



2025-07 Late October

INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



LIB DEM FRIENDS OF UKRAINE AFTER THE CONFERENCE DEBATE

**BOURNEMOUTH CONFERENCE REPORTS
UK STEEL INDUSTRY NOBEL PEACE PRIZE
TRUMP, ARMENIA & AZERBAIJAN**

EVENTS

10-12 October Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru/
Welsh Liberal Democrats Conference, Wrexham.

18 October 2025 Scottish Liberal Democrats
Conference, Radisson Blu, Glasgow.

25 October 2025 Isaiah Berlin Lecture: Prof.
John Gray on Liberalism, Populism and the
Sense of Reality. National Liberal Club &
online. Registration: [https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/
liberalism-populism-and-the-sense-of-reality-
tickets-1661027781809?aff=oddtcreator](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/liberalism-populism-and-the-sense-of-reality-tickets-1661027781809?aff=oddtcreator)
Background info: [https://liberal-international.org/
isaiah-berlin-lectures/](https://liberal-international.org/isaiah-berlin-lectures/)

3 November 2025 LIBG AGM. By Zoom

21-23 November 2025 209th LI Executive
Committee, The Hague, The Netherlands

*For bookings & other information please contact
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Consultants, 29 St Helen's Crescent, Hastings
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Democrat Friends of Ukraine, Sir Graham
Watson, Liberal International, BBC

Cover photograph: Liberal Democrat
Friends of Ukraine after the Conference
vote at Bournemouth.

Deadline for next issue November 30th

Isaiah Berlin Lecture

Liberalism, populism and the sense of reality



Delivered by Prof. John Gray

Wednesday, 22 October, 2025 | 18:30

David Lloyd George Room, The National Liberal Club, London

The lecture, titled "**Liberalism, Populism and the Sense of Reality**," will explore the enduring legacy of liberalism in light of today's political challenges. Drawing inspiration from Isaiah Berlin's seminal essay *The Sense of Reality*, Professor Gray will examine the tensions between liberal ideals and contemporary populist movements, offering a thought-provoking analysis rooted in both historical tradition and modern political dilemmas.

About the Speaker:

John Gray is Emeritus Professor of European Thought at the London School of Economics and a former Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford. A leading political thinker, he is the author of numerous influential works, including *Straw Dogs*, *False Dawn*, *Seven Types of Atheism*, and *The New Leviathans* (2023).

Facilitated by:

Lord John Alderdice, President of Honour of Liberal International and President of the National Liberal Club. Leader of the Alliance Party from 1987 to 1998, he played a key role in negotiating the 1998 Good Friday Agreement and served as the first Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Since 1996, he has sat as Liberal Democrat in the House of Lords speaking on international affairs. He also has academic positions at Oxford and Cambridge universities and is the UK Trade Envoy to Azerbaijan and Central Asia.

Register here:





Liberal Democrat Friends of Hong Kong at Bournemouth

Let me start: It's a wonderful team effort with fruitful advocacy for the Liberal Democrats Friends of Hong Kong. Thank you for the support from the Liberal Democrats and the sleepless nights the policy teams at LDHQ, Federal International Relations Committee and LibdemsHK who worked through many briefings from non-partisan academics to make policy and protect the rights of Hong Kongers.

.A big surprise too. We have won the best exhibition stand among all party bodies this year.

As Cllr Andy Ng says, "Hong Kongers love a protest or a rally." During our support rally on Monday morning, we are happy to have Kamran Hussain, the Vice President candidate for the upcoming Federal Election, Baron Shaffaq Mohammed of Tinsley and Luke Taylor MP joining Liberal Democrats members as a show of unity against China's transnational repression.

It showed our effort on promoting policy motion F34 'Protecting Hong Kongers' Rights' had successfully raised awareness within our party, and our effort had been recognised.

The F34 motion covered 3 major areas:

1. Retain the five-year pathway to settlement for all BNO visa holders, reflecting our unique and historic obligation to the people of Hong Kong and providing the certainty that Hong Kongers deserve;
2. Block the application for the Chinese 'mega-embassy' and take measures to ensure that there is the right to peacefully and safely protest outside the proposed construction site;
3. To stop transnational repression from CCP regime in the UK, by Establish a bespoke police hotline for reporting incidents of political intimidation, and reaffirm the illegality of bounty hunting in the UK – sending a clear message that the UK will not tolerate CCP-sponsored attempts at extraterritorial repression; and appointing a Home Office Departmental Tsar for the 'Protection of pro-democracy activists' – with responsibility for laying an annual report before Parliament outlining the Government's progress in strengthening protection for activists against foreign intimidation, and oversee the tackling of disinformation campaigns aimed at inciting violence against pro-democracy Hong Kong and Chinese activists.

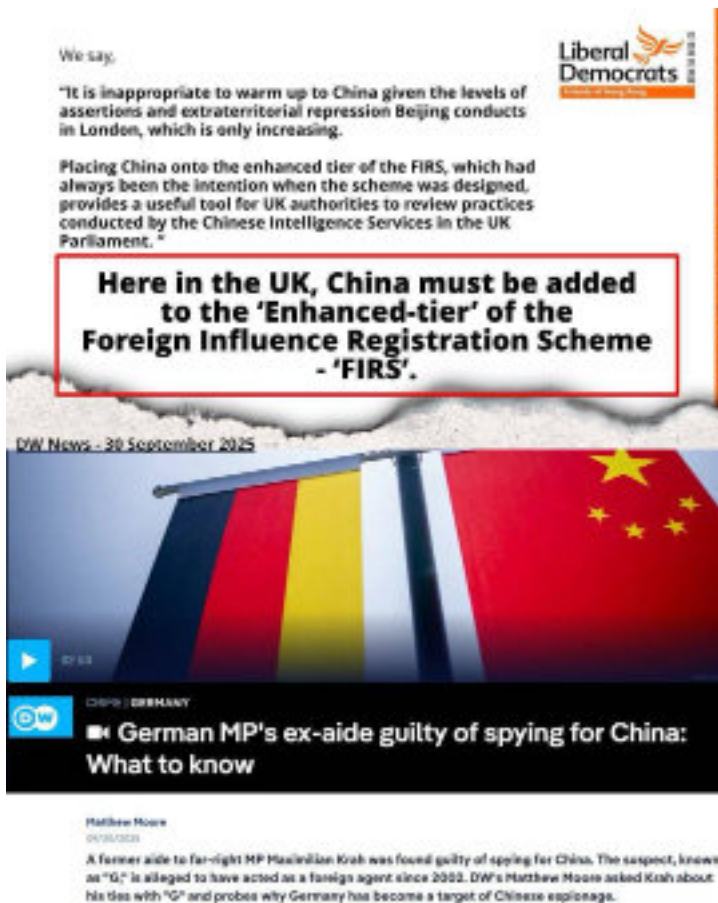
There were 2 amendments on this motion, from Bobby Dean MP and Cllr Rob Heiss, and our AO supported both. In general, they proposed:

1. Suspend all further Ministerial visits to China until the bounties currently targeting Hong Kongers living in the UK are lifted, and Beijing provides reassurances that no more will be authorised; include all Chinese Communist Party and HKSAR officials, as well as Chinese Communist Party-linked organisations, on the 'enhanced tier' of the FIRS; and implementing targeted sanctions against those officials in the HKSAR and the CCP identified as responsible for raising bounties on the heads of pro-democracy Hong Kong and Chinese activists living in the UK;
2. Commission an independent review into Chinese language public education to ensure inclusivity and editorial independence; and establish separate and distinct Mandarin and Cantonese strands within the Chinese language education framework across both GCSEs and A-Levels, following the example set by SQA in Scotland.



With the Parliamentary spy case which fell apart before trial and the guilty verdict in the spy case in the Germany's Parliament – our first focus is pushing the Labour Government to frame China where it belongs. China must be placed onto the enhanced-tier of the Foreign Influence Registration Scheme. It will provide a useful tool for UK authorities to review practices conducted by the Chinese intelligence services in the UK parliament.

As part of the tradition of our AO, we organised a stand in the exhibition hall. Instead of displaying an exhibition related to the theme of our fringe event (which will be covered later), we put all our effort in promoting F34 instead. In order to raise funding for our AO, we organised a raffle ticket draw. I am pleased to report that we have outstanding support from our party members and sold more tickets than we expected.



Our focus this year is not only on F34. We have held a fringe event with Nicholas Chan our Vice-Chair as the moderator. The title of the fringe event was *'Have we been inadvertently support multi-polarity? Let's return to building trusting networks.'* We are honoured to have Dr John Hemmings, Deputy Director at the Council on Geostrategy and a Senior Adviser at the Pacific Forum, and Ms. Asry Almi Kaloko, Political Risk Analyst at TITAN, Atlas Institute for International Affairs, in our panel as our guest speakers.

During the event we have some quality discussions between our panel and the audience, including some foreign representatives from our sister parties over the implication of Trump's foreign policies and the rivalry between Russia, China and US under the new geopolitical theatre. Debates with our sister parties on networks with the global south is especially interesting. Dr Hemmings clearly pointed out the challenges our country faced under the Trump administration, and his positive view on how PM Starmer tackled Trump's agenda; while acknowledging Trump's mercantile ideology on trade policies caused other countries drifting away from American's influence.

Some audience raised interesting questions such as how China would use trade policies to influence other countries on internal affairs such as woman rights, and some other raised interesting observations, such as the representative from Democratic Alliance South Africa explained how they witnessed China and Russia gained their influence in the continent from an African perspective.

All in all, this conference had built a solid foundation for LibDemsHK. We now have a more defined and tougher stance on our China and Hong Kng policy, and our experience on organising the award-winning exhibition stand would give us valuable lessons on how we should deliver our message to the members in an effective manner. The audience attending this year is higher in terms of quality due to the right promotion, and we also have some inspirations on fund raising method for our future events.

If there's any questions or campaigns on Hong Kong or human rights in China, do give us a shout! Write to us on your thoughts at info@friendsofhongkong.org.uk

Larry Ngan



Liberal Democrat Friends of Ukraine at Bournemouth

The Liberal Democrat Friends of Ukraine had a very successful and enjoyable conference, signing up more than 50 new members, co-hosting a fringe event and participating in various events, debates and discussions. We shared a stall with the Liberal Democrat Friends of the Armed Forces.

The military campaign has been a main focus this year and was the subject of the fringe event co-hosted with LDFOAF and featuring George Cunningham, Richard Foord MP, Edward Lucas, Helen Maguire MP and our chair Rosemary Thomas. We had hoped that General Valerii Zaluzhnyi, Ambassador of Ukraine, would be able to participate but unfortunately the Met Police and the Conference Head of Security decided that the security at the conference centre would not be at the level required. General Zaluzhnyi sent a very gracious message, as follows:

I am truly sorry that I cannot be with you in person, but I very much hope to maintain close contact going forward. Please accept my best wishes for a successful fringe event.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the Liberal Democrats for their consistent and important support for Ukraine at this critical time. Your steadfast solidarity is a source of great encouragement to the Ukrainian people.

There was standing room only for the event and one of the attendees wrote a helpful summary of the debate:

Former UK Ambassador to Belarus and Chair of Lib Dem Friends of Ukraine Rosemary Thomas underlined that supporting Ukraine fully must remain a priority – because only then can Ukraine negotiate from a position of strength. “Freedom is only ever one generation from extinction.” Noel Hadjimichael FRSA, Chair of Lib Dem Friends of the Armed Forces, added this war is an existential threat not just for Ukraine



Edward Lucas, Helen Maguire MP, Richard Foord MP & George Cunningham.

Security expert Edward Lucas warned that “it’s not five to midnight – it’s already five past.” He welcomed progress on reparations loans, crediting Lib Dem supporter Hugo Dixon for shaping the ideas behind them, but cautioned that the West is still unprepared.

George Cunningham, Chair of the newly-formed Lib Dems Abroad Steering Committee, highlighted the need to keep the British public properly informed – and to move beyond a “coalition of the willing” that is, for now, mostly symbolic.

Helen Maguire MP stressed that we cannot limit ourselves to endless conversations – there must be agreed actions. She argued that defeating Russia financially is possible, but remains a political choice, and was critical of both Labour and the Conservatives for failing to challenge the US when necessary.

Richard Foord MP kindly recommended some reading, including *Russia’s War on Everybody* by Keir Giles, and reminded us that Russia is both aggressor and destabiliser – dangerous precisely because it harbours both a superiority and inferiority complex. Adding: “This is far more than just Ukraine’s war.”

The closing reminder came via a Ukrainian politician's words, shared by Richard Foord MP: the West is still too preoccupied with its own comfort – a luxury Ukraine does not have.

A sobering but necessary conversation. The message was clear: support for Ukraine must be matched with action.

Members of the LDFoU also participated in the debate on the policy motion put forward by the Young Liberals on providing certainty for Ukrainian children living in the UK. The motion was moved by Lisa Smart MP and summated by Rowan Fitton (a member of LDFoU). Alisa Gnydyuk, Helen Kushnirenko and Julie Adnams Hatch all spoke very movingly on the issue (much of the hall was in tears at several points during Helen's speech) and the motion was passed overwhelmingly.

After the conference, which may be of interest, I went to six talks in the Hereford Military History Festival. Bob Seeley gave one of them along with Charles Hecker, who has written *Zero Sum* about international business in Russia. Bob Seeley had a lot to say, and his talk was very interesting. I was a little surprised, though, that he commented that he had only come to realise recently that the Russian apartment bombings had been carried out by the KGB/FSB. I thought that had been known for a long time (but then we don't all rely on the right-wing press for our information!).

Julia Fletcher.

¹ *The New Total War*, by Bob Seely, was reviewed in *interLib* 2025-06 page 13.



Wendy Kyrle Pope with Oleksandr Sanchenko MP, Servant of the People, Ukraine, leader of Ze! "Molodizhki, the party's youth wing.



LIBG/LDEG stall with Wendy & Becky



Diplomatic visitors



Michael Chen, Democratic Progressive Party, Taiwan and Arthur Wu, LDFHK



Shelly Tal Menon MK, Yair Atid, with Gavin Stoller LDF of Israel

THE ARCTIC AND EUROPEAN SECURITY

LIBG Forum 6th October 2025

The Arctic used to be a low-tension area politically and militarily, a barometer for climate change and centre of scientific research. But the fast-melting ice has attracted new big players who seek economic opportunities and are willing to shake up the political status quo, warned panelists in the recent Arctic Forum Zoom meeting hosted by Liberal International British Group, and chaired by Adrian Hyrylainen-Trett.

The panelists, Danish politician **Henrik Bach Mortensen**, Vice President Liberal International, a former Chairman of the Danish Institute of Parties and Democracy and **Astrid Thors**, Deputy President Liberal International, a lawyer, former Finnish MP and Cabinet Minister as well as former MEP, are both deeply concerned about the latest developments in the Arctic.

The start of the Ukraine war in 2022 had a significant impact on the governance of the Arctic. Since 1996, the Arctic Council has been the main forum for cooperation and environmental protection and the main driver for sustainable development in the region. There are eight member states who must agree before any decisions become binding. Sanctions against Russia meant that it was expelled from the Arctic Council and now there are seven member states left: Finland, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Canada and the USA. Even though Russia is still formally a member state, it's not included in most activities. Without Russia, the Arctic Council cannot form a consensus. Even though there have been some diplomatic attempts to get Russia back to the main fold, in reality the Council is paralysed.



Astrid Thors

This is bad news for over 200 universities from 25 countries conducting scientific research in the Arctic as well as the indigenous people whose livelihood depends on continuing access to fishing and reindeer herding. There is a danger that the Arctic is turning into a battlefield of commercial and military interests, which will have major environmental consequences. Tension around the Arctic region has increased in the last couple of years.

Russia has found a new partner in China, which wants to establish an all-year-round trade route via the Arctic. China wants to secure a steady flow of oil, gas and goods. The shortest way to the world market is via the Arctic and this access is controlled by Russia. Both Russia and China are seeking opportunities to find new natural resources, such as liquefied form of natural gas in the far North.

China's presence in the Arctic is not without its problems for Russia but currently Russia has chosen partnership rather than direct competition with China. Russia has also flirted with the idea of establishing a "Polar Council" in order to dilute Chinese influence. According to Mortensen, this would give Russia an opportunity to invite non-Arctic countries such as South Africa and Brazil to get involved. Traditionally the Arctic has been the domain of countries which have a direct, geographical connection with the region. This is different from Antarctica, which is governed by an international agreement where decisions are made by 54 countries participating. Adopting a "Polar Council" approach for the Arctic region would open doors to a larger number of new decision-making countries. Currently the Arctic Council has permanent observers, such as China, Singapore, Germany, France, Italy and others. These countries are allowed to attend meetings, but they do not have decision making powers.

Mortensen pointed out that China's interest is not surprising if you look at the map. The Northern Sea Route, which China calls the "Polar Silk Route", can cut up to 14 days of sailing time from eastern China to the East Coast of the US and significantly shorten up travel time to major European ports including Felixstowe, Gdansk and Rotterdam.

Historically this route is not a new concept. Astrid Thors reminded the audience that it was discovered in the 19th century by the Finnish explorer Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld. Thanks to rapidly melting ice this route has now become more viable and accessible.

Relationships between the Arctic Council member states are getting more and more fragile and potentially difficult to repair. President Trump's demands for Greenland to be in direct American control and to annex Canada, have a direct link to the Arctic. For the US there is a strategic, military dimension as well as potential for deep sea mining and exploration of rare minerals. The US has had a military base in Greenland since WW2, which is cemented by an agreement with Denmark. However, lack of icebreakers have slowed down the US ability to operate in the Arctic. This is about to change as the US and Finland have just signed a deal for 11 new icebreakers to be built in Finland and in USA.

The question of Greenland has put Denmark in a tight spot. Mortensen says that ever since the extension of the 1823 Monroe Doctrine after WW2, the US has regarded Greenland as part of North America and consequently it will not agree for any other country to get a foothold there apart from Denmark.

There is a vocal movement in Greenland favoring full independence from Denmark, but in the recent elections in supporting self-governance and staying with Denmark won the day. Denmark has offered Greenland more financial support. According to Mortensen, ties between Denmark and Greenland remain very strong.

Mortensen, who has recently visited Greenland, said that full independence would be a red flag for the US. He believes that the US would "move in" swiftly should that happen. According to Mortensen there have been intensive discussions where the Americans have been told that they are free to do anything they want in terms of defense and security in Greenland, but they must respect the choice of people of Greenland and that this region is part of Denmark. Potential private investors should also be aware that all land is owned by the government of Greenland. Mortensen explained that you can own a house but not the land, which might deter anyone wanting to establish a mine or a factory.



Henrik Bach Mortensen in Greenland

Both Mortensen and Thors agree that the US and China seem to have little interest in climate

change or the position of the indigenous people. The Arctic Council is the only international organisation where the six different groups of indigenous people living in the Arctic have a direct say.

Thors is also concerned about damage to marine life from deep sea mining and increased shipping which means more underwater noise. She mentioned that the brand new internationally binding High Seas Treaty, which will come into effect in January 2026, might be used to protect marine biodiversity in the Arctic. This could also drastically affect the decision making mechanism in the Arctic region because countries with direct access to the Arctic Ocean would have jurisdiction outside their own maritime zones.

The future of the Arctic remains uncertain.

Outi Määttä-Bourke

Henrik Bach Mortensen met with Minister Bentiaaraq Ottosen and party staff of Atassut, the Liberal Party of Greenland in August, reported here

<https://liberal-international.org/news-articles/li-vp-mortensen-visits-nuuk-to-boost-liberal-ties/>

How belief in a special relationship and the ripple effect of Trump's trade tariffs spell bad news for Britain.

Sir Graham Watson

In her State of the European Union address on 10 September, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said of Europe's steel industry:

"Global overcapacity is squeezing margins and leaving little incentive to pay a clean premium. This makes it harder for Europe's steel industry to invest in decarbonisation. That is why the Commission will propose a new, long-term trade instrument to succeed the expiring steel safeguards. Europe will always remain open. We like competition. But we will always protect our industry from unfair competition. "

On 7 October, in near panic, the European Commission proposed a cut of almost 50% in the amount of steel which can be imported without incurring tariffs and a sharp increase in tariffs (from 25% to 50%) for steel imports beyond its import quotas. Its stated goal is to protect Europe's steel industry from lower prices elsewhere caused by global overcapacity in steel production. It is also a reaction to America's recent move to impose levies of 50% on steel imports from mainland Europe while hitting UK steel (and that of a few other close allies) with tariffs of just 25%.



The major victim of the EU's tit-for-tat response to Trump's tariffs is likely to be the United Kingdom, which produces over five and a half million tons of crude steel per annum. Half of our exports by volume and 80% by value (£3bn) go to the EU. The US takes only 7% of our steel exports, worth £370m. 33,700 UK jobs depend directly on steel production and a further 42,000 on the wider supply chain, paying wages 26% higher than the national average (and one third higher than the average wages in Wales and northern England, where many jobs are located). Higher energy and raw materials costs have already caused a slump in the UK's steel industry, with imports increasing at the expense of domestic production. In 2022, UK steel production hit the lowest level since the Great Depression; in 2023 it dropped by a further 6% and shows little sign of recovery.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer, hailing the USA's June 2025 'concession' on proposed steel tariffs as a benefit of a UK-US special relationship and offering President Trump a State Visit, emphasised his plan to increase Britain's duty-free exports of steel for building projects and other purposes. Increasing exports to EU countries will be central to this. Yet the European Union, as a direct descendant of the European Coal and Steel Community which Britain shunned, is unlikely to do him any favours. Seeking to reap the benefits of open trade with our continental neighbours without paying the price of shared sovereignty is a strategy which can never work for Britain, particularly when diversifying trade partnerships and strengthening supply chain resilience become increasingly elusive at a time of intensifying global competition.

The EU, with steel plants in 22 member states, is the world's third largest steel producer. 300,000 people are directly employed in its steel industry and another 2.5 million jobs depend on it in some way or another. Yet many of its steel plants are operating below capacity and jobs are being shed. The EU fears, unsurprisingly, that as the U.S. shuts its doors, countries like China will simply send their excess steel to Europe.

As the UK's steel industry faces extinction, will the Labour Party in the Welsh Valleys take the fight to Farage for this fall-out from Brexit? Or is their guilt about Jeremy Corbyn's role in it (and by extension that of his then Europe spokesman Sir Keir Starmer) too raw?

The bigger picture is that both the EU and the UK are caught between protecting traditional industries and adapting to a changing global economy. The bloc has set ambitious goals to make its industries greener and more sustainable through the European Green Deal and the UK is already converting its furnaces, but higher tariffs will make it harder to cooperate internationally or access cheaper materials needed for the green transition. Instead of just raising trade barriers, the EU and the UK need to work with other countries to reduce global steel overproduction and promote cleaner steel technologies. In its latest proposal the Commission puts forward no new measures to promote the transition to 'green' steel production.

If approved by the European Parliament and the member states in Council, this tariff proposal may help protect the EU's steel sector in the short term, but it will also create new problems — higher prices, trade tensions, and slower progress on climate goals. A stronger long-term approach would combine protection with innovation and international cooperation.

Graham Watson

Sir Graham Watson, Convenor, LI British Group



Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine at Bournemouth

Monday 22nd September – Annual Palestine Reception

On 22nd September, LDFP co-hosted the Conference's Annual Palestine Reception with the International Centre of Justice for Palestinians (ICJP). The event took place from 5:15 until 7:30pm in the Ocean suite of the Nici Hotel.

Delivering a keynote address, Liberal Democrat Leader Sir Edward Davey welcomed the UK Government's recognition of Palestine but called it a 'small step' in the face of Israel's ongoing atrocities, reaffirming his party's commitment to ending the genocide in Gaza. Other speakers included Liberal Democrat Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Calum Miller MP, Tom Morrison MP, Tayab Ali, Director of ICJP, Anne-Marie Simpson, Chair of LDFP, and Ehab Omar, Co-Founder of British Palestinian Families. A recording of the speeches is available [here](#).

The event included refreshments and finger food and provided an opportunity for conference attendees to meet with likeminded individuals interested in defending and upholding international law and Palestinian people's human rights. It was well-attended by MPs, peers, non-governmental organisation (NGO) leaders, staffers, council group leaders, and other party members.

Lucia Messent

María Corina Machado Wins 2025 Nobel Peace Prize – A Triumph for Freedom and Democracy



Liberal International extends its heartfelt congratulations to María Corina Machado, Venezuela's leading opposition figure and LI Prize for Freedom Laureate, on being awarded the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize. This prestigious recognition honours her unwavering courage, integrity, and lifelong commitment to defending democracy, freedom, and human rights in Venezuela. At the helm of Vente Venezuela, a proud full member party of Liberal International, María Corina Machado has demonstrated extraordinary resilience in the face of authoritarian oppression. Her leadership and principled fight for a free and democratic Venezuela stand as an inspiration to liberals and democrats around the world.

Liberal International remains steadfast in its support for all those who, like María Corina Machado and Vente Venezuela, continue to advance the cause of liberty, justice, and democratic governance, often at great personal risk.

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The Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP)

Carol Weaver

No doubt we have all heard President Donald Trump say that he ended the war between 'Azerbaijan and Albania' [sic] and how he has now brought peace to Gaza as well as dealing with the Ukraine/Russia war. The easiest way for a President of the United States to 'bring peace' to a conflict is by siding with the stronger party whilst putting pressure on the weaker side to capitulate. We have seen Trump do this initially in all three of the above conflicts, hoping it would be simple and he could then claim a Nobel Peace prize, not to mention assets for his country and perhaps his own fortunes too. Trump seems to hate 'losers' and wants to be associated with winners and other powerful leaders. He also seems to think that *might is right* and if you grab land it's yours - parts of Gaza and the West Bank, Crimea and the Donbas, the entirety of Nagorno-Karabakh and parts of Armenia. His own eye is apparently on Greenland and Canada.

The second Nagorno-Karabakh war involving Azerbaijan and Armenia (2020) was not ended by Trump, neither did the US stop what various organisations call the *ethnic cleansing* in 2023, so the president did not exactly end a war. Nevertheless, it was certainly feared in recent times that continued hostilities could lead to a full-scale invasion of southern Armenia (Syunik) by Azerbaijan. Even after the 8th September peace deal, involving a joint declaration and a peace agreement, there is still negative rhetoric coming from Baku, mainly for a domestic audience.

The Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (the TRIPP project) is part of the September peace deal between Azerbaijan and Armenia. It demonstrates Trump's desire for glory by taking over the plans for a transport corridor in southern Armenia along the Iranian border, facilitating a route from Azerbaijan's exclave Nakhchivan to the country's mainland. The only current route is through Iran. For many years presidents Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Erdogan of Turkey have wanted the Zangezur Corridor through Armenia, which also provides a route for Turkey to the Caspian Sea and a new Silk Road. Before 2023 it was expected that Russia would supervise this corridor but according to Trump's deal there will be a railway, motorway and pipelines all developed and managed by the US (or appointed others) for 99 years. Despite this there are doubts about how far the US will continue to commit.



Trump's main contribution to the agreements was to encourage the Armenian President Pashinyan to agree to them. The joint declaration promises both 'unimpeded connectivity' for Azerbaijan and 'full respect' for Armenia's sovereignty. Pashinyan also envisages the region becoming a 'Crossroads of Peace' where all regional powers will co-operate. There certainly seems to be a lot of international interest in this southern part of Armenia now. The European Union approves of the new 'middle route' to Asia via a country which is progressing towards membership but the EU needs to be more involved. Israel, a friend of Azerbaijan and enemy of Iran is also supportive. Naturally, both Russia and Iran strongly object to any US military presence.

There is still a long way to go before the signing and final ratification of the initialled peace agreement (the Agreement on Establishment of Peace and Inter-State Relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan). Details need finalising. For example, many Armenians believe there should be a right of return to Nagorno-Karabakh but Pashinyan says this is not realistic and would be dangerous to the peace process. Meanwhile, Aliyev wants a change in the Armenian constitution to remove all claims to this mountainous land before he will sign.

Returning to initial thoughts of how Trump might try to make peace by backing the stronger party, by looking for benefits to the US and by hoping for personal benefits, mostly at the expense of the weaker party, TRIPP could be considered to be a fair example. Whether or not it will actually bring peace and prosperity for Armenia and its neighbours remains to be seen.

Carol Weaver

Reading

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c78nr234v5mo>

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2025/08/us-intervention-opens-new-page-armenia-azerbaijan-peace-talks-challenges-remain> - Laurence Broers

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/armenian-azerbaijani-conflict/98-armenia-and-azerbaijan-hard-road-lasting-peace>

International Abstracts

Threats to Democracy

The Unholy Alliance, by Guiliano da Empoli. Financial Times 27th-28th September 2025. *'Tech moguls and populist leaders are far more than disrupters of the old liberal order. Together they seek to sweep it away.'* Guiliano da Empoli is founder of the Milan based think tank Volta and has been an adviser to former Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi and vice-Prime Minister Francesco Rutelli.

Reviews

**How to Win an Information War: The Propagandist Who Outwitted Hitler, by Peter Pomerantsev
Faber, 2025, £10.99**

In September 1941 German civilians began to pick up enticing new radio broadcasts. In the salty language of an army veteran from Berlin, ‘Der Chef’ complained bitterly about food rationing and excoriated leading Nazis as inefficient and sexually corrupt. “It’s a pity we can’t cut our meat from the buttocks of the SS.”

But Der Chef was not a disaffected insider: he was in reality Peter Hans Seckelmann, a German political exile broadcasting from Woburn Abbey in Bedfordshire under the control of the British black propagandist Sefton Delmer.

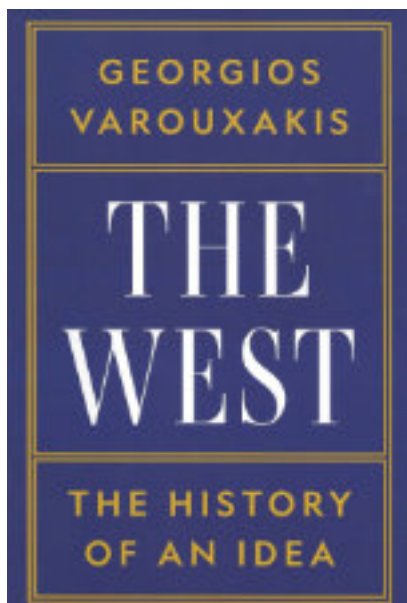
It is Delmer’s story that Pomerantsev tells – his boyhood in Germany during the First World War; his time as a journalist there during the Thirties when he became close to the Nazi leadership; his difficulties in proving to the British authorities that he was loyal and that his skills should be used.

Though Der Chef was a crude character, he was used in subtle ways. When he complained, for instance, that some German civilians were getting round rationing by buying clothes on the black market, his broadcast was designed to normalise this behaviour, encourage more people to take it up and speed the breakdown of the rationing system.

As the war went on, Delmer invented more characters and radio stations. Father Elmar – a real priest, though Austrian not German as claimed – broadcast religious programmes about the sins of the Nazi regime, emboldening believers with their own doubts about Hitler. And Delmer devised a whole station that combined subtle propaganda with a supply of genuine news about the home front and the welfare of troops that no German station could match. Ian Fleming, for instance, then working in Naval intelligence, fed him the results of the U-boat football league. Another writer, Muriel Spark, was on Delmer’s staff and later drew on this experience for her novel *The Hothouse by the East River*.

Pomerantsev shares Delmer’s experience of growing up in both liberal and authoritarian cultures. He is the son of political dissidents from Kyiv, was born in Ukraine and grew up in London. Early in this century, he lived in Moscow and worked as a TV producer. He sometimes draws parallels between Putin’s propaganda and that deployed by the Nazis or Delmer. His readers may be left wondering if some of Delmer’s tactics could be adopted by those seeking to counter the far right today.

Jonathan Calder



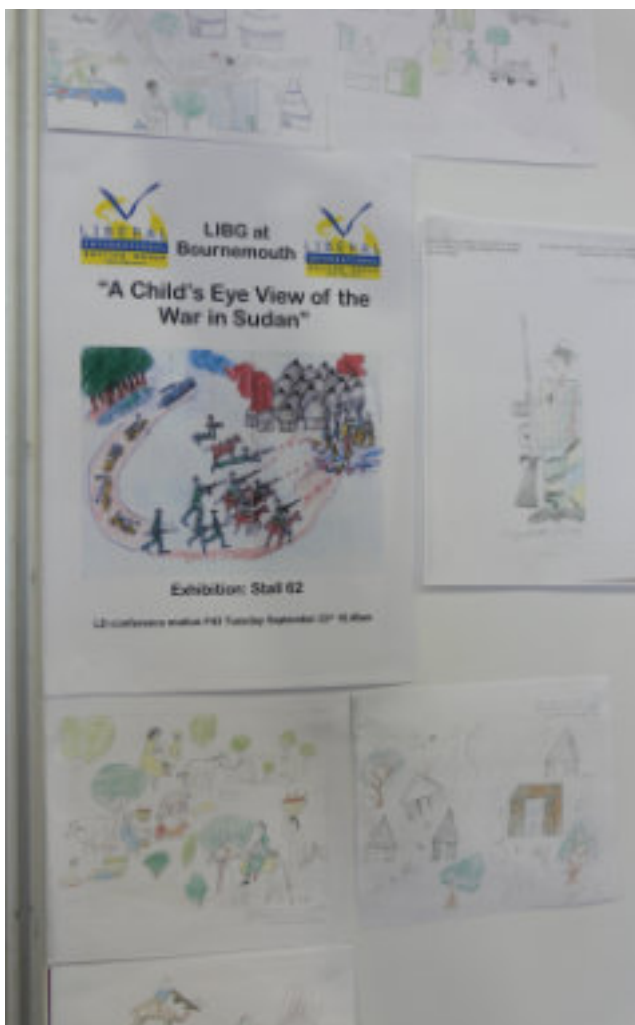
**The West, the history of an idea, by Georgios Varouxakis.
Princeton University press 2025
ISBN 97 80691177182**

It was Comte wot dunnit. John Stuart Mill wasn't keen on the idea But although it is a movable feast our present conception of the West starts there. Of course there are earlier conceptions, the western Roman Empire, the Holy Roman Empire, you might even go back to the battle of marathon and the Hellenes versus the Persians. Varouxakis acknowledges always but our starting point is really the rise of Russia under Peter the Great and most significantly after the Napoleonic wars and the Congress of Vienna. The detail through which Varouxakis travels is awesome, more than most of us need to know but I'm pleased to see that he shakes off Eurocentricity and includes now Third World thinkers (wherein I include black Americans) such as Rabindranath Tagore, W.E.B. Du Bois and Alian Locke.

Could it have been different? Russia was key to the Allies success during the Second World War; after Glasnost and the fall of the Berlin Wall, might Russia have been welcomed into a closer relationship, if not membership of the European Union? If we forget Stalin's socialist imperialism, I recall Russian economists arguing that the West might have done more for them in the transition from communism but unfortunately this coincided with our era where greed is paramount in capitalism, Russia's crony capitalism in particular.

There is a bigger 'battle' already above the horizon – between the 'developed world' and the Third world, the South. This is more than the West is opportunity; it will increasingly become a matter of survival; expect more migration from the sub-Saharan region and consider how we are going to meet this challenge. The West, territories aside, is an embodiment of ideas, ideas that liberals have developed, so it is unsurprising that Varouxakis turns to Raymond Aron in his conclusion, and if don't read this book for anything else, read that. His concluding lines *The baby must not go out with the bathwater. For if we are not careful... the precious heritage the freedom of speech, the secular state, the independent personality, the autonomy of science - which is not western or eastern, not human, will be snuffed out over the minds of men.* We as liberals are the guardians of that heritage and will fight for it.

Stewart Rayment



Sudanese Children's Art exhibited at the LIBG stall during the Bournemouth conference.

The Children's Drawings, By child survivors of genocide and mass atrocities in Sudan, preserved and produced by Waging Peace.

Waging Peace 2nd edition 2025

isbn 9781036921965

To promote the arguments full free Sudan debate at the Bournemouth Liberal Democrat conference, LIBG exhibited a number of drawings by children affected by the ongoing war over two decades in Sudan; a Horror Story that no child should have to live through, let alone if they were unfortunate enough, have to fight in. Waging Peace has brought this conflict two our attention over all of these years, little interest being shown by western governments. They have brought together a collection of children's drawings with a text in Arabic and English to shake our consciences.

Waging Peace is registered charity no. 1124746, www.wagingpeace.info and donate to them, They support certain and Sudanese people seeking asylum or who have refugee status to build meaningful lives in the UK their vision is of a Sudanese British community leading fulfilling lives and contributing to local and national life in the UK while working for an inclusive diverse and peaceful Sudan.

Saeed Rahman

