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# INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



*When Angela Merkel's press secretary tweeted this photo at G7 it went viral. It said it all.  
The Indian Express said 'Trump placed on the naughty seat?'  
What would your caption be?*

**Sierra Leone    Turkish Elections**  
**Palestine Petition    Malaysia**  
**China in Africa Forum**

# EVENTS

**22nd-24th June** 200th LI Exec. Delivering climate justice: Liberal responses to the Paris Agreement, Berlin, Germany

**23rd June** March for a People's Vote, London

**25th June** NLC Diplomat's Reception. £25.00  
NLC 6.30-8.00pm *see page 7*

**9th July** LIBG AGM. NLC 6.30pm

**15th-18th September** Liberal Democrat's Conference. Brighton

**13th-14th October** Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru/Welsh Liberal Democrat Autumn Conference, Marine Hotel, Aberystwyth

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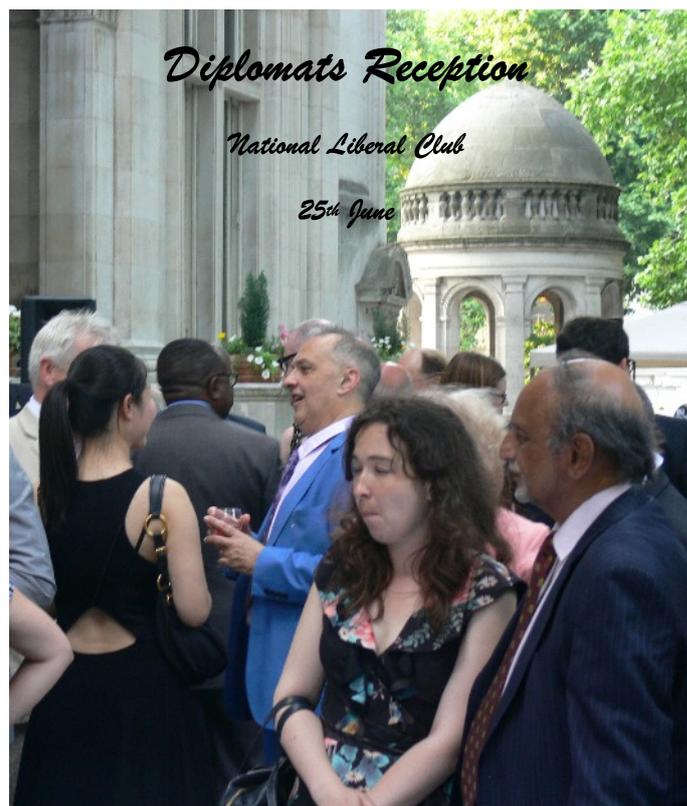
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Photographs: Stewart Rayment, Rebecca Tinsley, Liberal International



# TALKING TRASH IN FREETOWN

## Rebecca Tinsley

The stench of putrid rubbish is in the air. Along each road in Sierra Leone's sprawling capital, Freetown, heaps of garbage liquefy in the relentless May heat. The piles are so big that they cause traffic jams as cars manoeuvre around them. There is much honking of horns, crunching of gears and belching of ominously black exhaust fumes.

While rubbish mountains might prompt a Focus team campaign in Britain, they are a cause for celebration in Sierra Leone.

The newly-elected government of Brigadier Julius Maada Bio has borrowed a civic engagement strategy from Rwanda: once a month each citizen will be expected to take to the streets and alleys, cleaning up decades of rubbish. Plastic bottles and insidious little water bags, mango stones, and soda can ring tops line each alley, creek and public space. Rubbish bins didn't exist, and neither did garbage collection, until now. The first weekend's turnout was so enthusiastic, and the volume of rubbish so vast, that there were insufficient trucks to collect the piles. Hence the current temporary traffic obstructions. Democracy activists say the mass clean up initiative marks a watershed moment for this West African nation of six million. Its government is trying to foster civic responsibility, national identity and a sense of collective ownership where previously there has been regional and ethnic rivalry.



As Amadou, a social worker told me proudly, “The new president didn't even steal a dime from the budget for the clean-up. Can you imagine? And our civil servants are so happy because they are actually being paid.” His colleague, Samuel, recalled that the previous president took a delegation of 40 hacks to UN meetings, while neighbouring Liberia and Guinea took seven each.

### BRAZEN PLUNDER

“It was embarrassing. Their plunder and sense of entitlement was so brazen. Ministers would confiscate agricultural equipment belonging to the state and keep it for

use on their private farms.” Leaving aside the chronic corruption, Sierra Leone, a country the size of Scotland, has had more than its share of tragedy. Between 1991-2002, a devastating war claimed 50,000 lives. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF), rebels-without-an-ideological-cause, traded diamonds for weapons from neighbouring Liberia. The RUF were famous for punishing civilians by amputating arms and enslaving as many as 40,000 child soldiers. In 2014, an Ebola epidemic brought the economy to a standstill, killing 4,000, and most recently a mudslide in Freetown killed a thousand. I went to Sierra Leone because my small NGO, Network for Africa, is training local social workers, officials and police to counsel survivors of Ebola and the civil war.

Of those who contracted Ebola, 27% died, but the rest recovered. However, it is likely they will be affected by serious health concerns for the rest of their lives. Moreover, they are stigmatised in a culture where superstition is widespread.

Well-meaning development officials in the wealthy white world are often uncomfortable when confronted by the grip that magic and the fear of evil spirits still has in many countries receiving aid.

But ‘sensitisation training’ will fail if we ignore the fact that many people believe Ebola (or disability for that matter) is a consequence of angry ancestors or bad juju. For instance, a nurse in neighbouring Liberia who had risked her life helping afflicted patients throughout the Ebola crisis, later bled to death during childbirth because no medical staff wanted to touch her.

I met Foday, a 28-yearold single father, who had to move away from his home district when his daughter's mother died of Ebola. His family and neighbours shunned him because of what had happened to his girlfriend. He was struggling to find a job, despite his qualifications, because the shadow of Ebola hangs over him.

Attending our trauma counsellor training session was Marie, an official from the ministry of social welfare. She told me that each day during the crisis, she had collected children from the hospital green zone, where Ebola survivors were moved once they were well enough to leave the red treatment zone. The epidemic made orphans of thousands of children. Marie would painstakingly trace any surviving family members, and then deliver the children to them, following several weeks of trauma counselling.



Marie also had to assess how likely it was the child would prosper with their extended family. In too many cases, distant relatives would regard the surviving children as either potential domestic slaves, or as possessed by evil spirits. Marie told me it was common to find the children hawking bottles of water on the streets of Freetown; they had been sold to traffickers or handed over to strangers who promised to provide education and lodging for the children.

When I asked her what it had been like, during the crisis, Marie recalled the long, stressful days, trying to find safe homes for Ebola orphans. Each night when she reached home she would strip off all her clothes on the veranda and bag them, then scrub every inch of her body with hand sanitizer in the shower. She would collapse into bed, exhausted. But for months she was sleeping alone because her husband had moved to the spare bedroom.

I expected Marie and the others to be critical of how long it had taken the World Health Organisation to respond at the start of the Ebola epidemic. But, as so often in desperately poor African countries, there was forgiveness. "We're all human," Marie commented. "Once they got here, they were really good. And we remember the British sent their medical ship. That was very helpful." Perhaps predictably, the social workers, officials and police attending our week-long training session praised the government for its efforts to tackle cultural resistance to public health education messages about Ebola.

Yet, Sierra Leoneans are not shy to criticise their rulers on other matters. Following the election victory of Bio, the mood is so optimistic that the nation's challenges are being discussed in a can-do atmosphere. "We are hopeful," Amadou said with a gap-tooth grin. Less euphoric was his colleague Samuel, old enough to have adult recollections of the civil war. "We'll see what happens," he said quietly. The fate of the civil war's amputees is less discussed. "They live in special areas," said Samuel, looking uncomfortable. "Most of them can't work." "They're in compounds," explained a police community worker. But they are not in evidence on the crowded streets of Freetown, or in the residential alleys climbing steeply up the mountains or down to the stinking creeks where women wash clothes. It is as if the book has been closed on the years when rapacious rebels terrorised the rural areas, driving people into urban slums.

"There isn't a family in this country that wasn't affected in one way or another," said Amadou, his crooked smile faltering for a moment. We "It is as if the book has been closed on the years when rapacious rebels terrorised the rural areas, driving people into urban slums" conducted training sessions in which participants roleplayed traumatised clients, based on their own experiences. It emerged that every person there had lost a close family member in the war. An important technique in countering flashbacks is to teach people to visualise a safe place from their past, into which they can retreat when terrible memories overwhelmed them. In the case of many of our participants, none of them could dredge up a happy childhood memory that didn't lead to a horrific one. Instead, we asked them to create an imaginary safe place. Several of them chose the days they had spent with us, in a hotel conference room, as their most secure moments in life so far.

## DEVASTATING LEGACY

Apart from the civil war's devastating legacy and Ebola, Bio's new government faces massive economic challenges if it is to tackle the nation's lack of development (Sierra Leone ranks 178 out of 187 countries on the UN's index).

"The scoundrels who have emptied our coffers for decades neglected the most fundamental sector, agriculture," explained Samuel. "We have excellent farm land, and we used to export food, but for years our government has relied on rents from our natural resources to fund their extravagance. We have subsistence agriculture, but we need a concerted effort to farm efficiently and on a big scale. It shames me that I could not feed my children as well as my mother fed me when I was a boy."

But even the sombre Samuel was pleased that President Bio has pledged to make Sierra Leone self-sufficient by the end of his five-year term. Among the participants in our training week, there was also resentment that the international media had exaggerated the level of violence and ethnic tension during the recent election campaign.

"They seem to have decided what the story of Sierra Leone is, as if we cannot have a different future," one of our social worker participants remarked sadly. Indeed, if you are accustomed to civil wars and coups, the current situation would seem remarkably peaceful.

President Maada Bio, age 53, comes with his own baggage. He was in a group of officers who overthrew the government in 1992. He now takes what he calls "collective responsibility" for human rights violations during the junta, while the army was fighting the RUF. He staged another coup in 1996 to get rid of his superior officers because, he says, they reneged on a promise to hold elections. He duly handed over power, although a British intervention was required in 2000 when the RUF made a final attempt to seize Freetown.

It was Tony Blair's short, sharp military action in Sierra Leone that strengthened the hands of liberal interventionists who claimed that a prompt and concerted show of international force at the early stages of the conflicts in Rwanda and Bosnia might have deterred the Hutu and Serbs respectively. Arguably, the subsequent failures of the Afghan and Iraq interventions damned the people of Darfur and Syria to their miserable fate.

Back in Freetown, the cult of personality is already in evidence. On main routes, hundreds of posters have gone up, proclaiming, "Congratulations, Mr President." They join other public exhortations to wash your hands, not to leave dead bodies on the streets and to study ("today a reader, tomorrow a leader"). They fight for space with the riot of faith-based adverts (Red Hot Prophetic Church, New Wine Ministries, Wind and Fire Crusade) on every street. The patient and forgiving people of Sierra Leone need all the luck they can get.

### *Rebecca Tinsley is Director of Network for Africa*

The National Electoral Commission announced that Maada Bio of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) won 51.8 percent of a total of over 2.5 million ballots cast in the March 31 vote, beating out the ruling All People's Congress candidate Samura Kamara, who garnered 48.1 percent. (The SLPP has variously been described at Nationalist, Centrist, Third Way and Social Democratic; the APC, centre-left to left wing – it has shown some of socialism's worst traits in the past, though neither party has a pristine record on democracy & pluralism).  
<http://www.africanews.com/2018/04/05/opposition-candidate-julius-maada-bio-wins-sierra-leone-presidential-runoff/>



# HOPE OR DESPAIR; THE ELECTION IN TURKEY. YILDEZ

Early elections will be held in Turkey on the 24th of June. The decision Erdoğan took, caught everybody by surprise because no one was expected the election day would be coming that early. The general consensus was the election date would be around early 2019 yet he did choose the June 24th; possibly hope of evading the fast closing a massive economic crisis, which is still looming over the country.

Erdoğan's party formed an alliance with an infamous ultra nationalist party (MHP). He calculated that two parties together would give him a clear majority for his absolute power also give his party (AKP) comfortable lead in the parliament. Parliament is not going to be as important as before; it will turn into a puppet house anyway because the new system gathers all the power in the hand of the president.



When Erdoğan announced his decision of early elections everyone was sure of his victory even the hedge fund managers in London started buying Turkish bonds. Then came the big surprise. The opposition party İyi declared its own candidate had also formed an alliance with two other parties. Meral Akşener (former minister and MP also formerly nationalist party member) the other of alliance is a small but influential moderate Islamic (almost left wing) party. Akşener had split from the MHP and formed the İyi party in 2017. At first, she was seen as

the main contender against Erdoğan. Polls and political commentators were pointing to Akşener as a real contender.

Then things took a dramatic change. The main opposition party, the social-democratic CHP, declared its own candidate; Muharrem İnce, a retired physics teacher, who goes Friday prayers but also never hides that he drinks alcohol and most importantly he is a great speaker. As soon as his candidacy was announced, winds of the political climate started to change their course. According to some polls he already managed pull his alliance votes up and close Erdoğan. The latest polls states that Erdoğan would not be elected at first round then comes the bombshell; in the second-round opposition alliance might actually win.

The Kurdish party (HDP) is not officially a member of the opposition but they have hinted they will support Erdoğan's opponents in the second round. If the HDP managed to pass the ten percent threshold that means Erdoğan and his party will end up losing a lot of votes in the Kurdish populated areas. So, the elections turn into a rather difficult maths problem.

In light of these developments there is also another factor which becoming visible every day; that is Erdoğan is not the same old Erdoğan as we all know. He looks kind of tired, surprised and it is obvious despite all the efforts he is unable to gather the crowds as easily as before. So, we can safely say there might be a light at the end of the tunnel.

Despite the fact there seems to be a chance of change in the horizon no one is forgetting the ice-cold reality of Erdoğan's absolute power over every single institution in the country. Democracy is already dead and buried in Turkey; the country has been under emergency rule since the 2016 coup attempt. All the Kurdish media has been either shut down or taken over. Turkey has become world's biggest journalist jailer. The number of Turks leaving the country is the highest in the history. Parliament has been turned into a puppet house. Erdoğan and his close family plus a hand full of shady businessman and few civil servants are acting

as if they were a large Sicilian mafia clan. Since 2010's nothing could be accountable, none of the state spendings, government contracts, state banks accounts (credits) have not been checked. Accountability of the government spending has been prevented full stop. Turkish public have no idea where their tax money is going, who is getting filthy rich?

Less than half a dozen large Turkish construction company have been getting the lion's share of the government contracts which runs into billions of US dollars for last ten years. Government tender regulation has been changed and re-adjusted nearly 200 times while they are in power. No one knows where the money goes. Turkey has been under an emergency rules since the coup attempt, so there is absolutely no justice, no rule of law, let alone the whiff of democracy at all. There is a general consensus of belief that Erdoğan wants to be an eternal leader until he dies. This is a logical demand because otherwise this huge corruption system would collapse and they would be tried. So, there is no other way for him than a clear win; he still needs acceptance at least from the big chunk of the population. He is trying every possible way to push the Kurdish party (HDP) under the ten percent of threshold so that he could gain more votes from the south east. Under Turkish electoral rules, parties failing to reach the 10% threshold forfeit their votes – invariably to Erdoğan's party. Every judge who will witness and preside over the counting of votes was handpicked by him. So there goes the clean election and clean vote counting. The leader of HDP, Selahattin Demirtas, has been in jail for over a year on some petty accusations. Most of the HDP MPs are also in jail and stripped of their status.

The coming election maybe the most important one in history of Turkish Republic. For the first time in last sixteen years of his reign Erdoğan has lost the support of the western bankers and hedge fund managers. This was very visible after his London visit in May, so there clearly is a wind of change ahead. Without the support of hot money coming from the west Erdoğan won't be able keep the economy going as it is. The trade deficit is running more than couple of hundred billion dollars a year. The era of cheap money is almost over, so there goes the Turkish economy balance sheets. Despite we have somewhat observed the light at the end of the tunnel; I am afraid that Erdoğan will win again no matter what. In the case of Erdoğan's victory, our dreams of expecting a better future for our children, democracy and freedom would be buried so deep that future generations of Turkish children would not even know the meaning of these words.

*Yildez*



## **LIBG and National Liberal Club Annual Diplomats Reception**



**June 25, 2018 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM**

**National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place London SW1A 2HE**

An opportunity to meet informally with members of the London diplomatic corps and senior Liberal Democrats. This event is supported by LIBG but is now organised by the National Liberal Club, to which all enquiries should be made.

**Tickets are £25.00**

Cheques made out to "National Liberal Club" can be sent to Louisa Pooley at the club.

For payments by credit card contact Louisa Pooley on 020 7930 9871 or: [bookings@nlc.org.uk](mailto:bookings@nlc.org.uk)

For payments by bank transfer please use:

Natwest Bank. Sort Code 60-30-06. Account 36935883 and then email [bookings@nlc.org.uk](mailto:bookings@nlc.org.uk) so that payments can be matched to names.

# Chinese Influence in Africa Forum.

## Jonathan Fryer

In the 1880s, the European powers divided up Africa into their mutually recognised colonial spheres and the borders of most African states still reflect the lines drawn on the map then. In the 20th Century, two new big players became involved in Africa: the United States and the Soviet Union, sometimes facing each other off in proxy wars and militarising much of the continent in the process. In comparison, China was a late entrant into the evolving scramble for Africa, these days as much about access to markets as control of raw materials.



As Shao Zheng, Counsellor at the Chinese Embassy in London, last night reminded a forum on China in Africa put on by Liberal International British Group (LIBG), African votes in the UN General Assembly helped the People's Republic get its seat in the United Nations in 1971. But the People's Republic's relations with African states and their populations has not always been smooth since then. When I was working in Kenya and Tanzania in 1976 many Africans complained to me that the Chinese who came to Africa — for example, to build the TanZam railway, that linked the Zambian copper belt to the port of Dar Es Salaam — did not mix with the locals and looked down on them, which was a complaint echoed by African students in China. Since then matters have improved when it comes to community engagement, but according to other panelists at last night's event — such as Noel Mbala, former Minister of Transport of the

Democratic Republic of Congo and Rebecca Tinsley of the charity Network for Africa — the Chinese tend to deal only with elites and many of the big infrastructure projects they are supporting bring little benefit to the poor. Professor Paul Reynolds gave an interesting brief case study of how the Chinese in Djibouti have flexed their geopolitical muscles and clearly Beijing's interest in Africa is not just about trade. Indeed, as China asserts its global presence more under the guidance of Xi Jinping, we can expect to see an increasing Chinese footprint in Africa as well as more Chinese, ranging from engineers to hawkers. At the end of last night's meeting, when Shao Zheng was asked whether he was bothered by the criticisms levelled at China during the previous two hours, he replied that these were due to “misunderstandings”. What is doubtless true is that China and the West do often see things differently, not just with regard to Africa.

*Jonathan Fryer*

*Chinese Influence in Africa Forum, 21 May 2018 at the NLC.*

## China's Challenges in Africa.

### Paul Reynolds

China faces many challenges in its relations with Africa. How it deals with those challenges, and its changing approach, is indicative of changes in governance arrangements within China, as well as changes in policy & strategy, and of course changes in the nature of global rivalry.

Just 15 years ago China's only friends in Africa were those countries that had taken a particular anti-colonial stance and who had fallen foul of the West - such as Libya, Zimbabwe, and Sudan. Today, China has stealthily taken over the ports in strategic Djibouti from UAE-based interests (DP World) and has boldly established a large military base adjacent to the large multi-agency US base at Camp Lemonnier<sup>1</sup>, now staffing up to 10,000 military personnel under the noses of the US. Camp Lemonnier only has 4000 US military personnel. US Congress has only just woken up to this development, and at recent US

Congressional hearings the head of US AFRICOM (Africa Command) lamented that they couldn't compete with the Chinese multi-disciplinary approach.

What's more, these developments in Djibouti are part of a specific long-term resource approach to the Horn of Africa by China. The aim is to have an alternative pipeline to the South Sudan - Port Sudan route, where there have been problems with price gouging in pipeline fees by Sudan and South Sudan. The alternative is planned to terminate in Djibouti. In addition, there is on the drawing board a new Chinese-funded pipeline from the oil terminal in Djibouti to Addis, and from China's new oil installations in Southern Ethiopia. In parallel the Chinese Government has a new military agreement with Ethiopia.

China has been both stealthy and fleet of foot. What the US military is saying it that it cannot compete with is the Chinese approach taken in Djibouti, Ethiopia and elsewhere - economy and commerce first, and military second, but as an integrated strategy. The bolder approach and this integrated decision-making is attributed to Xi Jinping, who, unlike Hu Jin Tao, has taken over control of military and civilian governance mechanisms together. The US institutional system, which in Africa is decidedly military-first, cannot respond to this.

There are global military dimensions. The Chinese military base in Djibouti, and its ports in Djibouti, now form part of the Chinese 'maritime silk road'. Much of Europe's maritime oil passes through the 10-mile-wide straights known as the Bab el Mandeb between Djibouti and Yemen, en route to the Suez Canal. The Chinese government has also been seeking control of the Port of Aden in Yemen, on the other side of the straights. One can easily imagine China closing these straights for negotiating leverage, if the US moved towards even a partial blockade of Chinese mainland ports.



The Chinese integrated approach has yet to be seen in the same way in other parts of Africa, but it is on its way. Xi Jinping has signalled his campaign to 'professionalise' Chinese trading & investment practices in places like Africa, wanting to put end to the habit of state companies bearing the costs overseas, but private traders run by the same individuals, making the profits. This is seen as aimless and un-strategic. Xi Jinping also has been seeking to strengthen China's overseas and diplomatic capacity locally, which has clearly been lagging behind progress with the 'Belt and Road' initiative, in reach and depth.

These are different challenges relative to the Horn of Africa, and in most cases the economic & commercial policy leads the military aspect by a greater distance.

However, either way, under Xi Jinping, it looks very much like the days of the 'peaceful rise' doctrine are over.

### *Paul Reynolds*

<sup>1</sup> Camp Lemonnier is a United States Naval Expeditionary Base, situated at Djibouti–Ambouli International Airport and home to the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) of the U.S. Africa



This Forum was dead good. Becky fighting the Africans' corner, Paul being really good, the African gentleman begging for democracy and the Chinese guy smarming, evasive and toeing party line.



My argument is that the African elite are so heavily indebted to China that it is once more plunging the continent toward a debt crisis. China gives only a small proportion of its assistance as aid; the vast majority is in the form of loans tied to specific projects that must use certain approved Chinese construction companies. Many of the loans are for vanity or prestige projects that do not benefit African citizens. Anyone who has worked in Africa knows that unless Africans citizens get some personal benefit from these projects, they will be unsustainable. Africa is littered with empty conference centres and railways running at low capacity. China practices a form of neo-colonialism by deciding what Africa needs (e.g. special economic zones). It is a great strategy for Chinese business and employment, including opening the continent to Chinese goods, which are often dumped, thereby putting African factories out of business. However, it does little for most Africans beyond the bloated,

kleptomaniac elite. Too many African leaders take a cut of loans and contracts, treating the state as their personal bank account, but with little regard for the legacy they are leaving their people. The elite has only itself to blame for taking on this debt, because they are privileged people, often educated in Britain or the States. They simply don't care about their people. The quid pro quo, of course, is supporting China at the UN when issues of contested sovereignty (Taiwan, Tibet) arise. It is also an unhelpful precedent when China abolishes term limits and cracks down on Internet freedom.



*Rebecca Tinsley*

## International Abstracts

### USA

Trump's Jerusalem Horror Show, by Frank Rich. New York magazine. 16<sup>th</sup> May 2018

Some of the complexities of Trump's 'faith' position in the light of the provocative move of the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

<http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2018/05/frank-rich-trumps-jerusalem-horror-show.html>

### Journal of Liberal History Issue 98/Spring 2018

Subtitled Europe: the Liberal Commitment, the lead articles are The European Mind of late Victorian Liberalism, by Eugenio Biagini, Liberals, free trade and Europe, from Cobden to the Common Market, by Anthony Howe, The Liberal Contribution to the Council of Europe, by Robert Ingham, Liberal parties in Europe, by Julie Smith, How the Liberal Party became committed to European Union, by William Wallace, and an interview with Shirley Williams by Peter Hennessy & Duncan Brack on the SDP and Europe. There is also an article on Philip Kerr, Lord Lothian (1882-1940) by David Grace.

### Liberator 390

Rebecca Tinsley's Talking Trash in Freetown, which also features in this issue is the main international article should you prefer to read it in hard copy. Commentary and an article by Norman Baker, Home Office Minister from 2013-14, reflect on the Windrush scandal. Elsewhere, there are opposing views on the pact between the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party in Richmond, on the monarchy, the troubles of Ethnic Minority Liberal Democrats, youth opportunities, housing, London & Welsh elections, Tim Farron, the Liberal Party and the ubiquitous Brexit. There are obituaries of Colin Rosenstiel and Nick Tregoning, both of whom will be very much missed. Our deep condolences go to their families. No more leaping out of the way of Colin's bike as he thundered down from King's Cross station to Senate House alas.



# Support statehood for Palestine



One of the Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine members, Fiona Dunlop, has just started a petition for Britain to recognise Palestine as a state in its own right. An overwhelming majority of MPs voted for this in October 2014, but Mrs May's Government is dragging its feet, saying that it must wait for "the right time". This is appalling humbug, and simply gives Israel more time to pursue its Occupation and ongoing ethnic cleansing of native, Palestinian, inhabitants, with total impunity. Please sign the petition at <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/220199>, publicise it and share it widely with others.

Fiona's petition is fully in line with last Liberal Democrat Autumn Conference which voted to support Palestinian statehood. Alon Liel, former Director-General of Israel's Foreign Ministry, has also urged us to do this, saying that 'If Britain will recognise Palestine as a government, there will be a Palestinian state'. British recognition 'will be followed by other countries, and it can turn things around.' So please sign the petition at <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/220199>, publicise it and share it widely with others.

If you have any questions about this, please respond to [info@ldfp.org.uk](mailto:info@ldfp.org.uk).

Thank you for your interest and support

## The Committee, LDFP

The Petition reads: **We urge the UK Government to recognise the State of Palestine.**

Peace in the Middle East is dependant on achieving justice for all involved and for the people of Palestine have their human rights respected and the recognition of Palestine as an independent sovereign state.

The unilateral decision to transfer the US Embassy to Jerusalem, in defiance of previous international agreements, has been highly provocative.

Alon Liel, former Director-General of Israel's Foreign Ministry 'If Britain will recognise Palestine as a government there will be a Palestinian state'. British recognition 'will be followed by other countries, and it can turn things around.'



## CAPTION COMPETITION.

This could be the photo of the year, though we must give Trump credit for his other meeting with Kim Jong-un and hope that something positive comes of it.

So, as we say on the cover, what would your caption be? Email your answers to interLib at [lockharthastings@btconnect.com](mailto:lockharthastings@btconnect.com) or hand them in at the AGM.

No prizes, but we'll display them for a laugh on the LIBG stall at the Lib Dems conference.



### **Liberated: Global Liberal Family celebrates the release of Anwar Ibrahim**

Our global liberal family is overwhelmed by the news that Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim – Malaysia’s former deputy prime minister and former leader of our member party People’s Justice Party has been pardoned by the king and was released from prison on 16<sup>th</sup> May.

Mr Ibrahim described his release, which follows last week’s historic parliamentary election, as a “new beginning... a new chapter in our country.”

LI has been passionately outspoken since Mr Ibrahim was tried and imprisoned on various politically motivated charges over the past 20 years. We have proudly stood alongside his wife, deputy prime minister Dr Wan Azizah and daughter Nurul Izzah MP, in consistently calling for his liberation at the highest levels of government and also at the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2015, where LIBG chair Phil Bennion spoke out for Anwar.

Mr Ibrahim is a symbol of the unifying powers of Liberalism and Liberal International looks forward to celebrating with him soon as we continue our campaigns for the release of other imprisoned #liberals around the world including senator Leila de Lima, Kem Socha, Raif Badawi, and Ilham Tohti.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> May, Amnesty International conferred on Senator Leila de Lima their first ever ‘most distinguished human rights defender’ award. She was arrested in February 2017 after her opposition to extra-judicial killings in the Philippine Drug War. *See interLib 2017-03*

Kem Socha is President of the Cambodia National Rescue Party. In March 2018 he was detained for a further six months without trial for charges of treason & espionage and organising the 2014 Veng Sreng street protest. The CNRP was ostensibly ‘dissolved’ in November 2017 and its members banned from politics for five years.

Raif Badawi, the Saudi writer & dissent is in gaol for ‘insulting Islam’ - his sentence increased to 10 years and 1,000 lashes, despite ill health. He was awarded the LI Prize for Freedom in 2016.

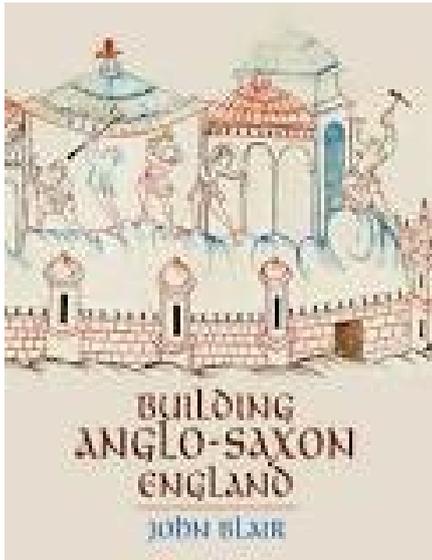
Uyghur economist Ilham Tohti is serving a life sentence in China on separatist charges. He was awarded LI’s Prize for Freedom in 2017. *See interLib 2018-01.*

There are too many others that might be named.

# reviews

**Building Anglo-Saxon England, by John Blair.**  
Princeton 2018 \$41.95  
isbn 9780691162980

Whenever the periphery rose up against the monarch, almost invariably the liberties enjoyed by the Saxons were raised against the despotism that came with the Conqueror and his descendants. How true this was may be conjecture, but Saxon (& Danish) England shaped expectations of a more pluralist body politic – be that only shared between elites for many centuries.



John Blair, of Queen's, Oxford, has a firm root in archaeology, which unlike Whiggish speculation, form the core of this book, combined with a firmer understanding of the institutional developments of the Saxon period – his earlier work, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon England* (OUP 2005) for example. So, even in the Saxon period we might see a steady move from the outdoor assembly of the moot to indoor gatherings from around 1,000 – with the potential implications for control.

Typically, of early Medieval societies, Saxon England must be recalled as slavebased – the *þeōwas* forming a significant social class, developing over time, and that such documentary evidence as survives informs us that institutions, such as the Church would seek to assert themselves over the lower orders, not always successfully. Responding to the question, 'when Adam delved...' Blair states that 'archaeology does not, on the whole, support the hypothesis of a seigniorial class

intruded into local communities from above'. There are caveats, but there appears to be some basis for the theory of a freer Saxon England, and if the period is of deeper interest to you, then you'll be well rewarded by this book.

Of particular value, the broader context aside, from a local history context – you should know your turf (alas, my favourite burhs get scant mention, but as Blair says in the context of assemblies, the Guildhall, in London mostly destroys archaeological evidence of the Roman amphitheatre, where Saxon moots were held – an almost accidental continuity, and this will be the fate of other sites in urban areas).

*Stewart Rayment.*

**Institutions and Democracy in Africa, edited by Nic Cheeseman.**  
Cambridge University Press, 2018 £24.99  
isbn 9781316602553

This volume of essays makes it clear we should all know better than to make generalisations about African elections and the governance that results. We should also grasp that while some constitutional norms like the separation of powers struggle to take root in much of Africa, there are also important but more informal rules restraining the bad behaviour of politicians.

This book sinks the myth that Africa is without legitimate institutions. It is popularly accepted that at independence, constitutional rule collapsed into personal rule, clientism and ethnicity, with a massive dose of corruption in the mix. Yet, it is clear that even tyrannical rulers now go through the motions of trying to look democratic, for the sake of avoiding international isolation. Previously, they didn't bother stuffing ballot boxes; they simply used the threat of violence to squash all opposition, while emptying the state coffers for their personal benefit.

Recently, several African leaders have manipulated referendums to abolish term limits, despite the

overwhelming popularity of term limits across the continent. China has unhelpfully set a precedent by abolishing its presidential term limits. But there has also been the peaceful change of governing parties in several previously unstable countries like Nigeria and Ghana.

The Big Man era is far from over, with presidents regarding the legal system as theirs to control. (Africans are hardly alone in this respect). Yet, there are innumerable examples of brave lawyers, journalists, and community activists who risk everything to challenge the old ways. The more we celebrate and publicise their courage, the less likely they are to be “disappeared.”

One essay here suggests that at independence, autocrats deliberately prevented the financial liberalisation necessary to allow entrepreneurs and thus the economy to flourish, so worried were they that wealthy men would challenge them. In places where leaders were less concerned about losing

their power base, it seems more likely that opposition parties could form successful coalitions to challenge governing parties.

The longer constitutions and independent electoral commissions and feisty legislatures and honest judges exist, it seems the more likely they will persist, because people become accustomed to their existence.

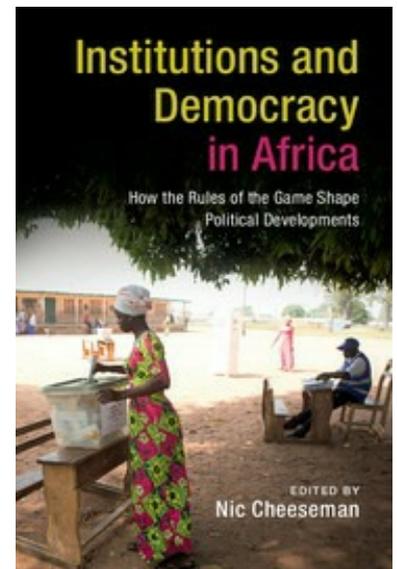
It is a shame there isn't more about how farcical outside election monitoring can be. While the authors admit that many of the most important manipulation occurs in private, more could be said about how vital a free media is in allowing debate in the months running up to elections.

Although this book is written in dense, academic prose, it offers fascinating insights into the legal, financial, electoral and legislative institutions that are taking root in Africa.

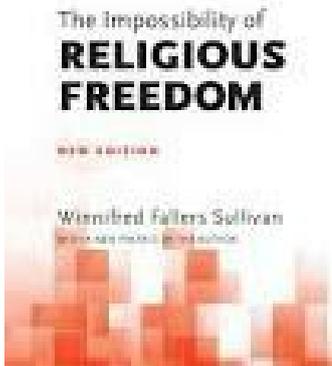
*Rebecca Tinsley*

**The Impossibility of Religious Freedoms, by Winifred Fallers Sullivan.  
Princeton University Press 2018 (new edition) £22.00  
isbn 978069110953 e-book isbn 9781400890330**

The concepts of complete religious freedom and the separation of Church and State are important strands in the self-identity of the United States. Both concepts are enshrined in the First Amendment to the Constitution which, for Americans, seems to have the status of Holy Writ. As William Hitchcock demonstrates in his excellent biography of Eisenhower (Simon and Schuster, 2018), for the thirty-fourth president, religious faith and the freedom to practise it was the single most important distinction between the Communist world and the United States. Eisenhower is quoted as saying, “Without God, there could be no American form of government, nor an American way of life. Recognition of the supreme being is the first, the most basic expression of Americanism.” Only in America could true religious freedom be found, free from both Communist oppression and the established religions of Europe.



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Winnifred Sullivan, a professor of Religious Studies and of Law, begs to differ. Her basic argument is that religious freedom in America is impossible. *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom* is a new edition of her 2005 study based on her participation as an expert witness in a legal case concerning the banning of religious memorials from a non-denominational cemetery in Florida. In 1998 a group of Florida residents challenged the city of Boca Raton on the basis that it had hindered religious freedom by forbidding the erection and maintenance of small home-made shrines on the graves of dead relatives. (This went beyond the cemetery regulations allowing for a religious symbol such as a cross or Star of David to be included with the name and dates of the deceased on a horizontal marker.) The litigation was made possible by the Federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 which, argues Sullivan, was a legal innovation despite the Act's name. The Act (and versions of it adopted by States such as Florida) was a response to a Supreme Court ruling which said that the First Amendment

did not mandate religious exemption or accommodation from general laws (in employment, for example) which may affect the activities of religious people. What the Act and associated legislation make possible, writes Sullivan, are intrusions into the work place and society generally of religious exemption and accommodation which goes beyond the First Amendment. This therefore breaks the separation of Church and State by privileging certain religious practices over other practices, religious and non-religious, and is therefore a form of establishment. She outlines the dilemma as follows:

*“While free exercise and disestablishment have usually been separately treated in First amendment jurisprudence, they are also understood to be two sides of the same coin. Free exercise cases always have establishment implications and establishment cases always have free exercise implications. The more the Government protects free exercise, the more it tends to recognise and arguably establish religion; the more the government seeks to sequester religion in the name of disestablishment, the more it tends to diminish the space for religious observance.”*

The constitutional dilemma is made more difficult by Sullivan's key question: In a society without a formally established religion, how do legislators distinguish between what is a religion and what is not? This is the question at the heart of the Boca Raton case in which religious practices challenged the cemetery regulations and it is an analysis of this case which forms the heart of what is a legal textbook. Academics in Religious Studies were called to witness both for and against the plaintiffs and the proceedings were overseen by a judge who enjoyed theological discussion and had his own views as to what constitutes religion, appearing to think that sincerity of belief was the main criterion. Does one judge whether a belief or practice is religious according to the established canons of orthodoxy or by what Sullivan describes as “lived” or “outlaw” religion? In UK terms we might pose the question by asking what the difference is between (say) the Church of England with its Prayer Book, Creeds and Thirty-Nine Articles and “Jedi Religion” which has (as far as this theologian is aware) no established body of doctrine, agreed text or uniformity of practice. In the case of *Warner v. Boca Raton*, the judge ruled against the plaintiffs on the basis that the erection of the shrines did not constitute an expression of freedom of religion. Sullivan's conclusion is that religious freedom may be best realised by laws guaranteeing equality for every individual to “life outside the state” including “outlaw” religion rather than through laws guaranteeing religious freedom.

The questions raised in this book go far beyond Boca Raton and the United States. Whether the issue is one of freedom to wear the hijab in public or the freedom to argue against gay marriage, the issue of true religious freedom and the freedom to express it affects all societies. The growing problem, as Sullivan recognises, is that “successful law requires social and cultural coherence” and western societies increasingly lack that coherence. The rise of ‘identity politics’ and the loss of a universally accepted meta-narrative have seen to that.

In his 1941 State of the Union speech, Roosevelt listed Freedom of Religion as one of his four freedoms. Yet the Constitution of the former Soviet Union allowed for that same freedom, albeit one effectively banned from public life and heavily regulated. If Sullivan is right that full religious freedom is impossible, then perhaps we can only talk about degrees of religious freedom, even in the land of the free. **Paul Hunt**



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