



2018 no. 1 £6.00 (free to members)

INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



Chile's Liberals on the march forward.

Turkey & Syrian Kurdistan

Moldova & Ukraine

Chile

Prize For Freedom

Russia

EVENTS

1st February LI(BG) North West - John Major, his foreign policy and international relations. The Crown, Lime Street, Liverpool - upstairs function room, 7.00pm. *see page 15*

5th February Liberal Democrat History Group AGM & Election 2017 a missed opportunity? NLC 6.30pm

16th February Chinese Liberal Democrats Year of Dog Chinese New Year Dinner.
NLC 7.00pm-10.00pm £46.00 *see page 15*

16th-18th February Young Liberals Winter Conference. Oxford.

9th-11th March Liberal Democrat Conference, Southport

19th March LIBG Forum – Yemen. NLC

21st May LIBG Forum – Democratic Republic of Congo. NLC (provisional)

9th July LIBG AGM

For bookings & other information please contact the Treasurer below.

NLC= National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place,
London SW1A 2HE
Underground: Embankment

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InterLib is published by the Liberal International (British Group). Views expressed therein are those of the authors and are not necessarily the views of LI(BG), LI or any of its constituent parties.

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Photographs: Stewart Rayment, Felix Dodds,
Liberal International.



YEMEN - Obstacles and pathways to peace

Meeting to discuss the war in Yemen - briefing for participants

Monday 19th March 2018 18.30hrs National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE

The war in Yemen started in 2015, in the Middle East's poorest country. Since then there have been more than 10,000 fatalities. As at Jan 2018 there have been more than 1m cases of cholera and more than 2500 related deaths. The already-weakened economy has all but collapsed and the UN reports than 2m children are suffering from acute malnutrition, with thousands reportedly dying of starvation already.

It has variously been described as:

- * A civil war between rebels aligned to the Houthis and to the late former President Saleh on the one side and the recognised Hadi government on the other
- * A 'preventative' proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran
- * Part of a religious war between Sunni and Shia muslims
- * A fallout from Russian 'successes' in Syria
- * A fallout from the Arab Spring
- * A by-product of America's Global War on Terror against Al Qaeda (or against IS) and affiliates



Are there pathways to peace to be found in some of these macro-analyses, or on the ground is reconciliation and peace inhibited by shifting tribal rivalries born of the chaos of war, of desperate poverty and of easy access to arms? Both sides in the conflict have been accused of committing war crimes, most notably related to Saudi air strikes and blockade. Should peace come before accountability under international law?

In European countries little is known about the war and only a minority of their peoples are aware of its existence. It receives little attention in the mainstream media, and it is way down the agendas of their respective foreign ministries. The UK public has little knowledge of their government's involvement. However the mass horrors of such a war have a habit of biting back.

Desperate people do desperate things. From destabilisation arising from mass refugee flows to GCC countries and the Horn of Africa, to gun running across the region, and to strains in the UK's close ally Oman which borders Yemen, such wars always have consequences. Yemen borders the Al Mandeb Straights, which is the Red Sea gateway to the Suez canal through which a third of Europe's maritime oil passes. Disruption of this flow would have a major negative impact on the European economy.

European countries therefore have very good reasons to understand better the conflict, its origins and sustaining factors, and the potential steps for peace. There is a premium on looking beyond the simple narratives which obscure the complex set of pro-peace steps needed.

This open discussion will feature known experts on the war and will explore the reality of the factors sustaining it. Participants will be invited to set aside the partisan narratives of the belligerents and their backers and attempt an objective assessment of the factors and recent history that led to the conflict. There will be a pursuit of a deeper understanding as to what it will take to end the war, and establish a peace that leads to stability and prosperity.

Free. All welcome. Enquiries to paulemreynolds@gmail.com

Please note the National Liberal Club has a dress code. The dress code is jacket and tie for men and smart casual for women. <http://www.nlc.org.uk>

Who is making the biggest mistake over Afrin?

Stewart Rayment

Another sorry twist in the saga of Syria and the war against ISIS - for long we have been baffled by who is on who's side, when and why? Now we are faced with the Turkish invasion of Kurdish Syria, and the apparent lack of interest in this in at least the UK media (perhaps not). Whilst the invasion had been anticipated for some time, the lack of news, even on the BBC's World Service, is disappointing. The BBC's Mark Logan is embedded with the Turkish army, but as I write, has reported little of substance. Even Istanbul has a news blackout. Erdogan had admitted to the deaths of 10 Turkish soldiers midweek, but it was probably rather more, not least because it appears that at least three Turkish tanks had been destroyed. Turkish backed Jihadist fighters have been in the fore of their advance, with Turkish special forces following up, mainly on night-time operations. Typically, what the Turks gain over night, they reputedly lose the next day. The Turkish army, again, has reputedly shot their jihadists fleeing from the conflict zones. It should be added that Kareem Shaheen's revelation of Turkey retraining jihadists (The Observer 28th January), has been going on for some time, with the innate suspicion that this is for domestic purposes.

The UN Security Council, meeting on Monday 22nd January at France's behest, failed to either condemn the Turkish invasion or call for its end. Trump has claimed to have given Erdogan a strong talking to, but Turkish media reports the opposite. The Financial Times reported that Erdogan had responded to the stern words from Trump with a comment that any combatants they came up against would be seen as enemies, whatever their nationality. US Secretary of Defense James Mattis said that Turkey did alert Washington before launching the attack. The Pentagon said that Washington had cleared targets. Mattis thinks Ankara does have legitimate security concerns, facing armed Kurdish militants on its own soil. However, the PKK did offer a rapprochement with Erdogan after the last general election, only to be rebuffed as Turkey slid further into a dictatorship. Both Turkey, the USA and the EU regard the PKK as a terrorist organisation. The State Department had urged Turkey not to attack, but in the face of action called on Ankara to keep it as short as possible and avoid civilian casualties. The New York Times was more succinct, 'Aren't the U.S. and Turkey friends? Only to a point.'

The conundrum – NATO membership, for the UK, Brexit sensitivities vs. the Kurds as the most effective opponents of ISIS on the ground. Yet another betrayal of the Kurds by the West. Russia, of course, will be happy with anything that provides succour to Assad, though Iran has been critical of the operation. As the formal war against ISIS appears to be coming to a close, Turkey's fears are that the Syrian Kurdish militia, the YPG - People's Protection Units, part of which grew out of the armed wing of the PKK, will turn on them. Abdullah Ocalan, ostensible leader of the PKK, imprisoned since 1999, was based in Kurdish Syria for nearly two decades. However, there are realistic doubts as to how much sway Ocalan still holds, and the former PKK is now much more fragmented, especially amongst the young.

Syrian Kurdish recruits to the People's Protection Units are more likely to be motivated by defending their own towns, like Kobani, than any obsolete Marxist ideology. In this, could lie Turkey's mistake. In targeting Afrin, the Turks hope to drive a wedge in Syrian Kurdistan, but in doing so may have made enemies where they only imagined them before.

It is the wrong season for Turkey to be launching this kind of war – the terrain will be wet for heavy tanks. Whilst Turkey has air superiority, Russian sources suggest that they lack the technology to make this effective; bombing is untargeted. Furthermore, most of the army officers with experience of guerrilla fighting – the Third Army, which fought against the PKK, are in gaol following last year's failed coup.

But what of the West's mistakes, which are legion? US Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson's statement that the United States would support a new, 30,000-strong, Kurdish-led border force in north-eastern Syria may

as it breaks...



There is something funny going on around idlib. turkish army convoy and airforce around idlib according to many twitter account. Plus russian bombing. Either everything is so complex or totally idiotic. Typical turkish way of things to happen
See you

@jenanmoussa

Follow Follow @jenanmoussa

More

1/ Huge story developing right now. Big Turkish army convoy including APCs drove thru HTS controlled Idlib in Syria heading towards AlEis, a rebel controlled frontline with Syrian gov forces &allies. Turkish army convoy was escorted whole time by AlQaeda linked HTS group.

have been the final signal for the Turkish attack, although forces have been in place for some time. Although Turkey may have a reasonable rapport with the Iraqi Kurds, their long border with Syria is a different matter. Further, some of the most exciting developments in democracy have been seen in Rojava over recent years – anathema to Erdogan. If, as former Dutch ambassador to Iraq, Nikolaus van Dam has suggested, the USA seeks to maintain a foothold in Syria post-ISIS, it is probably too little, too late, and without thinking through the Turkish, or indeed Assad dimensions.

The Americans have made a strategic error in leaving a power vacuum in the region. Russia, Turkey and Iran have been filling this vacuum and as a result the US has been failing in its negotiations. The loss of influence started under Obama but has been accelerated under Trump who fails to connect US receding power in the region with its diplomatic failures. Trump is insisting that Iran draw back from external interventions as a condition of the nuclear deal but his demands are being ignored. Erdogan’s party has long ceased to be prospective democratic Islamism. He is undoubtedly much more comfortable with the Russians and Chinese who don’t question his authoritarianism, than the West’s demands for democracy (hence a lack of enthusiasm for joining the EU). There is also more common feeling between Erdogan’s party and ISIS than the West cares to recognise. The problem is, who and what will replace Erdogan, and this is as much for his own party as for the opposition.

As the invasion enters its second week, it is clear that the Turks have objectives beyond Afrin, it is not a short, sharp operation that neither the USA nor probably Turkey may have hoped for. Turkey’s victims include many who are refugees from elsewhere in Syria, mainly civilians. Turkey doesn’t care; but neither apparently does the rest of the world. But as Gareth Stansfield pointed out in The Observer (Sunday 28th January), ‘the West must decide what it wants to achieve in the Middle East, or other players will benefit.’ Couldn’t we, perhaps, try to do something in line with what the people on the ground want, for once?

Stewart Rayment

The logo features the word "Your" in a yellow, stylized font with a bird-like graphic above it. To its right, "Liberal Britain" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Further right, "Launchpad 2018" is written in a larger, bold, black, sans-serif font.

Your Liberal Britain Launchpad 2018

Launchpad is an exciting new Members-only event hosted by the Liberal Democrats & Your Liberal Britain, that gives members a chance to Share their policy ideas, get the latest world-class campaign training from the party's experts; find out how you can put your skills to use and to ask key Liberal Democrats your questions. Vince Cable and LIBG will be attending both events. Please contact Wendy Kyrle Pope if you are able to help: w.kyrle@virgin.net

Launchpad London:

WHEN
February 05, 2018 at 6pm - 9pm
WHERE
Mary Sumner House
24 Tufton St
Westminster
London SW1P 3RB

Launchpad North:

WHEN
February 10, 2018 at 12:30pm - 4:45pm
WHERE
Royal Victoria Holiday Inn
Victoria Station Rd
Sheffield S4 7YE

LIBG Forum on Moldova and Ukraine

Carol Weaver

Due to current concerns over EU neighbourhood partners, Liberal International British Group (LIBG) held a forum entitled “Threats to Democracy and Security in Moldova and Ukraine” at the National Liberal Club in London on 20th November, four days before the 5th Eastern Partnership (EaP) summit. The speakers were MEP Hans van Baalen, ALDE party president and Liberal International president of honour; Dr Cristina Gherasimov, Academy Fellow, Chatham House; and Dr Carol Weaver, LIBG. The panel was chaired by Phil Bennion and an address was given by LIBG’s new president, Baroness Northover.

Hans van Baalen was the first speaker, focusing mainly on Moldova which he fears has become a ‘stone in a shoe’ despite having much potential. The big issue is corruption and a captured state with one person,



Baroness Northover, Hans van Baalen, Phil Bennion, Dr Carol Weaver & Dr Cristina Gherasimov.

Vladimir Plahotniuc, being in control via the Democratic Party of Moldova. The European Union (EU) needs to work with clean partners. There are various active groups but it is hard for the EU to defend

donations without credible people. Nevertheless democracy must come from within not from outsiders so a new generation must be supported. Moldova and Ukraine are European countries and we must not neglect or abandon them.

With regard to the main security issues, it is necessary for Europe to fully confront Vladimir Putin’s Kremlin and maintain sanctions.

As a Liberal family we must take more responsibility and help our neighbours especially through civil society.

Moving on to Ukraine, Carol Weaver saw three main umbrella threats with lots of overlap between them: 1) threats from Ukraine itself in terms of its corrupt system and poor rule of law; 2) aggressive threats from the east - Russia and the Donbas; 3) non-aggressive (benign) threats from the west, mainly with regard to possible neglect or leniency; possible reduction of sanctions; or the supply of US lethal weapons to Ukraine which could escalate the conflict in the east.

She gave an update on the current situation and emphasised that despite much progress there is clearly not enough separation of powers in Ukraine and that it is not enough to introduce new laws, they must be implemented too.

Also, it is becoming clear to us in the West that liberal democracy does not just keep marching on whilst we take it for granted. Europe needs to stay strong and united. Individual countries cannot afford to be too inward looking at a time when both Russia and the US may be relatively weak but capable of causing tremendous damage.

Finally, in response to the previous speakers, Cristina Gherasimov gave a comprehensive list of recommendations intended for the EU before the EaP summit. These included:

- 1) General: apply strict conditionality accompanied by clear policy guidance; send clear and firm signals in instances of non-compliance and build into assistance schemes a strong sanctioning system; draw on EU pre-accession experience with reforms in Central and East European states (what worked and what didn't); assess results as they are without trying to create success stories.
- 2) Economic: integrate the countries into the EU including by investing in the development of stronger economic ties through small and medium enterprises (SMEs) which can bring in new business standards and working principles; also invest in diaspora-led projects.
- 3) Political: reform law enforcement institutions and insist on making them work; reform political finance (e.g. reform reporting measures that would not jeopardize SMEs willing to donate to new political parties, ban political adverts); support whistle-blowers' protection; work with reformers in assisting these countries; introduce further anti-corruption measures where necessary including in the defence sector.
- 4) Social: develop domestic oversight over the governance process; support investigative journalism and avoid monopoly over media ownership; differentiate between civil societies willing to contribute to genuine democratic change of society and those supporting the government position; and continue support of free legal aid centres to restore citizens' trust in accessing justice.

A new mindset via trainings, capacity building, expertise improvement and integrity workshops needs to be developed throughout the region.

Carol Weaver

THREATS TO DEMOCRACY AND SECURITY IN UKRAINE

Carol Weaver

Threats to Ukraine can be divided into three main umbrella threats with various overlaps between them:

1. Threats from Ukraine itself in terms of corruption and lack of rule of law
2. Aggressive threats from the east i.e. Russia and the occupied regions of eastern Ukraine
3. Non-aggressive (benign) threats from 'the West' – mainly with regard to neglect or too much leniency

4. INTERNAL THREATS

Since the Maidan, Ukraine has made good progress in its reforms but there is a danger of reversal.

Like Moldova and Georgia, Ukraine has an EU Association Agreement and a deep and comprehensive free trade agreement (DCFTA) in force. Most observers agree that reforms have made progress and corruption in some sectors (especially oil and gas) has reduced over the last 3 or 4 years – more so than ever before. Also the Council of Europe (CoE) very recently acknowledged Ukraine's progress in implementing decentralization to the regions. This is working well in some areas where people now have good roads and schools.

The CoE also noted anti-corruption and judicial reforms. However, there is much more progress needed here. There are many in power in Ukraine who want these reforms but others are afraid that their positions will be compromised or that they will be brought in front of reformed courts. Corruption is used to keep power.

There have recently been accusations of corruption in one of the government's anti-corruption bodies (National Agency for Preventing Corruption - NAPC) set up as an EU requirement. The government has been accused of controlling the NAPC in its own interests. Investigations are being undertaken by another anti-corruption body (National Anti-corruption Bureau of Ukraine - NABU) which is now reported to be under government attack for doing its job.

There is clearly not enough separation of powers in Ukraine which is necessary in a democracy to free a state from 'capture'.



Civil society is playing its part and law abiding businesses are demanding court reforms. Having to pay bribes to judges is not the way they want it to be. And frankly corruption in the defence sector is dangerous if, for example, parts are stolen from incoming equipment for the army rendering it useless.

Regular anti-corruption protests take place outside the Rada (parliament) including one recently led by former Georgian president Saakashvili. There seems to have been some response by the Rada and it has recently sent bills on lifting MPs' immunity for consideration to the constitutional Court. However, it is essential that all laws are actually implemented.



5. THREATS FROM THE EAST

Ukraine since independence has always been pro-EU. However until the last few years it also wanted a good relationship with Russia and to stay fairly neutral security wise. Everything changed after the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the following events in the Donbas. Now there is a continuing threat from the eastern occupied areas (the so-called Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) and the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR)) including escalations of the fighting along the contact line with ongoing civilian deaths from shelling in both directions.

There have been continued calls for a more effective ceasefire as per the number 1 step in the Minsk II peace agreement of February 2015. Reportedly more than 10,000 people have died since April 2014. So who is fighting? On the one side there is the much-improved Ukrainian army, with a few remaining volunteer paramilitaries, supported in various ways by European countries and the US. On the other side are the so-called rebels with Russian arms, some Russian troops, volunteers, Chechens and reportedly other mercenaries including Serbs. OSCE monitors say that the conflict in Ukraine is "far from frozen".

So is a frozen conflict the best solution now rather than attempting to carry out the Minsk agreement which has never really been very workable and seems to be going nowhere? Although the Ukrainian government

has tried to implement various political steps unilaterally, including provision for "special status" for the eastern areas of the Donbas after acceptable local elections, there is still not a genuine ceasefire. Although federalisation was not in the Minsk agreement, Putin has attempted to use it to obtain a constitutional change creating a federal Ukraine so that he would have more indirect power over the Rada. Kyiv will not agree to this. There have also been arguments about whether the terms of Minsk should be implemented as steps – one at a time over quite a long period – or as a package option. The OSCE says the discussions in Normandy format (Germany, France, Ukraine, Russia) have reached deadlock so the US might decide to be more involved in Ukraine now. A US special representative (Volker) has been appointed.

In 2015 President Poroshenko called for UN peacekeepers to be deployed to eastern Ukraine to enforce a ceasefire but did not get an agreement. Nevertheless, in September 2017, the Kremlin suggested launching a limited UN peace-keeping operation along the line of contact in eastern Ukraine, with a limited mandate to protect the OSCE monitors. This could not work on its own but an international UN mission in the separatist-held parts of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, including the border between those areas and Russia, which is used to ship in weapons and military personnel, could be successful. But could a mandate really be agreed by all parties and endorsed?

As always, Putin may or may not be genuine in discussions, although no doubt he will want some kind of favourable situation for his presidential election campaign. He might want to freeze the conflict in Donbas and keep Crimea as a *fait accompli*. The presidential elections take place in March 2018 when Putin will stand as an Independent. It is unlikely that any genuine opposition leader with a chance of winning, such as Navalny, will be allowed to stand. This is unfortunate as a reformed and less aggressive Russia could be the best thing for the region including Russia itself.

Meanwhile the situation for ordinary people in the Donbas is that they have (temporary) LPR and DPR passports which Russia accepts and they use the rouble for currency. It seems to be fairly peaceful (though repressed) in places away from the contact line. There are some signs that people are returning, rebuilding homes and getting back to work. But there is still a humanitarian crisis especially near the contact line and the OSCE monitoring mission is sometimes denied access.

6. 'THREATS' FROM THE WEST

A secure and democratic Ukraine depends upon the West. The EU, the US and the UK cannot be seen to be shirking their responsibilities as outlined in the Eastern Partnership agreements and the Budapest Memorandum.

The EU

Various observers have accused the EU of 'backing off' and neglecting the eastern partners. Also in the past there has been too much complacency and 'story telling' (fellow speaker Cristina Gherasimov) in order to gloss over problems in the EU neighbourhood.

So it was necessary for the November Eastern Partnership summit to make clear that the EU is still committed to Ukraine and the other partners. With regard to corruption and judicial reforms, there should not be too much leniency which is a form of neglect in itself. Giving money without thorough oversight can cause more harm than good. Targeted sanctions against corrupt individuals could also be considered.

The United States

There could now be increased US involvement in Ukraine, as mentioned earlier. One controversial area is the selling of US lethal arms to Ukraine. Given the corruption in the realm of defence this is problematic. Also, whilst the arms could certainly help Ukraine in terms of its defence, the move is seen as provocative by the Kremlin especially as de-escalation is one of the terms of the Minsk agreement. Any escalation of the conflict is a particular threat to the people living in the eastern part of the country.

7. OTHER THREATS

There are many other threats which are not unique to Ukraine including: cyber threats; environmental threats; the power of organised crime which is particularly strong in conflict regions; and the possibility of more failing neighbourhood states as well as those which are increasingly kleptocratic and / or captured. Cyber attacks and propaganda by hostile governments (especially Russia) are also being used to disrupt societies via social media.

BRIEF CONCLUSIONS

As we are realising in ‘the West’, liberal democracy does not just keep marching on whilst we take it for granted. The EU was built not just on trade but on values including the rule of law, human rights, democracy and freedom. This is why the protesters at the Maidan held Europe flags.

The countries of the EU need to stay strong and united with firm messages to both members and partners who benefit from the union that they must continue to abide by their agreements and the rule of law.

Individual countries, including the UK, cannot afford to be too inward looking at a time when both Russia and the US are relatively weak but capable of causing tremendous damage.

The threats to Ukraine (and Moldova) in terms of both democracy and security need to be addressed urgently.

Carol Weaver

This is an update of the presentation given on 20th November 2017 at the LIBG Forum at the NLC.

For more detailed reports see:

Chatham House Report, ‘The Struggle for Ukraine’, October 2017

International Crisis Group, ‘Can peacekeepers break the deadlock in Ukraine’, December 2017

International Abstracts

President Trump

Big Rocket Man, by Garry Wills

Constitutional issues around the stand-off between President Trump and Kim Jong-un. Accompanying Gerald Scarfe cartoon shows the master still on form.

http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2017/12/21/big-rocket-man/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=NYR%20Hockney%20celebrity%20politics%20Coetzee&utm_content=NYR%20Hockney%20celebrity%20politics%20Coetzee+CID_a5135e5e3085ca02ba35eede9349f729&utm_source=Newsletter&utm_term=Big%20Rocket%20Man

Liberator 387

Catalunya provides the main international context for this issue, with an article Peter Harvey backed by an editorial view in Commentary. Hugh Arnold (Lamb Roasted) and Clive Sneddon (One for All) write on EU reform. The ALDE conference motion on Azerbaijan and LGBT+ rights therein features in Radical Bulletin.

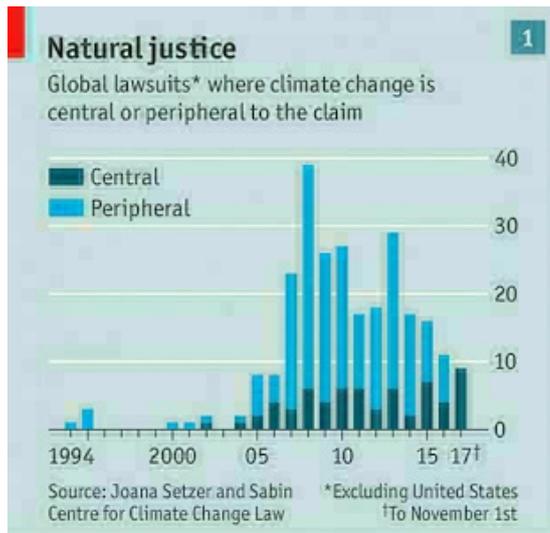
Journal of Liberal History Issue 97/Winter 2017-18

Domestic, though Graham Jones’ article on Geraint Howells mentions his Third World interests – in 1983 he argued that milk surpluses should be directed to the world’s hungry. Otherwise articles cover Gladstone and the Contagious Diseases Acts, Domesticity and New Liberalism in the Edwardian Press, and Liberals in Local Government 1967-2017. There is also an account of Liberal archives in the Flintshire Record Office and an obituary of the MP Bill Pitt.

Greenpeace vs. Norway Court Case.

Felix Dodds

A historic climate lawsuit started in Oslo on Tuesday the 14th of November and has got worldwide attention. Greenpeace along with Nature and Youth are suing Norway for issuing licences to explore oil in the Arctic and asking the court to invalidate 10 licenses granted by the government to 13 companies that opened up a new section of the Arctic to oil exploration. The vulnerable areas of the Arctic, like the Barents Sea, are home to both complex ecosystems and challenging climatic conditions. Greenpeace and Nature and Youth argue that new licences for oil exploration breaches the country's constitution and undermines Norway's commitment to the Paris Agreement.



Article 112 in Norway's constitution has been named the 'Environmental Paragraph', as it seeks to protect current and future citizens' right to a healthy and clean environment and sound resource management. It reads:

'Every person has the right to an environment that is conducive to health and to a natural environment whose productivity and diversity are maintained. (...) The authorities of the state shall take measures for the implementation of these principles.'

The lawsuit is the first of its kind in Norway and Article 112 has never been tried in court before, so the outcome of the lawsuit is unclear. While Norway's attorney general argues that the oil licenses, awarded to Statoil, Chevron and others,

have no link to the Constitution, others, like the Norwegian lawyers Sjøfjell and Halvorsen, are firm supporters of the case and have argued that exploiting oil and gas on a large scale in the Norwegian Arctic is unlawful. Convincing the court that issuing oil drilling permits could violate human rights won't be easy, however if the environmental groups are to succeed with this, it might set a very powerful global precedent.

In November in Bonn, policy-makers from around the world met to discuss how to implement the Paris agreement. Norway was one of the first to ratify the Agreement and this is the first court case that challenges new oil and gas drilling based on the Paris Agreement. The case in Norway isn't the first court case this is increasingly becoming a part of the toolkit to address environmental issues.

For the first time a poll in Norway showed in August that more than 50% of people now supported Leaving the oil in the ground.



"Like many environmental treaties, the Paris Agreement does not bind signatories to fulfil their obligations, however the court case will assess governments' and firms' actions against the 2°C goal." Greenpeace

Felix Dodds

<http://blog.felixdodds.net/2017/11/worlds-eyes-on-norway-greenpeace-and.html>

Mixed Results for the Lib Dems on a brief trip to the Netherlands

Phil Bennion reports on the ALDE Congress and the LI Human Rights Committee

ALDE Congress

With electoral fortunes in the UK failing to improve in the 2017 General Election, our voting delegation to ALDE Congress remains much reduced. Our waning influence was clear at the Congress in Amsterdam at the beginning of December as we lost votes on the resolutions but more importantly lost our vice presidential place on the ALDE Bureau. It is with great disappointment that I have to report that our excellent Vice President Baroness Ros Scott was not re-elected. The whole delegation was in shock as the news leaked out before the official announcement, as we had always received the full support of enough of the big delegations in the past to assure a UK presence on the Bureau. It is clear that Brexit is the culprit as other Bureau members confirmed Ros's work rate and value to the organisation. Ros deserved better than this.

We now have no alternative but to work with the UK friendly Bureau members to maintain influence. Timmy Dooley of Fianna Fail was re-elected and with his understanding of Brexit related issues will probably be our most reliable ally. Hans van Baalen was re-elected President and Hans is also a good friend of the Lib Dems, along with a number of other vice presidents.

An important resolution was passed on European Security and Defence Cooperation, but went further than we would have hoped. Close votes resulted in some confusing policy on the relationship between the EU and NATO, ruling out duplication and giving NATO primacy in these areas, but at the same time advocating duplicate EU structures with joint Parliamentary and Council control. My view is that the resolution would have been better unamended. There is a clear need for greater coordination in EU defence policies across member states to counter threats from the east, particularly in the light of US disengagement. Despite its inconsistencies the resolution was a constructive contribution to a future approach.

We also lost the Lib Dem resolution on Palestine, despite extreme amendments being successfully defeated. When revisiting this issue we need to use language that cannot be interpreted as anti-Israel. The German and Dutch delegations are always reluctant to be too critical of Israel and we need to take into account some of these sensitivities if we are to get our resolutions on the subject adopted.

However we successfully steered through our resolutions on the Status and Safety of the Rohingya in Myanmar and the Use of the Death Penalty in Iran.

Liberal International Human Rights Committee

LIHRC was held at the VVD HQ in The Hague on the day before ALDE Congress. This allowed HRC members who were also delegates to ALDE Congress to make just one journey.

The main issue was developing our collective and individual work programmes. The proposal that I had made in Andorra that we add an additional working group on political rights e.g. rights of assembly and political opposition became more concrete in The Hague. It has the full backing of the Committee's new Vice Chair, Astrid Thors, a close ally of mine from the Swedish People's Party of Finland. The Chair, Markus Loning, is now in his final mandate, but has timed out on the Bureau. Astrid thereby maintains the important link between the HRC and the Bureau.

Calls for Action on the Rohingya

The one political discussion was on the situation in Myanmar and how we could take our Resolution passed at the Executive in Johannesburg further. There was a strong consensus that the UK had a particular responsibility to influence the government of Myanmar to change its policy. Indeed, it was in acknowledgement of this responsibility that LIBG had submitted the Resolution to the Executive. I was asked to press our parliamentary spokespersons in the Commons and Lords (Jo Swinson and LIBG president Lindsay Northover) to urge Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson to take a much more visible position in taking issue with the Myanmar authorities and brokering a deal for the return of the Rohingya people. I have received a positive reply from both who will use their positions to press this issue.

International Criminal Court

Following the meeting we had a most interesting visit to the International criminal Court, where senior officials including a judge outlined the court's role then answered our questions. I was particularly interested in the statute of limitations, which prevent the court hearing cases that relate to events before its existence. The visit took place on the day following the suicide at the Former Yugoslavia hearings when a defendant had taken poison on receiving a verdict. The ICC was only set up after the Balkan war and so is not involved in crimes committed during that conflict. This means that any older cases can only be taken through the United Nations using similar ad hoc procedures and not through the ICC. The current case at the court is against Mr Gbagbo, the former President of Cote d'Ivoire, who refused to give up power when he lost an election, using violent measures to cling on.

The proceedings are public, but sensitive material is heard in camera. I was told that members of the public can turn up at security and gain admittance with their passport. A thought for anyone visiting the Netherlands who has an interest in international matters.

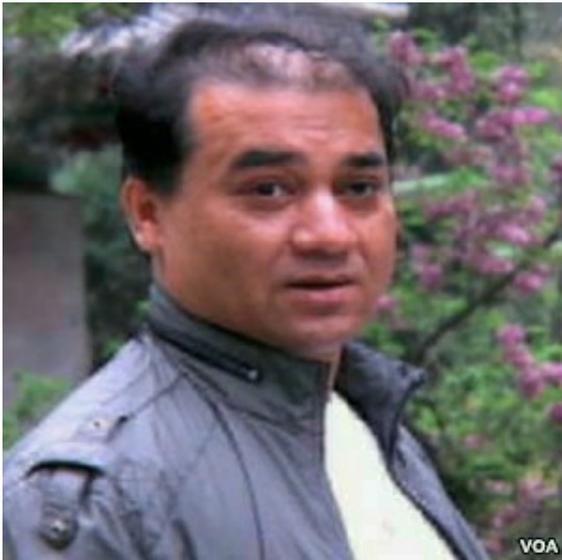
Phil Bennion



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Uyghur activist Ilham Tohti awarded LI's Prize for Freedom

Directors of the Ilham Tohti Initiative received Liberal International's Prize for Freedom in recognition of the imprisoned Uyghur's campaign of conciliation between Han Chinese and Muslim Uyghurs in China's Xinjiang province, at a special ceremony to take place in The Hague, The Netherlands on 30th November. The international human rights award is given to a well-known personality of liberal conviction who has made outstanding efforts for the defence of freedom and human rights. The citation recommending Professor Tohti, endorsed by the 70th-anniversary congress of Liberal International in Andorra in May 2017, emphasises his campaign "for promoting conciliation between Uyghurs and Han Chinese."



Prof. Ilham Tohti

Ilham Tohti's daughter, Jewher Ilham, shared a video message with dignitaries gathered for the ceremony. In her message, Ms Ilham said that the award offers encouragement for human rights defenders in China amid increasing pressure on activists.

The awarding of the Prize for Freedom forms part of a programme in which Liberal parliamentarians and human rights experts of 16 countries will assemble in The Hague for Liberal International's meeting on global justice and the rule of law.

The Prize for Freedom is Liberal International's oldest awards, having been presented annually to courageous human rights champions since 1985. Professor Ilham will be the first-ever recipient of the LI Prize from mainland China.

Liberalism receives boost in Chile as PLC's Mirosevic re-elected with country's largest mandate

With all votes counted, the leader of the Liberal Party of Chile (PLC), Vlado Mirosevic, was re-elected to represent the northern region of Arica Parinacota in the Chilean congress last month – winning over 34% of the votes – becoming the most voted-for candidate in the Chilean Parliamentary elections of 2017. The election result confirms the accelerating appeal of liberalism in northern Chile and builds on Mirosevic's breakthrough election in 2013. Deputy Mirosevic's campaign focused on decentralisation, the promotion of secular values, and a strong local presence in Arica. "I'm glad our message was heard and the region's voters understood what we are aiming to achieve. Our base of support has been growing steadily since 2013. Every day more of the region's citizens share our approach to politics and our desire to build a different kind of democracy for Chile", Vlado Mirosevic said.

The Partido Liberal de Chile is the only liberal progressive party that not only managed to maintain its presence in Congress but also increase its representation, with the election candidate Alejandro Bernales. In his region (Los Lagos), Alejandro Bernales is the only elected candidate not belonging to the traditional political elite.

The electoral block Frente Amplio (Broad Front), in which the PLC competed in the elections, won 20% of the vote, winning 20 seats in congress and gaining 1 seat in the senate. This result gives the Frente Amplio a significant presence in Chilean congress and has turned the diverse political block into serious voice in parliament. Frente Amplio comprises seven parties, otherwise of various socialist and environmentalist ideologies. Mirosevic and the PLC describe themselves as Social Liberal and Federalist.

John Major and Foreign Affairs

Liberal International (British Group) North West are meeting on Thursday 1st February at 7pm. Dr. Ben Williams and Dr. Kevin Hickson will talk on John Major, broadly, and on his foreign policy and international relations. Ben (University of Salford) and Kevin (University of Liverpool) published an edited collection of essays re-evaluating John Major's premiership last Summer. "John Major: An Unsuccessful Prime Minister? Reappraising John Major" (Biteback, May 2017).

Venue: The Crown Public House, Lime Street, Liverpool - upstairs function room, 7pm.

The Crown is immediately next to Lime Street station, on the corner of Lime Street and Skelhorne Street (opposite the Holiday Inn Hotel / Sainsburys). It is grade II listed with Art Nouveau features.

The function room in this landmark heritage pub is being provided free of charge. Unfortunately, it is not accessible for people with mobility problems as there is no lift. Drinks, alcoholic, non-alcoholic, tea and coffee will be available from the public bar downstairs.

Ben and Kevin will both talk for about twenty minutes and there will then be plenty of time for discussion and questions. Ben Williams is a former Liverpool Labour councillor, and both authors are members of the Labour Party (Dr. Hickson, apparently active in Crewe) so it should prove an open discussion.

Kiron Reid



The Chinese Liberal Democrats would like to invite you to celebrate the **Year of Dog** with us at our annual Chinese New Year Dinner and Auction at The National Liberal Club:

Date and Time: 16th February (Friday), 7pm - 10pm

Venue: National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, London, SW1A 2HE

Tickets: £46 per head for a four-course dinner including a glass of wine.

Cash bar available on the evening.

Guest Speaker: Rt Hon Lord Tom McNally PC, who will share with us his thoughts on the ever-evolving UK-China diplomatic and trading relations.

The Imperial College of London Lion Dance Team will be performing at 7pm at the Foyer. Guests to be seated in the Lloyd George Room by 7.30pm.

RSVP: info@chineselibdems.org.uk Please advise us of any dietary restrictions.

New Officers and Executive Committee for 2018

Co-Chairs: Cllr Tatyán Cheung and Merlene Emerson MBE

Vice-Chair: Dr Yeow Poon

Treasurer: Shavonne Konno

Secretary: Sarah Cheung

Membership: YeeLiu Williams

Executive members: Jerry Cheung, Will Cheung, Linda Chung Yeing Lang Crouch, Soo Min Leong and Phil Ling.

New Membership Fee

The membership fee for Chinese Lib Dems is **£10** per year, **£5** for concession. To join or renew your membership, click here: <https://chineselibdems.org.uk/en/page/join-us>

Voters' Unemployment

The "voters' strike" will boomerang politicians and society

Lev Shlosberg, Pskovskaya Gubernia

The Russian civil society is discussing the idea of a "voters' strike" put forward by Alexei Navalny in response to his non-admission to the presidential elections. The idea looks quite appealing, and the main secret of this appeal is that it is easy and comfortable for a person to consider himself a participant of a large action, when he/she has nothing much to do - there is no need to make efforts to achieve a political result. Inaction, submitted as an action, is a manipulative psychological device that allows a person to feel part of a larger group presenting itself to society if not as a majority, then at least as a force.

A STRIKE FOR A REVOLUTION

Главный вопрос для выработки личного отношения к «забастовке избирателей» заключается в том, что является альтернативой выборам. Альтернативой выборам является революция, и больше ничего. История ничего нового не придумала. Выбор у нас всё тот же – выборы или вилы.

The key issue for developing a personal attitude towards the "voters' strike" is that it is an alternative to elections. But the alternative to elections is the revolution, and nothing else. History did not invent anything new here. We still have the same choice: elections or a pitchfork.

One cannot fail to understand that a revolution in Russia means cruelty, blood, tyranny and innocent victims. There were no other revolutions in Russia.

A government which emerged from lawlessness becomes a lawless government and it cannot be different.

The "voters' strike" is not an alternative to a revolution and cannot become such for a simple reason - it does not cancel elections. Elections will be held in any case. The lower margin of turnout is not determined, and the organisers of the election campaign of the likely winner are primarily concerned with the score of his "victory". The voter turnout is not included into the "score".

If the "voters' strike" does not work for elections as an instrument for political change (and it certainly does not work for elections), then it indirectly works for a revolution, even if the organisers of the "strike" do not think about it, or directly deny it - simply because there is no other alternative to elections.

Moreover, the "voters' strike" directly works for **Putin**, as it raises his percentage in elections, reducing the support for other candidates.

It absolutely suits the authorities, therefore Navalny's leaflets criticizing Putin are confiscated everywhere, but rallies in support of the "voters' strike" are allowed almost everywhere - they do not beat on Putin, but on his opponents.

In the final analysis, the "voters' strike" represents a direct fight against all other presidential candidates, but for Putin.

In relation to society, this struggle is maximally egoistic and minimally altruistic; this is the struggle of **Alexei Navalny** for himself, for his personal political space, regardless of how this struggle can end for the entire Russian society.

Gathering together social forces for political action, it is necessary to understand where the energy of the society organised by you will move, what way-out it will be looking for, into what forms it will take and where it will lead to.

Depreciating these definite elections due to non-participation of a definite candidate in these elections, the organisers of the "voters' strike" launch a dangerous boomerang, which will certainly hit them as politicians and the society.

Depreciation of the institution of elections means increasing the social value of a revolution or a coup. These are the connecting political vessels. If you cannot (do not want, do not plan, etc.) to achieve change through elections, then, you are making room for other political actions.

Elections or pitchforks. There is no other alternative.

The habit of non-voting is the sister of the habit of revolution.

Democrats should not educate and raise revolutionaries. Even simply because they are more likely to perish in the flames of revolutions.

CAPITULATION BEFORE THE PUTIN

In what elections was Alexei Navalny going to take part? In the very elections in which we all take part - dishonest, opaque, not free elections.

Today there are no other elections in Russia.

But participation in such elections is the only possible and the only correct form of peaceful political struggle.

True, this is a game with rules imposed on us. It is a run in the swamp. But there will be no other elections under Putin.

First, we will learn how to win in such elections and only after that we will be able to return to fair elections to the people, in the whole country inclusive.

It will not work the other way. Fair elections will not come to the country out of the blue. The present Russian authorities, illegitimate children of dishonest elections, will never give us fair elections for their political death.

True, participation in such elections means participation in a political struggle within a system which has been destroying freedom. But free people are able to win in non-free elections, when they become a majority.

We need to learn at such elections, in these fields and in this morass how to defeat a political adversary. By the overwhelming majority of civil society. Such correlation of forces can be achieved only in the struggle against the opponent, a superior opponent at present.

And here - the second key question. The "voters' strike" is a disguised form of surrender to the acting authorities: "I do not want to go to the elections, the winner of which is known in advance, I do not participate in the crowd scenes (a circus, clownery, etc.)."

It sounds proudly in form, but extremely sad in actual fact.

The "voters' strike" supports the myth of Putin's invincibility. All the legally important reservations that the next presidential term will be the fourth, the elections are unlawful, and participation in unlawful elections is unworthy of a citizen – all this is in favour of the power holders rather than the poor.

They will win on such elections - elections without citizens - as a ruling class confidently and without problems. Russia's ruling class of Russia and personally Vladimir Putin need such elections without dissenting voters.

The "voters' strike" is a form of deceitful agreement with Putin's uncontested omnipotence, a form of avoiding a personal direct clash with him.

"We will never be able to win the elections" – this postulate is the most pernicious and suicidal for democracy; it de-energises people's energy, emasculates civil strivings and paralyses the public will.

This postulate corrupts the people, discourages their saving habit of voting, as it is exactly a habit that - the only one multiplied by millions of votes - can bring peaceful changes to the country, as it always happens in history.

A voter who did not come to the polling station once, one day receives a nasty and contagious experience of avoiding elections, the experience of non-voting, the experience of non-participation, the experience of not solving difficult tasks, the experience of not taking responsibility. Sooner or later, such an experience can become a habit.

A DISAPPEARING VOTER

The third question is how much we believe in ourselves and the people.

If a politician is confident in his abilities, is certain of mass support of citizens with whom he is on constant communication, you can show in almost any situation how many people are with you and what is their strength.

A politician can show how many supporters he has exactly through his actions in the elections, and this can be not only a vote for the candidate.

It is possible (nobly, but very painful and difficult) to call a political ally for support, if there is such in the elections. It is possible to make ballots invalid in the same way, up to writing down the name of the candidate suspended from elections in the ballot (I did so in 2012, having written down **Yavlinsky** in my ballot).

Citizens can and must do an action that can be physically counted so that to say "Look, there are many of us, you (yet in power) cannot disregard us, we are here, we have not left and will not leave.

A "voters' strike" is a way to a political deadlock, because it does not allow the voter to prove and tangibly exercise his or her suffrage.

A voter who did not come to the election "on purpose", in protest, is dissolved in the number of voters who did not come to the elections out of habit, or laziness, or indifference and disbelief. Such a voter cannot be seen, it is impossible to count his or her vote. A non-voting voter disappears as a citizen.

Political privatisation of non-voting citizens is a very wicked move for a politician. You cannot add your 10 cents to 45 cents of someone else and declare that you have 55 cents in your hands. It is not fair.

The "voter's strike" represents despair and disbelief rather than strength and will.

Why should democrats nurture powerlessness and lack of will in the people? Do we want to win, or is life of those avoiding elections quite comfortable and convenient for us?

Only those who come to the polling stations will be able to answer these questions.

A call for non-voting is a call for political unemployment of voters, a call to wean from the feelings of the master of the country, the sovereign of power, a call to abandon the struggle for the state that belongs to us by right.

A call to non-voting means alienation of people from their civil feelings, and this is very dangerous for society. This weans people from their self-awareness as the people, from realization of their significance, their historical and political role.

The "voters' strike" means fostering of a sense of political inferiority in the people, habituating voters to the fact that they do not choose the power (the power is chosen not by them). A politician should not habituate voters to the political unemployment, even if he himself cannot participate in the elections.

You cannot corrupt the people by inaction.

THE BOOMERANG OF WEAKNESS

The "voters' strike" is a recognition that Putin is stronger than us.

In fact, we are stronger than Putin. Putin has no future. We have it. But this can only be proved through elections gathering all the forces.

All should come to the polling stations and prove that we are the majority. We should grit our teeth, win elections and take the power into our hands.

Is the Russian society capable of defeating Putin in the election today? Yes, it is.

The number of people who are dissatisfied with the direction of the development of the country is larger than the number of those satisfied with life or submissive to the fate of Putin's electorate.

•Do we have enough strength for this victory? Only elections can show this. Not only these elections, but all elections, literally every election, and none of elections should be neglected.

Are politicians able to unite civil society, and not for personal ambitions, but for the sake of the future, for the sake of common freedom?

Only elections can show this.

Time will come (and it happened many times in history), when a politician who called for a "voters' strike", will lack these very votes - those who wanted and were ready to vote, but they were said: do not go, do not do it, this is not our war, we are above the battle.

A boomerang that has not reached its goal returns.

But it can return to empty hands that have forgotten how to hold weapons.

Lev Shlosberg

[Source: http://gubernia.pskovregion.org/columns/bezrobotica-izbirateley/](http://gubernia.pskovregion.org/columns/bezrobotica-izbirateley/)

Lev Shlosberg, from Pskov, was severely beaten for publishing an article, the first in Russia, about unknown graves of Russian soldiers sent by the state to Ukraine, thus proving their military involvement. However. nothing will keep a good man down... (interLib 2014-07 - Putin's Punchbag)

reviews

Joseph Chamberlain, international statesman, national leader, local icon,
edited by Ian Cawood & Chris Upton.
Palgrave MacMillan, 2016

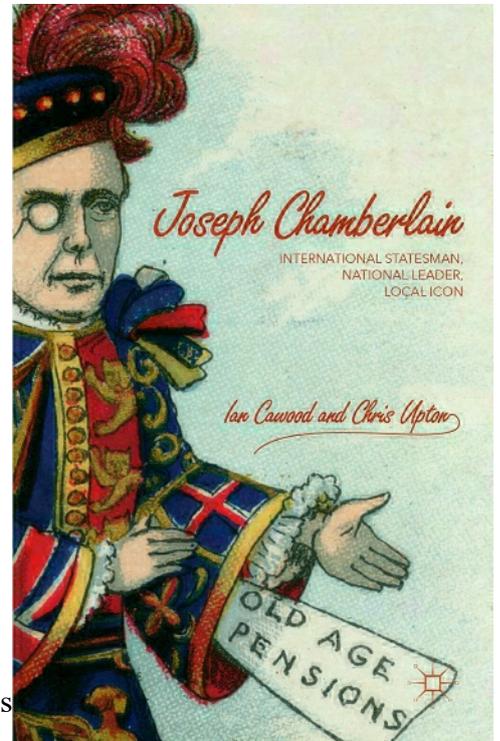
Liberals tend to love or loath Joseph Chamberlain. On the one hand there is the Radical, champion of municipal enterprise, on the other, the deserter into Tory ranks, wrecker of perhaps the last real chance to save Ireland within the Union. I cast my mind back a long way to A level History; one of the questions put was ‘why did the champion of radicalism, choose the Colonial Office in Salisbury’s Cabinet?’ This seemed some kind of cop out compared with what he might have achieved elsewhere. Radicals within the Liberal party and the Liberal Unionists could still coalesce over common issues in days when party disciplines were less fixed, but Imperialism was the order of the day, and something where Chamberlain had more in common with most Tories (though why not with Rosebery or the LImps?)

This collection of essays, which stems from the Joseph Chamberlain Centenary Conference of 2014, in Newman College, Birmingham (of which the Liberal Democrat History Group were major participants), answers some of the questions that arise there. Chamberlain was of a generation with a more direct understanding of empire, along with Dilke, Rosebery, Curzon and Salisbury. T.G. Otte’s contribution particularly underscores that, whilst Jackie Grobler (also emphasising the man as a meddler of ill-intent in South Africa) and Tom Brooking (New Zealand and the development of what would become Commonwealth) give depth to that understanding.

Moving through national and Birmingham politics, contributors frequently contrast Chamberlain with an ally and friend who became an opponent. This tells us something, somewhere along the line it is noted that political careers frequently end in failure, not necessarily because one is ahead of one’s time, but one is out of step with one’s colleagues. Chamberlain (and interestingly, his sons) failed to recognise this. To this end, whilst destroying Mr. Gladstone’s government, he invariably paved the way for Campbell Bannerman’s.

I am not a Chamberlain fan, but this collection greatly contributes to our understanding of one of history’s might-have-beens – tremendous focus, but in the end too much focus and not enough flexibility. This is not a comprehensive biography of Chamberlain, but covers much of the basic ground whilst throwing light not only less explored aspects of his career and late 19th century politics in general.

Stewart Rayment



How to Do Things with International Law, by Ian Hurd
Princeton University Press 2017

It is very interesting to read a political scientist’s book on law. Hurd is not concerned with what the law says, or whether it is coherent. He is certainly not beholden to the narrative of law as the pinnacle of human organisation. He considers it as just one possible political tool of many, and considers how it has become the dominant philosophy of international relations. Through the book, Hurd aims to show that states have become obsessed with framing their actions as permitted by international law, and this obsession with international law pushes the boundaries of the law itself.

How to Do Things with International Law

Ian Hurd

Most international lawyers imagine that the international legal system can function like their domestic legal systems in being impartial and fairly restraining actions. But international law does not work like this. States can choose which rules apply to them, they have varying levels of influence over making the rules and enforcement is tricky. Many lawyers lament these flaws and want to reform the international legal system so it looks more like a national legal system. In contrast, Hurd believes that international law is an incredible success story. Not because it has managed to restrain state's actions and create a harmonious world, as lawyers hope, but because it has become *the* prism through which to view all international relations.

Hurd examines three areas in which legal arguments have dominated political discourse – the right to wage war; new forms of warfare such as drones; and torture. He shows how legal texts, such as the UN Charter's rules prohibiting war except for self-defence, have been regularly invoked by states. And as countries cite rules to explain behaviour which does not

fall squarely within the literal meaning of the text, the rule morphs. Pre-emptive self-defence and self-defence against non-state actors, such as Taliban rebels, have fed into the law of war. Hurd proposes the compelling argument that law does not just prohibit conduct, but it implicitly permits other conduct, so states will push law to permit the conduct they wish to engage in. He argues that 'the need to justify oneself according to the rules makes ... leaders dependent on those rules' but 'even well-legitimated rules contain within them the possibility of endless competing interpretations of compliance and noncompliance.' Herein lies the difficulty of international law: it is powerful because it frames all international behaviour, yet the more it is used, the more it bends to the states' will.

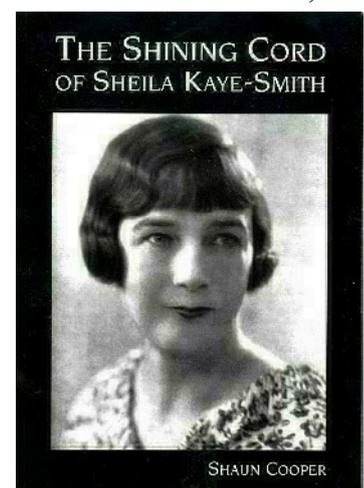
Hurd does not seek to be the last word on international law. Of course, it will always be right to think about what international law *should* do. Maybe one day we will establish a system that can truly limit states' behaviour. In the meantime, Hurd gives us a refreshing dose of pragmatism. If law is the only language states understand, we must be alert to countries using disingenuous legal arguments to justify their conduct and use our own legal tools to respond.

Eleanor Healy-Birt

The Shining Cord of Sheila Kaye-Smith, by Shaun Cooper.
Country Books 2017 £12.50
isbn 9781910489475

Many people have observed the magical or mystical qualities of Sussex. The proximity to the sea, the tones of the underlying rocks all contribute in the light of sun or moon to make it shine. This is reflected in the writing of Sheila Kaye-Smith, who was born in St Leonard's in 1889 and whose stories are primarily set in the eastern end of the county and its Kentish borders. Perhaps an unlikely convert to Roman Catholicism,

coming from a non-conforming family, and a county which gleefully sings 'A penneth of rope to hang the Pope' at its multitude of Bonfire celebrations. She was seduced at a young age by Christ Church, St. Leonard's; at the cusp of the twentieth century, Anglo-Catholic and higher than Rome. Although religion features in her earlier books – *The Tramping Methodist*; *Spell Land*, where Anglicanism wrestles with Swedenborg, it made a quantum jump after the First World War. Reviewers of *Tamarisk Town*, noted this stylistic change half way through the book. She married a curate, Penrose Fry in 1929; the author of a book on Anglo-Catholicism. Together they would convert to Rome, and eventually move to Northiam, where they would build the church St. Theresa of Lisieux in the village.



In many respects, the high point of her writing was just before this, *The Sussex Gorse*, *The Fall of the House of Alard*, *Joanna Godden*. Close observation of the countryside, farming and the tangled lives of its people in an age before mass communication. She regrets the encroachment of the town on the countryside, the emigration from London and the loss of the Sussex dialect. Writing in this style before she had read or met Hardy (he warned her to stay out of Wessex), the comparison is fair – such miserable lives. Misery was not however, the life of Sheila Kaye-Smith, though losses of father and sisters affected her writing. Her characters would be parodied in Stella Gibbons' *Cold Comfort Farm*, with all of its urban sophistication – not a country book; was the 'something nasty in the woodshed' that haunted Ada Doom also encountered by Claude Shepherd in the opening pages of *Spell Land*?

Cooper makes no mention of Kaye-Smith's politics, beyond a general feminist context (some of her associates were prominent suffragists). *Tamarisk Town* is something of a local government novel, roughly contemporary with the great *South Riding*, but set, ostensibly in the 1850s, it has more in common with Jane Austen's unfinished *Sanditon*. The chief protagonist, Monypenny, is a Liberal and promotes the 'improvement' of his town He is also a cad.

Shaun Cooper has done her justice in his biography, with enough of, or on her writing to tempt you to read more. Some of her books go in and out of print and titles are not uncommon in older second-hand bookshops. Shaun also provides us with some 'Easter Eggs'... I'm sworn to secrecy on these, but will liken them to the extras which you sometimes get on a DVD of a film, and they more than justify their inclusion.

Stewart Rayment

**The Battle for British Islam, by Sara Khan with Tony McMohan.
Saqi 2016 £14.99 isbn 9780863561597 eisbn 9780863561641**

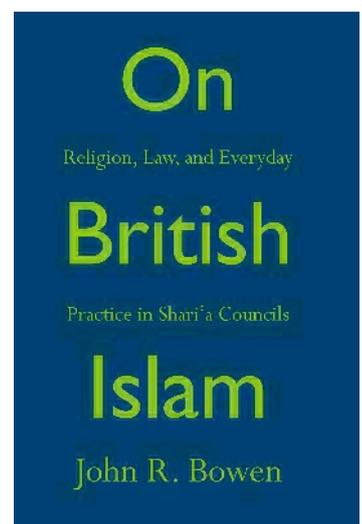
It is a very well researched book and a lot of effort has been made to look at the subject matter from different aspects. The writer's interpretation of religion includes human rights and pluralism but the majority of Muslims might not agree. She is rather critical of some of the old fashioned conservative religious people who emphasise some of the misinterpreted parts of the Holy Quran without trying to radicalise any one. The book puts too much emphasis on women's rights and what she believes is happening to these. I do not agree with the title. There is no such thing as 'British Islam'. All religions are universal and globally based. It would better to say "Islam in Britain".

The writer promotes the work of "Prevent". In my view, Prevent is an insult to professionals, doctors, imams, teachers and college lecturers. It has created distrust amongst many ordinary, law abiding Muslims who feel that they are being blamed for various terrorists acts. It also makes those who are involved in radicalisation be more careful which kills the purpose of Prevent. In this year the autumn Liberal Democrat Conference passed a resolution abolish Prevent. Prevent has put extremists in hiding and imams, doctors and teachers have lost the confidence of children, therefore it has become very difficult to get children in confidence to talk sensibly.

The writer has mentioned that many Muslim men, women, imams and other leading people are trying to fight against radicalism. We need to allow open discussions, otherwise those who are being radicalised cannot be made to understand the misinterpretation of Islamic rules.

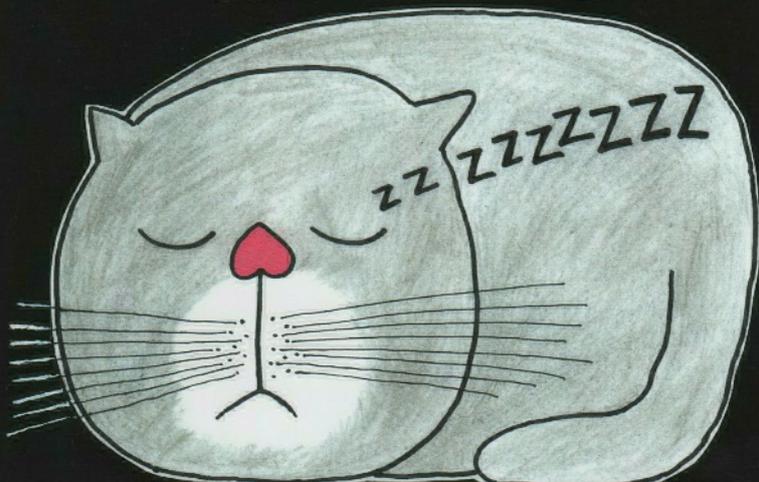
The book ignores or is not accepting that there are many values that human rights emphasises which are not accepted by any religion, eg LGBT. Having a belief does not mean that you can ignore the beliefs of others. If you want to be respected and live in a non-religious country, you must respect everyone's belief and treat everyone equally and according to law of the country where you live. ISIS and similar organisations are nothing to do with real Islam. They are bunch of terrorists using religion to justify their acts. I admire her courage to write such a book. It clearly states what is happening in various parts of UK though I only agree with part of her conclusions.

S Ahmad Mallick.



THAT CAT

is the laziest cat in the world



J-F BURFORD & IAN HEATH

THAT CAT

is the laziest cat in the world



J-F BURFORD & IAN HEATH

That Cat is the laziest cat in the world, by J-F Burford and Ian Heath.
That Lazy Cat 2016 £7.99 isbn 9781905912469
colouring book isbn 9780995691001 £5.99

There could be some competition for the title Laziest Cat in the World; I've known many, though the present incumbents are surprisingly active. J-F Burford puts forward family cat Casper as the claimant, and speculates on his many adventures... stalking the mice in the Tonge family garden I don't doubt, myself. Ian Heath's name will ring a bell... his cartoons have graced Punch, the Daily Mail and Evening Standard. Suitable for all from 3 to 103, you can buy the books and limited prints through the online shop at www.thatlazycat.co.uk

Stewart Rayment

Skerryvore

A TALE OF TERROR

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY MICHAEL PUNTER
 ORIGINAL SOUNDSCAPE BY GARY RYAN

Skerryvore

Performed by Rachel McCarron and Rob Allender

It's 1899, and Professor Barrett welcomes you to an illuminating evening in the Chamber of Demonstration! Tonight, you will meet his prize exhibit: Mary Campbell.

Mary is a hysteric. She has been in the Professor's care for several years since a series of violent outbursts against men in spectacles. Mary has no idea why she does such things. But Professor Barrett believes, somewhat controversially, that it might have something to do with events she experienced as a child on the remote island of Skerryvore...

On 23rd December 1876, tragedy befell the lighthouse at Skerryvore. The three crewmen vanished, leaving a meal on the table and a fire in the grate. Only Mary was left. A little girl with nowhere to go. A witness without a memory. But tonight, via the miracle of mesmerism, Professor Barrett will return Mary to the eye of the storm. At last, she will tell all she knows about the tragedy at Skerryvore, finding redemption in the process. That is, if everything goes to plan...

Skerryvore is a new play in the traditions of *The Woman in Black* and *The Turn of the Screw*, from the author of *Darker Shores*, *1066 Three Kings* and *The Lost Gospel of Pontius Pilate*. It features an original soundscape by Gary Ryan, one of the world's leading classical guitarists.

Stage management by Jane Richardson, lighting direction by Jonathan Richardson, poster design by Cliff Brooker.

The performance runs for approximately 50 minutes without an interval.

Skerryvore

A TALE OF TERROR

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY MICHAEL PUNTER
 ORIGINAL SOUNDSCAPE BY GARY RYAN



TUES 20 & WEDS 21 FEBRUARY 2018 AT 7.30PM
 STABLES THEATRE, THE BOURNE, HASTINGS TN34 3BD
 Adults £13, under-18s and groups £10, members £8
 Box office 01424 423221 - www.stablestheatre.co.uk

Not suitable for children under 11 or for those of a nervous disposition



TUES 6 TO THURS 8 MARCH 2018 AT 7PM
 THE OLD OPERATING THEATRE AND HERB GARRET
 9A ST THOMAS STREET, LONDON SE1 9RY

Adults £14, under-18s and groups £12
 T. +44 020 7188 2679 - E. info@oldoperatingtheatre.com

Not suitable for children under 11 or for those of a nervous disposition