suffering African citizens. This has contributed to the widely held belief among African civil society groups and citizens that the African Union and other regional organisations are a worthless dictators' clubs meeting in pleasant resorts and spending money on themselves rather than intervening to stop coups or the persecution of their subjects.

The book illustrates the numerous cases in which leaders have used regional courts to settle scores with their opponents. Otherwise, inconvenient judgements are simply ignored, much to the frustration of the admirable and brave civil society NGOs and bar associations across the continent.

The book describes the ways in which African regimes have used regional courts to prove their legitimacy following coups or dubious elections. "Legality rather than effectiveness has been characteristic of the African state in general." Unfortunately, "legitimation through legality differs from the internalization of rule of law values."

The authors ask, "If court authority threatens political power, why build it in the first place?" Put simply, the international community went through a phase of promoting justice, accountability and transparency on the continent. In order to keep the donations flowing, African leaders went along with the whims of the funding bodies. "This strategy was aimed at major donors such as the EU, the US, the IMF and the World Bank." Nothing much changes; it seems.

Rebecca Tinsley

Daniel Hartlaub and musical friends At the Electro Studios, St. Leonards.16th -18th May.

Daniel Hartlaub is a familiar artist to Hastings, having appeared here in group or solo shows over the last few years, typically in the company of equally familiar musicians around the town. His 2025 visit had the added attraction of work by his uncle Felix Hartlaub, who died in the last three days of World War 2 in Germany, I should have added that Daniel practices mainly in Frankfurt. Felix's work had been set as what we might now call a graphic novel, projected continuously, each page merging in and out to the next. Drawn at the age of 13, in the expressionist style favoured in Germany in the mid-1920s, it is effectively a journey through life; think Frans Masereel. Felix, a civil servant, disappeared after being called up in, as I said, the last three days of the European war, officially so at least. If their Reich could not last 1000 years, the Nazis were determined to have Ragnarök instead.



From Felix Hartlaub projection

The darkness of the tale mirrors Daniel's own work, some of which was indeed created for book illustration, linking us back to Nazi Germany as it happens. Historian Petra Bonavita writes on the German resistance to the Nazis. Surprisingly, as it may seem, there were many within the German police force opposed to Hitler some taking part in the ill-fated Operation Valkyrie; so far as I am aware this work is only published in German. However, whilst Hartlaub chooses to work in black and white for his print work, some of it is of a much lighter nature; his *Fencer* is particularly fine. The exhibition was curated by Katrin Kobberger.

Aside from Felix's graphic novel, other projections overlaid the various musical escapades accompanying the show, some by Hartlaub, others by Mr. Exploding Cinema, Duncan Reekie.

There was a family feel to these as musicians from various ensembles regrouped. On Friday 16th we started with what might be a core Necessary Animals, Amanda Thompson and Keith Rodway, joined by Kath Allsopp, violin and Hutch Demouilpied, trumpet, playing new music for the event including a duet with medium wave radio. They were followed by Simon and the Pope, (Simon Charterton, percussion and John Pope guitar) accompanied by Demouilpied, to get the feet moving.

On Saturday 17th a reconfiguration; A.K.A. Anthony Moore joined Rodway and Thompson playing pieces from Moore's songbook; *Coralie* and *The Pilgrim*, from Slapp Happy days, and *Hymn to Despair*, an ode to Southern Water's endless dumping raw sewage in our rivers and sea, which I think, was premiered at The Beacon, Hastings, last year, and *Hymn to Love*, to lift the evening up again. Rodway was then joined by percussionist Simon Charterton and sonic experimentalist Nick Weekes for a long free-form session under the name of Jury Service; watch out for those names to brighten your lives in coming months. The Underground as one knew it in the 60s and early 70s is alive and well in Hastings.

Daniel Hartlaub's work can be viewed at <http://danielhartlaub.com/> and he can be contacted through that site.

Stewart Rayment



The 51st State, by David Scott. 2024

Dr Kevin Dixon's review of the first of David Scott's Seagull Trilogy, put the question 're the Nazi plots in *'Operation Seagull'* successful leading to the German occupation of Britain; or do we realise the danger we are in and repel the planned invasion?' (*interLib* 2022-02 page 16). If you missed it, the giveaway is that in the third volume, the Germans are still here, and no, we didn't, though the nature of a Nazi invasion have come to roost.

David was an evangelist of community politics in the late 60s & 1970s and turned the newly created Braintree constituency into a three-party marginal in the February 1974 general election. A journalist, he declined the editorship of *Liberal News* later in the decade, opting for the more secure *Romford Recorder* instead. He later moved to Torquay, helping Adrian Sanders take the seat in 1997 and focussing his career on training journalists.



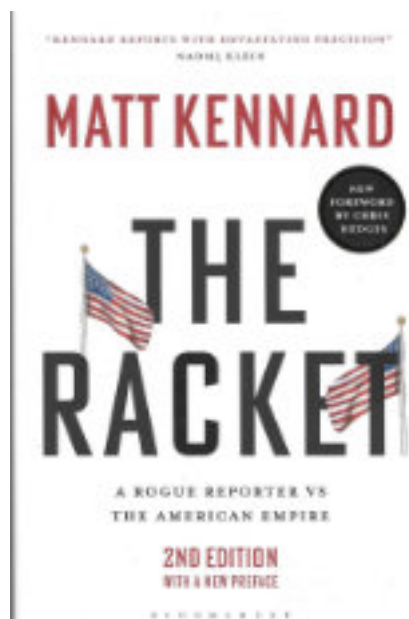
Journalism and politics are underlying themes in David's fictional writing, counterfactuals for the trilogy arising out of his foray into local history, *The Funk Hole Myth*. Rupert Tremaine is the right-wing editor of the local newspaper who has abetted the Nazis and enjoys favour with certain factions,

The counterfactual assumes many of the standards – King/Government in exile in Canada, Edward VIII restored to the throne, Stalin is removed early after the German invasion but Scott underplays the brutality of a Nazi occupation (even though commonsense might have been to win over the occupied population, this didn't happen elsewhere, so why here? Think the Channel Islands). Nor the inevitable British resistance, perhaps that would have been less significant away from major commercial centres if you take the case as stated in *Operation Seagull*. However, our players are of a more privileged section of society, so though many are based on real people we don't want history to get in the way of the tale.

The 51st State may give you some clues as to how the tale is going to end up and like Kevin, I won't spoil this by giving more away; there is a twist. Decide on the plausibility, point by point, yourselves. Enjoy the argument.

The book can be obtained through David at DScottTorq@aol.com

Stewart Rayment



The Racket, a Rogue Reporter vs. the American Empire, by Matt Kennard. 2nd edition Bloomsbury 2024 isbn 9781350422735

Originally published in 2015, we had been aware of the Military-Industrial Complex at least since Eisenhower's warning blast, so Kennard's exposé of its financial tentacles was of little surprise, except perhaps in its extent. Americans might think US imperialism but not US Empire, though genocidal internal expansion & Mexican wars through the 19th century aside (see chapter 10 for its ongoing consequences) it became an external reality at least since 1890s.

So, what is new? Turn to the new preface and find that the chicanery directed at the Third World has no respect of the special relationship but fosters that relationship to its own ends. Particular focus is placed on the Labour leaderships of Michael Foot and Jeremy Corbyn and the operations of the CIA and National Endowment for Democracy against them. Yet doesn't the British-American Project have something of a Labour pedigree?

Is that nice President Trump a window of opportunity? If the Pax Americana can no longer be guaranteed, especially in the face of Russia & China, is it not should we, but do we look elsewhere? Very difficult, there were and probably still are more American servicemen in the UK than most other countries; where does that fit into the Trump playbook? How does the Starmer playbook react to it?

Saeed Rahman