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INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



Jon Snow gives the 2012 Garden Lecture on Iran

Rio+20 Abidjan Egypt

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Time to Rethink Iran?

Lord Garden Memorial Lecture

Jon Snow

Well, it's a very daunting honour to be allowed to speak in memory of Tim and his beloved Chatham House. And to do it actually here, which is not a thing I often do. I'm not an expert. I am a hack, there's no question about that. But he was an inexhaustible expert. And the strange thing was, once he became a Liberal Democrat Peer, we barely noticed because we still had him on as an expert. He just happened to be a Liberal Democrat as well.

But he was an analyst who could really explain what he had analysed. A lot of people can analyse stuff but not actually then talk about it very coherently. So he had great gifts and we miss him a great deal. He was wonderfully friendly and decent and understanding. He would have proved at the tender age that he would have been now, only 67, a more than useful force in our virgin peacetime engagement with coalition politics.

I am more than mindful that I have chosen a subject to speak about which many people in this room are far more expert in talking about than I am. But I speak today not as an academic, and certainly not as someone of Tim's analytical calibre, but as one who has spent a lot of time in Iran down the years, some of it with Tom Fenton – who is here in the front row – from CBS.

And I've met and talked with elements of its leadership, interviewed successive presidents from Banisadr to Ahmadinejad, who I've actually now met nearly half a dozen times. I've met many others, from the formidable global Iranian Diaspora, from which Britain herself benefits so considerably.

But the timing is not mine. The timing is Sue's, because when she asked me what I wanted to talk about three or four months ago, maybe more, maybe six months ago, I said I'd like to talk about Iran. And at that point, things were pretty dead. Well they weren't, they were extremely lively. People were talking about bombing Iran and of course they're still talking about bombing Iran today. It's a fashionable thing to do, to talk about bombing Iran. Actually I think if anyone wants to bomb Iran, they should bomb it with laptops, because that's actually what people really yearn for; connectivity.

But nevertheless we have these relatively abortive and hopeless nuclear talks, which I think are more of a charade for the West than they are for Iran. I don't think... The West is so desperate now to try and avoid some awful shemozzle, because heaven only knows that if somebody did bomb Iran, the consequences are absolutely unfathomable.

But it's my argument today that we could not have constructed a worse relationship with another country than we've managed with Iran. It has been a huge endeavour to get ourselves into the condition that we're now in, in which a country that is a formidable regional power is now so alienated from everybody about. And it's very easy to say that they're all bonkers, that the Supreme Leader is a difficult man, that the leadership is divided, that they're corrupt and that they're messianic and the rest of it.

But I'm afraid to say, at the end of the day, it is a country that has not invaded another country in 300 years. It's a country which interestingly has not yet bombed London or indeed New York or Washington or the Pentagon, or more or less anywhere else. And there are plenty of countries that we could point to with whom we have most fraternal relationships which have had a hand in bombing places of interest to ourselves.

We have troops in the field in, I estimate two countries covertly and two overtly, in which Wahhabi fundamentalists are very actively in play, in which Saudi money for example has played an active part. And which you could even say Saudi inspiration has played a formidable part in bringing them about.

And yet, we are totally allied with the Saudi faction of life, and we are virtually at war with Iran. And I want to argue today that this is a ridiculous condition to have got ourselves into and that in many ways, we've allowed ourselves to do it without really thinking seriously about it.

I want to take you just very quickly through history, because I think history, recent history in Iran tells you a great deal about why we're in the mess we're in now. 1978-79, I was sent to Iran, only because somebody

came into the newsroom and said, 'Is there anybody who has ever been to Iran?' And I put my hand up, because I'd been on the hippie trail in 1970 and driven an old Bedford van to Tehran. Why we'd gone there, I don't really know, except that we had a band and in those days, that was what you did.

But anyway, you got a taste of it, and I got a taste of a pretty special place. I think one of the things, of course, is that Iran conjures the most extraordinary kind of reactions. It is a place of unbelievable beauty. It's a place with the most incredible history, culture, depth. I mean, I'm afraid to say that they were working on alphabets when we were crawling on our stomachs in the caves. That is unfortunately a fact. They were at it 3,000 or 4,000 years BC and if not slightly more.

At any rate, I was there for the revolution. And the revolution was, make no mistake about it, a popular revolution on a massive scale. It's still the biggest movement of people I've ever seen in one place. Millions of people on the street. It was a passionate and it was an Islamic event. And there it is. That's what it was. We may not like it, but that's what it was. It was an Iranian revolution, and you have to determine how you're going to deal with this.

Well, many of us dealt with it by deciding we didn't like it and that we wouldn't have anything to do with it. And I believe that from the outset that was not a very good idea. But of course, we were naive in those days. We knew less about Islam and we knew less about Shiadom and we knew less about how to relate to people who perhaps had religious passions.

Actually, on the day of the revolution, frankly the streets were so jammed that I said to my crew, 'You know what we're going to do? We need to find out why this matters. And you know one of the reasons why it matters? It matters because the most important listening post for Soviet atomic testing is on the Caspian Sea. And they've lost it. We've lost it. We don't have it anymore. We will no be able to tell what the Russians are doing.' All the way through the Shah's reign, we had this wonderful listening post and we were able to tell to the most minute detail what had been fired and how much nuclear material had been detonated.

And so I said, 'Let's go there. Let's find it.' And the funny thing is that when I drove through in 1970, I saw it and I knew what it was because we lived in Yorkshire. My dad was a bishop up there. And we used to go, he was the bishop of Whitby, and we had to drive across the moors and there were these golf balls, [inaudible] and they had golf balls. On the

bottom of the Caspian Sea, at the bottom, you would drive from Tabriz all the way towards Afghanistan and there in the right hand corner, just before you turned left for Russia, boing, there they were.

And I remembered they were there, but I couldn't say exactly where they were. So I took my crew up and I said, 'Right, we'll turn right at Tabriz,' and we arrived and found the golf balls. And drove up, there were two 16 year old revolutionary guards sitting with Kalashnikovs across their knees on tubular chairs.

And they were a little worried to see us. But they clearly had no familiarity with their weapons and did nothing to familiarise themselves with them when we arrived. They had no idea where they were or what they were doing. And we said they were somewhere rather important. And they said, 'Well, that's fine. We're not remotely interested.' They were quite happy to let us film and the rest of it.

Of course, me being slightly exuberant and naive, I said, 'Let's go in!' And of course the cameraman, being rather wiser, said, 'No, I think this might be booby-trapped.' And so we solemnly threw stones through the open door of one of the golf balls to see whether it was indeed booby-trapped. It wasn't, and there was stuff pouring out of these machines, paper. These were early, big computers recording what was going on there.

And I began to see the scale of the interest that the West had had in what was going on just across the Caspian Sea in the Urals. What a vital resource.

And when we went into the living quarters, the pyjamas were still on the beds. There was breakfast food on the table. They had fled not much more than a day before. The Americans had clearly not known it was coming. There had been an American unit within this testing zone.

And we recorded all this stuff, went back to Tehran. 4:00 in the morning, knock on my bedroom door. I go to the door. Voice, the other side, 'Hello!' I thought, that's British. 'Hello!' I think, that sounds slightly military. And indeed he was, he was the military attaché at the British embassy. 'Could I come in, Mr Snow?'

I said, 'Yes, yes, come in if you must. It's 4:00, but there it is.' He said, 'We have information that you may have been to the early warning station and filmed some material that we believe might be a little sensitive.'

I said, 'Well, I can't confirm that, I'm afraid. But you know, if that's what you've been told, you can live with it.' He said, 'No, I'm afraid you've got to listen to me. There are things there which if transmitted, they may not mean anything to you, but some of the material on some of that paperwork etc. is very, very sensitive indeed.'

So I said, 'Okay, fine. Well you tell us what's sensitive and we might agree to chop it out, but we'd need a deal.' He said, 'Well what would the deal be?' I said, 'Well, the other thing which makes this country very interesting is that it's the first to have the Foxbat fighter bomber, which the Americans supplied the Shah in the closing days of his reign, 16 of them. They're somewhere in this country and we'd like to see them.'

'Oh,' he said, 'My dear chap. I can do that for you. All you need to do is you go down to Shiraz, second roundabout that you go in as you're going in, turn right and left at the traffic lights again, the next one. Carry on along that road and you'll find you'll arrive at the airfield. And there's a whole lot of bunkers there. They're all there to be seen. You can see them from the road.'

I said, 'I'm most grateful. Here, what do you want us to cut out?' It meant nothing to me at all, but we did. And we put a piece out. There was no problem. I didn't feel compromised. And the next day we went to Shiraz and recorded footage of the Foxbats, which was exclusive and fun.

But more seriously, I realised of course we were dealing with something very formidable. Spying, military resource, and then of course the other thing that Tom will remember and anybody who was in Iran in those days, when you took off from Mehrabad Airport, you would look down and there on the ground would be row upon row upon row of jumbo jets. In military fatigues, there would be troop carriers in this line, in that line there would be fuel carriers, refuelers.

And you think, good God this is Iran! I mean, it's a big country but what are they going to do with all this stuff? And they clearly had become a kind of bunkering base for the world powers. What was going to be done with this stuff, absolutely no idea. But billions of dollars of material was sitting there on the airport. An amazing dependency therefore on the West, on America and of course, a dependency which meant that it had become a kind of client state.

Well, I mean, it's important to point out at this point that American diplomatic relations with Iran had

lasted just 25 years. That is all they ever had. British diplomatic relations with Iran extended back nearly 300 years. A very, very long time. And there was great British expertise, fluent Farsi speakers on some scale, people who had lived and loved Iran and understood it and were pretty good.

But they somehow fell into the slipstream of the way in which America felt about Iran, and the revolution was very much about America. Not particularly against us, but against America. And indeed, the Americans, I don't know, Tom? [Indicates audience member] Were you excluded? I think you were thrown out. Most of the American correspondents were thrown out. In fact, all of them. A few hid in a lift shaft in the Intercontinental Hotel, but generally speaking they were all sent out.



Jon Snow and Julie Smith.

And I was seconded to ABC, American television for six months because they were so worried about the situation. And very quickly, of course we reached the hostage crisis. Which of course was the most devastating humiliation that many powers have ever experienced in diplomatic terms. The idea that your entire diplomatic core resident in the country, 52 diplomats, are held hostage, your ambassador is holed up in the Foreign Ministry also held hostage, was a completely humiliating experience.

And the fact that it wasn't resolved in a day but took 444 days was even more humiliating. And the fact that you sent the cream of the Marine force to come and rescue them and crashed yourselves in the desert by completely manufactured own goal... I went to Desert One, and I was one of only two or three of us who actually got there, and when you saw it, it was a much worse disaster than the White House had ever let on.

I mean, the refuelling aircraft had come in, a C130 or whatever you call them, had gone into reverse thrust and they hadn't realised that as you land on the desert floor you were going to blind yourselves completely with sand. And of course there were no instruments on the ground to guide him in and he crashed into the end helicopter.

The helicopters had broken military rules, which Tim would have been pretty hot on. They were parked too close to each other. One caught fire. Two caught fire. Three caught fire. Incinerating the crews on board who were waiting to be refuelled. And only, I think, three or four helicopters escaped and they limped out of the country down to the carrier force.

The thing was an absolute nightmare. And I think put the crust on the whole sense that America had that they were dealing with something very, very evil. And I believe that the overhang of that humiliation is informing us to this very day. And it's a devastatingly destructive force. And it's a completely understandable one. Of course it's understandable. All these families are still alive. I mean, the people who were held hostage, most of them are still alive. The scars are there. In those 444 days, yellow ribbons were tied round trees in every neighbourhood where a hostage came from. It became a completely national American phenomenon. And it scarred the nation's mind.

Well, I don't want to go onto the history too long because I want to get straight into the now. But what I would say is this. That those of us who were on the ground could talk to the students, still, several days after this thing had happened. We were able to talk to key Iranian officials. We were able to talk to the Foreign Minister, who was very much the kind of figurehead for these people.

And it was possible to get a deal. There was no question. But America would not talk. The Algerians offered to be the go-between, and they had a formula for getting them out. So they weren't talked to. And 444 days later, who got the hostages out? The Algerians. This is a great and dark chapter of our life with Iran, and I'm afraid to say I think it is what has really informed where we are today.

Cyrus Vance, Secretary of State, agrees to talk to Sadeqh Ghotbzadeh, the Foreign Minister, over the satellite. Early invention at that point, very difficult to get people to do that. 4:00 in the morning Iranian time, whatever it was in America. And I remember ABC calling me up and saying, 'Jon, do you think you could

persuade Sadeqh Ghotbzadeh to do an interview with Cyrus Vance?'

And I said, 'Oh, I think that's going to be very difficult. Very difficult.' I needed to justify my fee. And I went down to the Foreign Ministry, 'Sadeqh!' 'Hello?' 'Jon Snow here. ABC.'

'Oh, Jon. Come in.'

'Look, Cyrus Vance wants to talk to you.'

'What? When? When? How? What time?'

'Well, I'm afraid it's 4:00 in the morning.'

'4:00 in the morning? That's fantastic! When?'

'Well, tomorrow morning.'

'Terrific! Great! Oh, that's amazing. Wow, wait till the students hear this one. This is great. I'm going to talk to Cyrus Vance.'

I thought, this is ridiculous! Why doesn't Cyrus Vance come here? Nobody came. Nobody came. And this terrible stand-off went on and on and on. There's been duplicity on all sides ever since and the thing has been fermented and the rest of it. Since then, who have we had? I think we've had Kerry, we've had McCain, but very few people of stature from the United States have been there.

Here, we've had Jack Straw go. He tried pretty hard. He went I think seven times altogether to Tehran. But the interesting thing is, there's only one world leader who's ever met the Supreme Leader, and that is Erdogan from Turkey next door. Again, I don't really think people have ever made any very great effort to try to get to the top.

The biggest thing about this is esteem. Nobody has been prepared to say, 'Look, we don't like what you're doing. We don't even like you. But we respect Iran. We respect your history. We respect your civilisation. We respect what you have given us.'

And history is going to ask why the UK, with its history, with its knowledge, with its understanding, with its scholarship, with its Farsi studies in Oxford, Cambridge and beyond, why didn't we do better? What did we get out of the United States that persuaded us that Iran was a thoroughly nasty place and we were going to have nothing to do with it?

What went wrong? What went wrong? Why did we allow ourselves to be the stool pigeon of the

understandable shock and horror and hatred that was blooming in America? We should have said to ourselves, 'Hang on a minute. Iran is a very important country. We need to find a way to communicate with these people.'

And if you cut to the present day and you see the extended hand of friendship from Barack Obama in Cairo, if you're one like me, a naive hack, and you hear those words you think, my God he understands the open hand of friendship! And then you say, two weeks later, 'Where's the wrist?' Two months later, 'Where's the elbow?' Two years later, 'Where's the shoulder?'

What happened to the open hand of friendship? What happens to it after the election, should he win? Because I believe that if there were a parity of esteem, it's going to be a very tricky thing to do. But somebody somewhere has to make a breakthrough and it won't be Ban Ki Moon and it won't be even, bless her, Baroness Ashton. It has to be the great Satan. It actually has to be the United States. It has to be somebody, either Hilary Clinton or Barack Obama.

One of them has to go. One of them has to take their life in their hands and go. And it wouldn't be too risky, I can tell you. This is a safe place to go. Famous last words. But that it is. Because that's not what it's like. I mean, there is the most appalling violation of human rights to be had any day of the week. That's on the table.

But there is no question in my mind that if you are prepared to accept what Iran is, if you are prepared to start from the bottom and say, 'This is a great country,' then you can start to deal with what is not so great. And what is not so great is that it is a shambles at the top. Divided revolutionary guard. Too much money in their pockets. Too much stranglehold over the economy. Division between the Supreme Leader and the President. It has all the problems we know about because we read about them every day of the week and they result of course in what you get in terms of the nuclear [issue].

And then we say that we're going to only negotiate over one thing. And that's going to be a bomb. Okay, that's fine, they might be building it, they might not be building it. They might be building the capacity to build it. Or they might not be building the capacity to build it. But we're not actually sure.

But they have got a nuclear power station, which has so far taken 41 years to build, which is the longest build any power station has ever taken in the history of humankind. That's jolly alarming. It never quite gets finished. Do they really need it for that and all the rest

of it? There's nobody in this room who thinks that you would ever be able to create a relationship with a country like Iran through the question of whether it has or hasn't got a nuclear weapon.

Today I'm hiding behind a message in *Foreign Affairs* which I would not dare have even raised as a question. Should we allow Iran to have a bomb? And actually the article is called, 'Why Iran should have a bomb'. And it's by a fairly seasoned and reasonable American professor. I couldn't go that far because I don't have the brain. I don't have Tim's capacity for analysis.

But what I do know is that there is no way that Iran is ever going to do what anybody wants them to do if you simply talk in terms of a nuclear weapon. This is a country that looks west. It looks to us. Our culture infects everything they do. They love our culture within the people. And the people are the people we should be connecting with.

We should engage with Iran. We should trade with Iran. Heaven knows, I've been investigating the companies that have been going to the wall in the North West of Britain because of the sanctions. Little companies that produced widgets that have nothing to do with bombs but are caught by the sanction. This is mad. We've lost our diplomatic representation. We're now losing our manufacturing relationship and trade relationship.

Britain is bigger than this. Why do we need to do it? We don't believe in sanctions anyway. I mean, everybody's proved that sanctions don't work. I mean, it's fun to have them for a bit because it makes people feel uncomfortable, but in the end they don't do the job. We have to engage.

I've talked for far too long already, I'm mindful of that. But I did tell them I was going to speak for about five minutes later. But I want also to address the very important issues, which inform people's views very strongly for very understandable reasons. It's my argument that once you have a situation in which there is schism between a power like Iran and the United States, then everything comes into play.

And I find from having talked to senior Iranians that the reason they go a lot of the distance on a lot of the issues that they support is because they know it will upset the United States, and they know it will upset us. So they talk of the Holocaust in the most disreputable and repulsive and repugnant terms. They talk of Israel in repugnant terms. They cosy up to Hamas, they cosy up to Hezbollah, they supply and all the rest of it, and

But they are everywhere where we don't want them to be, and why are they there? In part because they've had to decide that they will now make life difficult for us. And frankly I think most of us would do the same. If we'd lost our connection, and we look west, let's make pain for the West. Let's kick them about a bit. Well, you know, that will only be dealt with if we begin to engage.

So I want just to look at one fabulous piece of engagement which gives us real insight into what is possible. Over the last three or four years, the British Museum has managed to stage some of the most remarkable Persian-based exhibitions that have ever been staged anywhere in the world. Some of the most remarkable exhibitions that have ever been staged dealing with such antiquity.

And most of the stuff that has come from Tehran has never, ever been out of Iran before. It's come from Persepolis and all sorts of places. And over a period of three or four years, and the relationship continues to this day, pieces have been coming out, scholars have been going in, scholars have been coming out. There has been traffic, there has been an activity, there has been a conversation. And there has been a very strange kind of cultural freedom.

And then it came to the crunch point, when they said, 'We would like the Cyrus Cylinder.' What is the Cyrus Cylinder? It's that size. It has hieroglyphics on it. And those hieroglyphics are the original first ever testament of human rights. And they reside in a glass case in the British Museum. And a facsimile is to be found in the hall outside the chamber of the United Nations.

It is the first statement of man's obligation to man. Of humankind's understanding of their obligations to the world in which we live. It's a breathtaking, tiny thing, in which I think there's only about 150 people who can even read it because it's in this strange... what text is it? You know, I know. But there it is. So it has these hieroglyphics. It's a marvellous little thing which is only that size.

And the British Foreign Office says, 'This would be very foolhardy indeed. Do not send the Cyrus Cylinder. You'll never get it back. We did after all nick it from Babylon in 1875. But you will never get it back.' And the trustees of the British Museum, to their huge and courageous credit, said, 'The Cyrus Cylinder goes.'

And this is the Elgin Marbles. This is Persia's Elgin Marbles. The Cyrus Cylinder is flown in its own seat,

in a beautiful wrapping, to Tehran. A place is built, a huge place, to contain thousands of people. And the Cylinder sits in the middle. And the people of Iran go round it in their hundreds of thousands. Perhaps a million.

And what's important about this? This is a pre-Islamic piece of culture. And one of the things the Islamic Revolution has always refused to do is to acknowledge Persia's gorgeous, sumptuous intellectual past. And here suddenly was the vice president of Iran, the then most likely candidate for the presidency, they were all going round and milking it for all they were worth. And what were they milking? A thing which talked about human rights! I mean, that's Iran for you. But it was an amazing moment.



The Cyrus Cylinder, back in the British Museum as promised.

And then a terrible letter arrived. 'Dear Neil MacGregor: We would like to keep the Cylinder for another three months, until the New Year, the Persian New Year.' And they had to decide, well, we don't have much option, do we? Okay, yes. The day after the Persian New Year, I was summoned to the British Museum with a camera. I arrived in the Persian Gallery. And I saw a man in white gloves carrying the Cyrus Cylinder and putting it back into the box. Locking the door, and there it was.

If you want something which tells you what is possible in terms of negotiation, you may think, 'What's a bloody piece of terracotta got to do with trying to mend relations with Iran?' It tells us everything. Because it was redolent with symbolism. It was counter-revolutionary. It was all about human rights,

which they're not. All these things were running in opposite directions and they did it. They got it.

So anyway, there is it. I want to tell you that that's a wonderful thing. And that is a great pointer to what is possible. Heaven knows how it can be done. But I do believe that it must be done, because if it is not done, if we do not engage, and if Britain doesn't begin to assert itself independently about what they really understand of Iran, we're going to live in ever more dangerous times.

We need Iran. For our presence in Afghanistan, for our residue in Iraq, for our need in Syria, for the Middle East. There is no solution to anything in that region without Iran. We must rethink Iran. I'm a journalist and I'm not really allowed to have opinions, so I have no opinion. But the Tim Garden Memorial Lecture has allowed me to have a view. And my view is engage, engage, engage at every level. And if you're a tourist, go! It's so safe! Go to Isfahan, it's the Florence of the East.

Thank you very much.

Time to Rethink Iran? The Lord Garden Memorial Lecture, was given by Jon Snow, broadcaster with Channel 4 News, on 21st June 2012 at Chatham House. Dr. Julie Smith chaired the meeting.

Gardeners' Question Time is available on the LIBG website



Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine

A Party Affiliated Organisation

www.ldfp.eu

email: info@ldfp.eu

The Lib Dem Friends of Palestine fringe meeting has a very distinguished speaker, Professor John Dugard, the eminent South African international lawyer, former Human Rights rapporteur in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and authority on Apartheid in international law. His topic will be:

"The Sacred Trust of Civilization and Britain's Historic Responsibility to the Palestinian People".

The meeting is at 1.00pm on Sunday 23rd September in the Durham Gallery at the Hilton Metropole. All are welcome. Refreshments will be provided through the kindness of Middle East Monitor (MEMO) and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Graham Watson will chair the event.

LIBG@Brighton!



Changing laws and attitudes: a more equal world

*LIBG with LGBT+ and Liberal Youth
A passionate discussion on equal global rights in countries that persecute people for their identity and sexuality. Speakers include: Jeremy Browne MP; Julie Smith, Liberal International; Lance Price and Harjeet Johal, Kaleidoscope; Peter Tatchell*

*(invited). Hilton Metropole, Balmoral Monday 24th
lunchtime 13.00–14.00*

Britain's Place in Europe, Europe's Place in the World

*LIBG with Liberal Democrat European Group
Speakers: The Lib Dem's newest MEP Rebecca Taylor; Dr Carol Weaver; Jonathan Fryer; and Catherine Bearder MEP. Chair: Phil Bennion MEP.
Hilton*

*Metropole, 106 Bar Tuesday 25th mid evening
20.00–21.15*

& throughout the conference join us at Stall H.10 – not least because we need volunteers to staff the stall and importantly RECRUIT NEW MEMBERS.

International Abstracts

There is much coverage of foreign affairs in the Liberal media. The following is of particular note:

Liberator 354 (July 2012) contained grim reading in Rebecca Tinsley's update on South Sudan 'Feeding the Crocodile'.

Lib Dem News 1203 (31st August 2012) Liberal Youth's Hannah Bettsworth reported on the Pro-Democracy Teddy Bears in Belarus, updating events

From Rio to the post 2015 Development Agenda

Felix Dodds

Rio+20 in June was a significant UN conference it helped save sustainable development and to change the whole discussion on the development agenda putting sustainable development goals (SDGs) at the centre of any post 2015 development agenda.

The Liberal Democrat Conference this year will debate SDGs and hopefully the government will take much more of a lead than they did for Rio+20.

Rio 1992

Rio+20 was held twenty years from the seminal UN conference on environment and development. Rio in 1992 not only agreed Agenda 21 a sustainable development blueprint for the twenty first century, the Rio Declaration a set of 27 principles by which we should help guide society towards a more sustainable way but also two conventions on biodiversity and climate change. An amazing achievement by itself but out of Rio we saw two other legally binding agreements on desertification and straddling fish stocks, the setting up of a new UN Commission on Sustainable Development and the development of sustainable development strategies by over 100 countries.

Johannesburg 2002

By 2002 it became clear that developed countries had failed completely in helping developing countries to move towards a more sustainable path of development. The 1992 conference estimated that it would take development aid of \$120 billion to help developing countries deliver a more sustainable path of development in 1992 development aid was around \$60 billion it fell by 1997 to \$56 billion only going back to \$60 billion by 2002. This will be looked back as the lost decade to address climate change and other important drivers of unsustainability.

Johannesburg was held with a backdrop of 9/11 and the new Republican President Bush consequently it failed to address the major issues or put together a road from Johannesburg which might address the serious emerging environmental security nexus.

The end sustainable development

By 2006 even the President of South Africa recognized the total failure of the journey when he addressed the UN general Assembly not only as President of South Africa but as head of the group of 77 developing countries he said:

“Precisely because of the absence of a global partnership for development, the Doha Development Round has almost collapsed. - we have not implemented the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development, thus making it difficult for the majority of the developing countries, especially those in Africa, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and have reduced the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation to an insignificant and perhaps forgotten piece of paper.”

Sustainable Development was dead by 2007 the UN body for sustainable development failed for the first time to get agreement on anything. The leadership and helping to reform the movement for sustainable development came from Brazil, from President Lula who addressing the UN General Assembly set in motion the process for Rio+20 when he said:

“I propose that we hold a new conference, in 2012, to be hosted by Brazil: the Rio + 20 Conference. If we want to salvage our common heritage, a new and more balanced distribution of wealth is needed, both internationally and within each country. Social equity is our best weapon against the planet’s degradation.

It is unacceptable that the cost of the irresponsibility of a privileged few be shouldered by the dispossessed of the earth,” declared the President Lula, calling for industrialized countries to “set the example,” while emphasizing that “developing countries must also help in combating climate change.”

On 4 November 2008, Brazil followed through with the G77 and China tabling a UN General Assembly resolution calling for a new Earth Summit. This represented the first time that the call for a Summit on

sustainable development has come from developing countries.

In 2009, it became clearer to governments and stakeholders that the Summit could have a significant role in reframing the economic debate around a “green new deal.” As countries published their recovery packages from the financial crisis, HSBC reviewed them to see how green they were and there were some very heartening results. China’s recovery package was, according to HSBC, 35% green. The European Community’s was 53% and, amazingly, South Korea’s was 83%. The UK instead of investing in a ‘green new deal’ lowered VAT and lost any opportunity to lead the green revolution under the Brown administration.

At least the discussion on sustainable development was being listened to by many of the finance and

development ministries. It was as if we were now back to addressing the Stockholm Summit’s themes of “Limits to Growth,” now knowing more clearly that these limits are not as far in future as we had thought – the most obvious ones being climate change and ecosystem loss.

Added to this was a new discourse emerging around environmental security issues. Our newspapers and media are full of terms such as Energy Security, Climate Security, Food Security, Health Security and Water Security.

The Agenda for Rio+20

The Summit agenda agreed by the UN General Assembly to two weeks after the Copenhagen Climate Conference failure was:

- Implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development
- The green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication
- Sustainable development governance
- Emerging issues

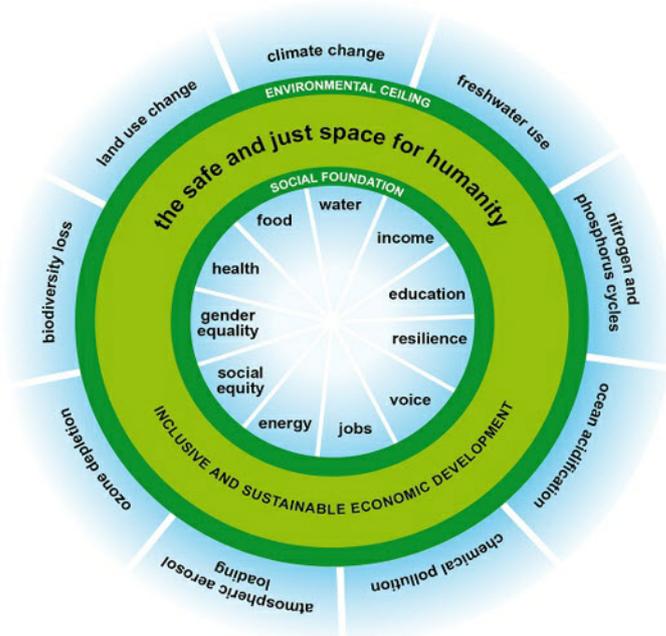
This very attractive agenda saw the ridiculous situation of the European and other developing countries having literally to be dragged to the table by the new leadership from developing countries, particularly the BASIC countries of Brazil, South Africa, India and China all hosting critical intergovernmental workshop on aspects of the green economy and governance. The UK government was nearly invisible in the run up to Rio+20 and the lack of attendance by the UK PM, the US President and the

German Chancellor show clearly that the leadership had moved to the developing countries.

Rio+20 a game changer

The proposal for Sustainable Development Goals to replace/frame/supplement the MDGs in 2015 came from the governments of Colombia and Guatemala at an intergovernmental workshop in Indonesia. Initially seeing some opposition from development ministries in developed countries they managed to through Rio reframe the whole post 2015 development framework discussion to ensure that new goals should be universal and perhaps should even address consumption and production patterns which are contributing to reaching planetary boundaries.

Rio saw the first series attempt to bring into the global discussion the work around planetary boundaries by Johan Rockström and colleagues. They had identified nine planetary boundaries that we should not exceed – we are already exceeding biodiversity loss, climate change and the nitrogen and phosphorus cycles. Supplemented by an excellent piece of work by Kate Raworth of Oxfam who suggested a social foundation framework – the joint work is now known as the Oxfam Doughnut, the space between the planetary boundaries and the social foundation is the safe and just operating space for humanity on this planet. It will frame a lot of the global debate in the future as we now are starting to have solid data.



Rio+20 not only put on the agenda Sustainable Development goals but also agreed to strengthen UNEP and create a new High Level Forum for Sustainable Development. It recognized that there isn’t a green economy but green economies and countries

are now exploring what that means for them. It also launched a 50 country natural accounts pilot running parallel to countries normal accounts under the World Bank. The Summit didn't agree to a global framework on sustainability reporting for companies on stock



Felix Dodds at the Rio+20

exchanges but the process will continue and in the next 2 years expect an agreement on that. Perhaps the largest section in the Rio+20 text is on Oceans and the follow up will address issues such as ocean fertilization, acidification, marine debris, illegal fishing and fish stocks. It saw the science community come together under a new ten year work programme called Future Earth which will help provide information for decision makers in a more clear way. Rio also saw the first meeting of Supreme Court Judges meet and create a network on sustainable development

Robert Kennedy in 1968 perhaps captured the future we now face, talking about a different issue and a different time the words seem so appropriate now when he said:

“a revolution is coming, a revolution which will be peaceful if we are wise enough; Compassionate if we care enough; successful if we are fortunate enough— But a revolution is coming whether we will it or not. We can affect its character; we cannot alter its inevitability.”

Felix Dodds is Director of the Stakeholder Forum. He is a former Chair of the National League of Young Liberals (1985-87) and was Chair of the UN DPI NGO 64th Conference Sustainable Societies Responsive Citizens (2011). His latest book with Michael Strauss and Maurice Strong is Only One Earth – the Long Road via Rio for Sustainable Development.

LI Congress, Abidjan

17th-21st October 2012

In October delegates will descend on Abidjan for an LI Congress held for the first time by Ivory Coast, at the invitation of President Alassane Ouattara.

The theme resolution this year focuses on 'Promoting private investment and enhancing social responsibility' and while a little more laissez-faire in its approach than many LIBG members might naturally advocate, is generally laudable.

As ever, the World Today resolution looks at the political situation in many individual countries, offering scope for Liberals in many countries to highlight their successes or take the opportunity of the gathering of sister parties to criticise their national governments. While for many in the UK, such congresses may seem lacking in political purpose,

this is a reminder that for our liberal allies in many countries, the support and solidarity of other liberals in Europe and elsewhere is hugely valuable.

If anyone is interested in attending the Congress, more details are available on the LI website, or please drop me an email (Jes42@cam.ac.uk).

Julie Smith

Membership Matters

Inevitably when a party is in government, there are a number of casualties. Being the junior party in a coalition, this is especially the case with the Lib Dems, not least because the United Kingdom got out of the habit of coalition in government after 1945.

It seems pertinent to remind members that Liberal International is not the Liberal Democrats – it is they that are members of our wider organisation, not the other way round. Many members of LI are not party members, including many academics, journalists and people in diplomatic fields; the point is that they are Liberals. As is often pointed out, LI is a broad church, home for instance in the Netherlands to both D66 and the VVD, both Liberal parties but with completely different outlooks. So feel at home with us.

Egypt's Destructive Freedom of Expression

Mohammed Nossier

There is no doubt that Freedom of Expression is an essential component of democracy, however, freedom of expression should act as a means to an end. It is basically a tool in which citizens' voice their opinions advancing their nation to progress and prosper. Freedom of Speech comes with responsibility wherein citizens should be held responsible for their expressions. However, what is happening in Egypt nowadays is a destructive method of Freedom of Expression, the accusation of political forces and politicians to each other will conclude in a zero sum game.

In the last few years of the era of Mubarak that lasted for almost three decades, he enabled oppositions to criticize his government's policies so far as politicians and journalists don't personally attack him or his family; a few people crossed this illusionary line that Mubarak designed (and eventually paid a heavy price), but in essence Mubarak managed to live with the policy of you talk and I do what I want. At that time, Mubarak realized that releasing the Egyptians' frustration due to his long ruling would not harm his status. Furthermore, the State owned media, which is headed by people who are assigned by Mubarak was praising him around the clock boosting his image.

This philosophy was one of the fundamental factors that helped Mubarak rule Egypt for three decades, misleading Egyptians on many issues and negatively affecting his political challengers so he could sustain his power.

One of the essential outcomes of January 25th revolution is breaking the bearer of fear in criticizing the ruler or in other words, the small window of freedom of expression was widely opened in which Egyptians got their full freedom of expression, but the responsibility element that goes along with this has not been digested yet. In addition, there is no law that frames the responsibility of freedom of expression. Egyptians nowadays appear on media channels, aside of criticizing all politicians inclusive of the ruler, they often attack each others personally with accusations that don't have any grounded proofs. This has led to drawing a question mark on most of the Egyptian

politicians, downgrading them to the extent that Egyptians don't trust politics and politicians anymore.

On the other hand, the newly democratic elected president has recently used the same tactics and tools used by his predecessor limiting freedom of expression. Egyptian police recently collected an issue of Al-Dustour newspaper that was criticizing the president, and shut down two TV channels on the ground of administrative faults. Both channels used to criticize the president Morsy and the Muslim Brothers on regular basis.

Furthermore, the state media that control tens of printed newspapers & magazines, and tens of national and regional TV & Radio channels are basically managed by the ruling party, previously Mubarak's NDP and currently the Muslim Brothers. Obviously, the president through government organizations appoint the heads of those media outlets that are either belong to the Muslim Brothers or affiliated to them. It goes without saying that those appointees work on boosting the image and the status of the new president.

Egypt is in strong need of issuing a law that define the practice of freedom of expression. It should somehow release its control of the state media enabling them to function independently, distinguish between criticizing government and people's ideas & policies, which is a legitimate constructive performance and clear accusation of corruption that require immediate prosecution.

I have not voted for president Morsy, but I fully acknowledge that he was elected in relatively free and fair elections. Criticizing the ruler is a key component of democracy, but questioning his legitimacy will result in vicious circle of questioning further rulers and destroying the state fragile pillars that we are trying to build. We need to give a fair chance for president Morsy to rule Egypt in his current four year term and he need to work on clearly defining Freedom of Expression through a well-defined law.

Egypt's Freedom of Expression future law should express that proposing someone blood licit* is clearly an illegal performance and people who express this act

need to be prosecuted immediately. Since the Muslim Brothers became in power there is a segment of the society who want to perform like Saudi Arabia famous group amr bil maroof wa nahi an al-munkar (enjoining the good & forbidding the evil), a group of people who enforce citizens abiding with Islam's principles, of course from their perspective without any substance or legal rights.

Words are known to be powerful and leave impact on people, either positively or negatively. Leaving the Microphone On for each one to express his thoughts and accusation is not the healthiest attitude of freedom of expression that people should do. In essence Egyptians should freely practice freedom of expressions but with full responsibility.

Mohammed Nosseir
Member of the Political Bureau of the Free Egyptians Party.

* blood licit – that someone's blood is legitimately shed because of their actions. The fatwa against Salmon Rushdie would be something like this.

New Officers

The following officers were elected to the LIBG Executive at the AGM and Wendy Kyrle-Pope was elected as chair at the first exec. meeting thereafter.

Wendy has served many sterling years as Treasurer, and has been replaced by John Innes in this role. Mark Smulian is the new Secretary. Adrian Trett continues as Membership Secretary.



Exec. Members are Jerry Asquith, Merlene Emerson, John Pindar, Nick Hopkinson and Anuja Prashar. Peter Lesniak, Simon Hughes' diary secretary, hopes to assist when able.

Julie Smith was elected as a vice-president and Robert Woodthorpe Browne continues in that role. A recommendation on further vice-presidents

will be put to the next Exec. meeting following constitutional changes adopted at the AGM. Simon Hughes remains as the president.

Wendy expressed thanks to Julie for her work as chair over the last three years, and also to the former secretary, Dirk Hazell, particularly for his work on the constitution.

review

Radical, by Maajid Nawaz.

W H Allen, £12.99

Middle class and rural England was bemused by the existence of an urban sub-culture in Sadie Smith's "White Teeth". Maajid Nawaz shows us in this new book, co-written with Tom Bromley, what has been going on largely unreported in our cities and educational establishments, not seriously addressed by the Press or politicians. It is essential reading for all liberals interested in domestic or international politics.

Maajid was born in Southend, where ethnic minorities were at that time rare. His parents were of Pakistani origin, his Mother a liberal and his Father a traditionalist who worked in the Libyan oil fields. Racism began to rear its head when he was about seven and stopped from playing football by diktat of racist parents of his friends.

Later on, he got into hip-hop with its rebellious lyrics and became a B-boy and graffiti artist with the tag "slammer". His experiences of racism got worse when skinheads invaded Southend at weekends to do some Paki-bashing. By this time, in self defence rather than machismo, Maajid and his other ethnic minority friends were "tooled up" with knives.

Maajid becomes accustomed to violence in Barking and Newham Colleges at the age of sixteen in the second of which armed African students terrorise Asians until a huge Brixton Muslim shoots dead an African who is trying to stab him. By this time Maajid has discovered Islamism,, and becomes a recruiter for Hizb al-Tahrir. He describes Islamism as being purely political, as opposed to the fundamentalist Islam preached by Salafists,, whom HT regarded as the enemy. HT worked for the creation of the Khilafah, a Muslim superstate which would stretch

across national boundaries. The more unpleasant penalties of sharia law would be part of the scene.

At one point 12,000 Muslims gathered at Wembley Arena shouting for the Khalifa.

Maajid later becomes an HT recruiter abroad too, in Denmark and Pakistan and even among Pakistani military studying in the UK, many of whom are later purged by Pervez Musharaff. He marries a fellow enthusiast and they move to Alexandria in Egypt to continue the work. Unlike in the UK, Hizb al-Tahrir is illegal and it is not very long before Maajid, now in his mid twenties, is being followed and his flag is raided in the middle of the night.

"Welcome to Egypt. We do as we please" sums up the attitude of Hosni Mubarak's secret police, the Aman al-Dawlah, who cart him off to al Gihaz, where as prisoner 42', he waits in terror for his turn to be tortured with electric shocks to the soles of his feet and his testicles. Miraculously he is spared and after a couple of years of court hearings is sentenced to 5 years in Mazrah Tora political prison. Here he was adopted as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International, notably following the efforts of Amnesty member John Cornwall.

Back home after his sentence was completed, he soon became disillusioned with HT, first with their internal personality clashes and attitudes, and then, losing his Wife and friends in the process, with the whole concept of political Islam, helped by discussions in the jail with such Egyptian democrats as Ayman Nour, a great liberal.

Maajid, with others, formed Quilliam - named after a 19th century philanthropist who built the UK's first mosque for Muslims - with the aim of spreading liberal democracy among Muslims at home and abroad. A regular broadcaster and consulted by Western Governments, including our own, Maajid has considered standing as a Lib Dem parliamentary candidate although he may decide to stay clear of party political involvement.

This brave young man reveals a life of violence and struggle born of real and perceived injustice. He now preaches a way of hope, that all democrats should support in every way they can. This book, often distressing, makes easy enough reading. A text book for us, and perhaps for the wider world.

Robert Woodthorpe Browne

Getting Somalia Wrong? by Mary Harper Zed Books, 2012.

This is an eminently sensible book. The creation of South Sudan has broken the sanctity of old colonial boundaries, we should look where further changes can make sense.

The international community is obsessed with the maintenance of a Somalia which has never been integral, since the Ogaden has been outside it, and so far as I can see, HMG (ultimate culprits in the past) seems determined to follow the same murky track. Yet as Harper says, it is the autonomous initiatives within the greater Somalia that are delivering the solutions.

The referendum of the unification of the former British and Italian colonies was loaded from the start, simply because there were more people in the Italian colony. The Somali culture is heavily clan based, and Somaliland, the former British colony is to a degree homogenous – that helps. It has had reasonably successful presence for many years, and rightly points out that its recognition by the international community could be integral to the solution of the problems of the wider Somalia, which once stabilised (probably without too much of the international interference that has created the problems) might unite.

The Lib Dems are not longer in the Foreign Office (some mistake there Nick), but should use their influence in government to shift our policies rather than being lapdogs to the opinions of the USA and China.

Stewart Rayment

FREE PUSSY RIOT

Grigory Yavlinsky commenting on the two year sentence given to the Russian Pussy Riot punk group, former leader of Yabloko, said: "The political protest by Maria Alyokhina, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Ekaterina Samutsevich has in fact very serious grounds. It is a protest against election fraud conducted to usurp power, and against censorship in the media, the lies and corruption, hypocrisy and injustice. The long term of imprisonment of the girls, forcing the atmosphere of unforgiveness and vengeance, does much more harm to the Russian society than their outrage in the temple."

Earlier Yabloko's leader Sergei Mitrokhin voiced his concerns that the violation committed by Pussy Riot members did not constitute grounds for keeping them in custody. He said: "The developments demonstrate

once again that we can hardly speak about any genuine liberalization of law-enforcement in Russia.

Considering the political roots of the incident we cannot rule out that such tough measures are a mere revenge of the authoritarian state who are using juridical mechanisms as a reprisal instrument used on personal motives.” In a statement condemning the arrest of three female members of the Russian band Pussy Riot, Yabloko expressed clear disagreement with the charges of hooliganism and religious hostility brought against them, calling on the authorities for their immediate release, especially since two of them are mothers of small children. The members of the group were arrested in February after performing a protest song against President Vladimir Putin at Moscow's main Cathedral.

Amnesty International is campaigning for the release of the members of Pussy Riot –
www.amnesty.org.uk/pussyriot

There will be a demonstration supporting Global “Pussy Riot” Day in London, on Saturday, 15 September, from 11 am till 2 pm, opposite the Russian Consulate at Bayswater Road - bring your balaclava!
<https://www.facebook.com/events/278450275589875/>

MINERS' STRIKE MASSACRE

Tim Harris MP of South Africa's Democratic Alliance issued a statement to LI following news of the deaths of 44 mineworkers at Lonmin's Marikana platinum mine in South Africa's North-West Province. Harris explained that the DA has joined the rest of South Africa in expressing shock and outrage after mineworkers were shot dead by police during a workers' strike last week.

Democratic Alliance is now calling for the resignations of those responsible. DA Parliamentary Leader Lindiwe Mazibuko MP welcomed President Jacob Zuma's commitment to establish an Independent Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the tragedy and said that it must specifically establish who authorised the use of live ammunition on the strikers. She also called on the Minister of Police, the heads of the Trade Unions involved and the Chief Executive Officer of Lonmin Mine to consider their positions and offer their resignations. The shootings left 34 dead and 78 wounded, bringing the total number of dead to 44 after ten workers had already been killed earlier last week during inter-union clashes.

BLASPHEMY LAW IN TUNISIA?

Wael Nawara (AAFD, LI Cooperating Organisation) has spoken out against a recently proposed bill criminalizing defamation of religion in Tunisia. He said 'Religious extremists are waging a violent war on personal freedoms. Re-introducing 'Thought Police' is

no less dangerous when it comes from an elected government or nicely wrapped in religious pretences. In fact it is even more dangerous this way. We hope that the Tunisian people will turn down such laws before the country starts to slide towards fascism.' The bill could hand a prison sentence to anyone convicted of violating 'sacred values'.

Taeib Houidi of the Tunisian Republican Party (LI partner), stated: 'The bill to criminalise 'violations of the sacred' is dangerous to civil liberties. It gives the probable future Islamic Council the discretion to define and interpret these 'crimes'. The government is standing against freedom of conscience and expression.'

DPP SLAMS NEW AGREEMENT WITH CHINA

Beijing and Taipei have signed a new cross-strait agreement on investment protection and promotion, but the DPP (LI Full Member) blasted the agreement as 'worse than a 'knockoff agreement''. Analyzing the text of the agreement, DPP's Policy Research Committee Executive Director Joseph Wu said: 'Beijing did not make concessions on most of the major issues, such as arbitration in a third country and the protection of basic human rights'. Taiwan did not get the international arbitration it wanted in the negotiation, he said, adding the arbitration mechanism was viewed as a 'domestic issue' which would make Taiwan a 'de facto Chinese colony'.

The DPP demanded that the agreement be monitored and amended by the Legislative Yuan. In the meantime, LI Vice President on the Bureau and DPP legislator Bi-khim Hsiao visited Shanghai for a seminar on cross-strait relations, but emphasized that she was doing so in a private capacity. Hsiao said she was invited to the seminar on the peaceful development of cross-strait -relations, as a board member of the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD).

BRIGHTON

Solvitur acris hyems gratâ vice veris

Now fruitful autumn lifts his sunburnt head,

The slighted Park few cambric muslins whiten,
The dry machines revisit Ocean's bed,

And Horace quits awhile the town for *Brighton*.

Horace Smith 1813

GARDENERS' QUESTION TIME

Notes from the questions and answers to Jon Snow's Garden Lecture.

Jeremy Argyle (?) Jon Snow had said 'if you must bomb Iran bomb it with laptops'. Jeremy said there were 20 million people online in Iran, but the quality of connectivity had declined since 2005, since websites have to be registered. How then do we achieve greater connectivity.

Jon Snow (JS): The registration of websites is a consequence of paranoia. JS had asked Jalel(?) who was Iran most afraid of? The Israelis, the West? He replied 'Pakistan' – if the Wahabis get missiles Tehran will be the first to be hit. Iran has good relations with India; perhaps we could use India's connections to open a dialogue with Iran. We have to shock-drop into a new era.

David Crow, Chatham House: Referred to the recent article by Kenneth Walsh (?) which argued that Iran having nuclear weapons may not be so bad and could provide balance and stability in the region.

JS: I've read the article and wanted to think about it. It is not worth destroying the region to sort this out. Iran is insecure, domestically and because of this situation. He might be right but I wouldn't like to commit myself.

Rosemary Hollis, former head of MENA, Chatham House & Academic: Britain does not like sanctions. This was true in the 1990s, but what is the foreign policy position of British politicians now? Do they think there are worse things than war, ie: to show humility and risk re-election?

JS: No British politician has ever risked re-election on foreign policy.

Jonathan Davies, Lib Dem Friends of Israel: Should Israel take Ahmadinejad's talk of wiping them off the face of the earth seriously?

JS: Yes, but this rhetoric is spawned in the world of hatred in which Iran's leaders are imprisoned. Israel and Iran have more in common with each other than with their neighbours; you could add India to that, the three 'I's. Israel has nuclear weapons but is not a member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Iran does not have nuclear weapons but is a member of the Non-

Proliferation Treaty and has stayed in it despite everything.

I don't think Israel will bomb Iran; they're too intelligent for that. It would be a global catastrophe if they did so. It could be the one thing that would unite Sunni and Shi'ite as it would be perceived as an attack on Islam.

Geoffrey Robinson QC: I was reading the Cyrus Cylinder – in translation – just the other day. It has nothing to do with Human Rights... there is just one line where Cyrus notices that the prisoners of the Babylonians look half-starved so he shows them mercy and sends them home. In 1988 5,000 prisoners were strung up by the Iranian leadership because they were atheists; this is the most awful single act done to prisoners, who had been in gaol sometime. 162 people in the diaspora were killed by assassination, ordered by Rathsanjani. In 2009 militias were killing dissidents in the streets...[JS: What is your question?] Sri Lanka we don't forgive; Iran you are prepared to

JS: I have not used the word 'forgive'. There are massive crimes, regime after regime, but at the end of the day we have to move on, to make the world a safer place, move on to prevent it happening again.

Ewan Grant, former Intelligence Analyst with HM Customs & Excise, now an independent consultant: We use Desert One and the Israeli raid on Entebbe airport in training. Contacts with people trying to do business with Iran refer to members of the Revolutionary Guard being awash with money and revealing links between them and those in diaspora. Is there any real chance of getting a dialogue going with the Iranians using contacts in the diaspora?

JS: It is amazing the amount of traffic between people in diaspora and Iran – all discrete and a bit 'iffy'. There are many avenues, India, the British Museum, Neil McGregor. The biggest thing is to express respect for the country and its achievements.

Xxxx a British Telecom engineer: The British press has ignored the revelations in Alastair Campbell's memoirs about the Israeli's threat to bomb Baghdad. If

Isreal were to bomb Ishafan how would we react to it?
A crime against humanity?

JS: I only report.

Anthony Kess, Chatham House: If persuaded by the powers that be to influence Iran not to back the Syrian government (if they do), may that influence them to take a more measured view?

JS: Iran's relationship with Syria is complex. The Syrian government is Shi'ite, well Alawite, if actually secular, so there is a root of interest. But the Russians are more pivotal in the supply of weapons, not Iran. Most of Iran's weapons are old US weapons, for which they can't get spares; unless they help Syria with cash.

Sam xxxx, Chatham House: Engaging with Iran could bring ??? Hussain ??? & ??? back into the picture?

JS: They don't know what would happen internally. Some would oppose (dialogue) others are keen. Its like playing bowls, do you go for the jack or try to scatter all the balls and see what happens. I'm not an expert, but I see what I see. I've been to Iran nearly every year since the revolution; not last year as it was difficult.

John Preston: British foreign policy is influenced by the USA. Should we study Russian foreign policy as way in which we could develop an independent European policy?

Rosemary Hunter? King's College, London: You said the Great Satan (Obama) had to engage with Iran. Can UK practice... and American diplomacy...

JS: I'm using the language that the Iranians and the press have used. I don't know what the real cost to our interests would be. P5+1 is very American influenced, though led by Europe. Not tried.

We had a loosely different view when we had an ambassador, but then we became the whipping boy for the absent Americans...

These are not a perfect recollection – taken from hasty notes at the lecture. Additions and corrections are welcome. Stewart Rayment



Jon Snow & Sue Garden

Liberal Democrats Autumn Conference – the International bits...

Saturday 22nd mid evening 20.15–21.30

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
(ALDE) - *Challenges to Democracy: from the Arab Spring to evolutions closer to home*
A Discussion with Edward McMillan-Scott MEP,
European Parliament Vice-President for Democracy &
Human Rights; Jeremy Browne MP; and Robert
Woodthorpe-Browne, Chair, Liberal Democrat
International Relations Committee.
The Grand, Victoria Terrace

Saturday 22nd late evening 22.00–23.15

*Liberal Democrat Forum for Africa - Proud of Africa,
from Africa, love Africa...*
This is the networking event for all who have African
Heritage, and who know and love Africa. Hosted by
Cllr Michael Bukola, music, entertainment, discussion.
Come along get involved – join the Forum on
facebook: Liberal Democrat Forum for Africa.
The Grand, Victoria Terrace

Sunday 23rd Conference

09.15–10.15 F11 Policy motion: *A Sustainable Future
for Aviation*
10.55–11.40 F14 Policy motion: *International
Cooperation on the Environment*
11.40–12.20 F15 Policy motion: *Good Food Shouldn't
Cost the Earth*

Sunday 23rd lunchtime 13.00–14.00pm

Refugee Council - No fate like home: Why refused asylum seekers do not return

The event focuses on the dangerous situations in countries that asylum seekers come from, and the reasons they don't return after their asylum claims are refused. The panel discussion is chaired by Donna Covey, Chief Executive of the Refugee Council.

The Grand, Alexandra

Amnesty International, the International Broadcasting Trust and Channel 4 News - Human Rights: Can social media make a difference?

Panel will include: Jeremy Browne MP,; Steve Crawshaw, Amnesty International; Reem Al-Assil, Syrian Nonviolence Movement; *Channel 4 News* correspondent (tbc).

The Grand, Regent

Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine - 'The Sacred Trust of Civilisation': Britain's historic responsibility to the Palestinian People

Professor John Dugard, author of the definitive work on apartheid law and former Special Rapporteur to the Human Rights Council, will speak on Britain's historic obligations to Palestine. Refreshments kindly provided by Middle East Monitor and Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

Hilton Metropole, Durham Gallery

Liberal Democrat Christian Forum and Tearfund - How can we deliver climate justice in tough economic times?

Chair: Rt Hon Sir Alan Beith MP. Speakers: Duncan Hames MP; Fiona Hall MEP; Tearfund's Laura Taylor. Debating how we can pursue ambitious policies to cut emissions and also support developing countries most impacted by climate change.

Saint Paul's Parish Church

Sunday 23rd early evening 18.15–19.30

Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel - Reflections on Israel: prospects for peace?

Stephen Williams, MP for Bristol West; Alon Roth-Snir, Deputy Ambassador for Israel; Sir Alan Beith MP, President, Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel.

Chair:

Gavin Stollar, Chair, Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel.

Hilton Metropole, Cambridge

UNICEF UK - A Fair Future for the World's Children – Time to GrowUp?

From food to fairness; climate to aid – children should be at the heart of international development. Get involved in the debate. Hear from: Jon Snow (invited, chair); Martin Horwood (invited); David Bull, UNICEF Executive Director; Harry Phinda, Youth Advisor.

Hilton Metropole, 106 Bar

Sunday 23rd mid evening 20.00–21.15

Liberal Democrats Friends of Pakistan (LDFP) 12th Anniversary - Pakistan High Commission Annual Dinner Reception(2012)

HE Wajid Hassan; Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg MP (tbc); Deputy Leader Rt. Hon Simon Hughes MP; Lords Leader Tom McNally; Phil Bennion MEP. Chairing:

Qassim Afzal, Federal Executive. Please email. Contact 07956873046 Email

Qassim.afzal@ntlworld.com. Note: this event will end at 22.00

Hilton Metropole, Clarence

Monday 24th lunchtime 13.00–14.00

Channel 4 News / ITN - Channel 4 News' Gary Gibbon in conversation with Ed Davey

Channel 4 News' Political Editor interviews the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change – A look at politics, being a Lib Dem, life at the Cabinet table and life in general. Lunch provided.

The Grand, Empress

LGBT+, LIBG and Liberal Youth - Changing laws and attitudes: a more equal world

Join a passionate discussion on equal global rights in countries that persecute people for their identity and sexuality. Speakers include: Jeremy Browne MP; Julie Smith, Liberal International; Lance Price and Harjeet Johal, Kaleidoscope; Peter Tatchell (invited).

Hilton Metropole, Balmoral

Liberal Democrats Against Child Labour - Inaugural Meeting: Abolishing the slavery of our time

215 million children are engaged in child labour, usually in danger, poorly paid and without education. Liberal Democrats should fight to stop this. Antony Hook, founding chair; Sir Malcolm Bruce MP; Dr Aidan McQuade, Anti-Slavery International; Catriona Fox, ChildHope.

Hilton Metropole, Durham Gallery

Monday 24th lunchtime 13.00–14.00

British Chambers of Commerce - Exporting is Good for Britain

A panel of experts including: Rt Hon Danny Alexander MP, Chief Secretary to the Treasury (tbc); John Longworth, Director General, British Chambers of Commerce; Sam Fleming, Economics Editor, *The Times* (tbc); will discuss international trade. A Q&A will follow.

Hotel Du Vin, Dome Ballroom

Monday 24th early evening 18.15–19.30

Save the Children - How can aid best help the world's poorest people out of poverty?

Chair: Faisal Islam, Channel 4 News (tbc). Baroness Northover, Lords Government Spokesperson for International Development; Rt Hon Sir Malcolm Bruce MP, International Development Committee Chair; Rt Hon Lord Mark Malloch-Brown, Former Deputy UN Secretary General; Brendan Cox, Save the Children.

Hilton Metropole, 106 Bar

Monday 24th mid evening 20.00–21.15

GovNet Communications - The GovNet Communications American Election Special

Chair: Lord Archy Kirkwood. Speakers: Sir Robert Worcester, Founder MORI; Toby Helm, Political Editor, *The Observer*; Dr Tom D Grant, Chair, Republicans Abroad; William Lee Adams, London Bureau, *Time Magazine*. Note: this event will end at 22.00

Hilton Metropole, Buckingham

BOND – Beyond Aid - A Liberal Democrat approach to International Development

The UK must continue to play a leading role in ensuring justice and equity for poor people around the world. How has the Liberal Democrat policy on development evolved and what can we expect from the party? Note: this event will end at 21.30

Holiday Inn, Ashdown Suite 1

Monday 24th late evening 21.45–23.00

The European Azerbaijan Society - The European Azerbaijan Society Reception

A drinks reception sponsored by The European Azerbaijan Society, with short addresses by Lord Wallace, Foreign Affairs Spokesperson, House of Lords, and Lord German, member of the Azerbaijan All Party Parliamentary Group.

The Grand, Consort

Tuesday 25th early evening 18.15–19.30

The Foreign Policy Centre and Nestlé UK - Rethinking growth: How can business better protect the environment?

Speakers: Baroness Lindsay Northover, Lead Government Spokesperson, International Development, House of Lords; Tony Juniper, Leading British Environmentalist; Ruth Davis, Senior Policy Adviser, Greenpeace UK; Duncan Pollard, Sustainability Adviser, Nestlé S.A. Chair: Sarah Mukherjee, Director of Environment, Water UK.

Hilton Metropole, Gloucester

Tuesday 25th mid evening 20.00–21.15

Liberal Democrat European Group and Liberal International British Group - Britain's Place in Europe, Europe's Place in the World

Speakers: The Lib Dem's newest MEP Rebecca Taylor; Dr Carol Weaver; Jonathan Fryer; and Catherine Bearder MEP. Chair: Phil Bennion MEP.

Hilton Metropole, 106 Bar

Tuesday 25th late evening 22.00–

Glee Club

The traditional end-of-conference celebration of songs old and new. Pick up your copy of the *Liberator Songbook* so you can raise the roof, with songs from the days of Gladstone and Lloyd George to satirical songs from 20 years of the Liberal Revue. Cash bar.

Hilton Metropole, Oxford Suite

