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INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



Cellou Dalein Diallo addressing Union des forces démocratiques de Guinée supporters.

ERDOGAN & AFRIN

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

GUINEA: HONG KONG

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS SOUTHPORT CONFERENCE

EVENTS

9th-11th March Liberal Democrat Spring Conference
Southport

19th March LIBG Forum – Yemen

21st March Palestine Return Centre: Forced displacement in the occupied Palestinian Territories. Committee Room 15 Houses of Parliament. 6.00pm
Hosted by Alistair Carmichael MP & Tracy Brabin MP. Speakers Nur Arafah, a Rhodes Scholar at the University of Oxford & Professor David Turner, ICAHD (UK). This is a private invitation only meeting. To confirm your attendance please email info@prc.org.uk

14th-15th March Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru/Welsh Liberal Democrat Spring Conference, Village Hotel, Coryton, Cardiff, CF14 7EF

20th-21st April Scottish Liberal Democrats Conference. MacDonald Aviemore Resort

23rd-27th April Study Session “You(th) in the <3 of Human Rights Education”
European Youth Centre Strasbourg, France

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

9th July LIBG AGM

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

For bookings & other information please contact the Treasurer below.

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Photographs: Liberal International, Kevin Cheung.

ERDOGAN'S PERSONAL WAR AGAINST AFRIN

Turkish military operation against Afrin started more than a month ago. Just before it started and particularly on the first few days after it started; Turkish media had pumped up string nationalist and militarist winds. There was a general consensus of "a crushing victory" on the air. It was even said "in three hours Afrin will fall". It has been more than a month Turkish military nowhere near Afrin, according to the officials there has been at least 33 soldiers dead hundreds wounded. There is no announcement of lost number of tanks and other military vehicles. So, it is rather difficult to talk about the "victory". However, since beginning of Afrin war more than 650 people have either been detained or are under investigation for showing their discontent with the war.

The reason of this operation had been widely discussed around world as well as in Turkey. The military wing of the PKK based itself in Syrian Kurdistan and the threat of a Kurdish state or autonomous region bordering Turkey, is the ostensible excuse for the invasion. Since the USA regards the Turkish PKK as a terrorist organisation and many American commentators echoed this¹ but as is common in justifying wars, this is only superficially the reason.

The both USA and Turkey needed this to be a short sharp successful operation. Turkey has failed in this; a conundrum for the USA – their most effective ally in the war against ISIS, the YPG Kurds versus NATO ally, Turkey. Assad has now sent troops to Afrin, so too has Iran; where does this put Russia with Turkey? Turkish warplanes are now targeting Assad's 'popular forces', but it is Russia who ultimately controls Syrian airspace. Michael Jansen, reporting in Gulf Today, says that as the Kurds withdraw from the Manbij area to reinforce Afrin, 'Arab Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) units and their US military advisers have suspended offensive operations against Daesh pockets and adopted defensive positions. US air strikes have contained Daesh but ground forces are essential for mopping up' and preventing the escape or even counter-attack of their forces².

Since 2013 Turkish foreign policy has had no principle, it just has after short term opportunities. The Afrin invasion attempt has one only reason; that is Erdogan's urgent need of military victory of a sort in order to secure enough votes in the coming early elections. With the new ultra nationalist alliance he is out to secure sixty percent of votes. If he could manage that his dictatorship would be solid. (Despite) With all the election cheats, vote rigging and specially designed legislations he seemed far away from the percentage that he needed. So, then comes the Afrin war, high winds of Sunni conservatism and nationalism which powered by media (lots of lies and fake news) would help him (Erdogan) to snatch enough votes for an eternal dictatorship (until his death). Absence of a free press, no accountability, no more rule of law and forever emergency rule make it easy for him to run the country as if his playground. A lot of strategists around the world are trying to understand and work out the reasons behind this military operation but in fact there is only one reality behind it; that is Erdogan's vast need of solidifying of his power.

Yildez

¹ interLib 2018-01 pp. 3-5 Who is making the biggest mistake over Afrin?

²The Gulf Today. 5.3.2018 <http://gulftoday.ae/portal/acb49c2c-bfe3-40fa-b34e-d1694c2f7f98.aspx>

Erratum: Who is making the biggest mistake over Afrin?

Raqqa should have read Rojava in earlier editions of this article – apologies problem with an article revised constantly as matters developed over several days.

How You May be Helping the National Rifle Association

Christine Graf

Glance at the NRA's website, and you may find - after putting in a phony membership number - that the last hotel you or a friend frequented might well be in cahoots with the National Rifle Association, offering incentives to NRA members who stay there. We'll say more about that later.

Why does the NRA continue to wield such an outsize influence in the U.S., despite a rate of gun violence that's universally deplored? Because the gun organization can make - and break - politicians' futures. No mass shooting, however tragic, seems to make a dent in its power.

To have some idea of how extreme the NRA is, consider the exaggerations of their spokesmen. A top NRA lobbyist, Chris Cox, was given a prime spot at the 2016 Republican Convention, where he warned that the next president would fill Supreme Court vacancies, affecting people's gun rights: "A Hillary Clinton Supreme Court means your right to own a firearm is gone," he claimed.

Wayne LaPierre, head of the NRA, blasted gun control advocates shortly after the latest school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida: "If they [the gun control advocates] seize power . . . our American freedoms could be lost and our country will be changed forever."

On February 22, barely a week after the massacre of the 17 students in Florida, President Trump had this to tweet about the NRA: "Wayne, Chris, and the folks who work so hard at the NRA are Great People and Great American Patriots. They love our Country and will do the right thing. MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!"

During the 2016 election the NRA spent some \$20 million in advertising against Hillary Clinton, and at least \$11 million supporting Donald Trump, putting money into advertising rather than in direct contributions to the candidates. Although former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and former Representative Gabrielle Giffords have supported gun control groups, they are always outspent by the NRA. (In 2012 Giffords was shot and nearly died at one of her rallies in Tucson, Arizona, the city from which we write. The assassination attempt ended her congressional career but not her work for gun control).

A more subtle but more effective means of NRA influence is the grade they assign to each politician based on how that person has voted on gun control, or what they like to call Second Amendment rights. The 5 million or so NRA members get mailings praising or condemning candidates for office, assigning each an "A", "B", etc. according to how they have voted or what they have said, and NRA members tend to vote based on the grade. Michael Bloomberg, who has spent millions in the cause of gun control, gets an "F."

NRA support helped put Ted Strickland, a Democrat, into office as governor of Ohio, but when, in his run for the U.S. Senate he proposed a ban on assault weapons, they spent over \$1.5 million in 2016 to make sure his opponent, Rob Portman, won the seat.

"The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun" asserts the NRA head, and Donald Trump likes to repeat this, maintaining that the best answer to stop school shootings would be to arm Teachers. (Most teachers, when interviewed, are not at all keen on the idea of strapping on a pistol when they grab their books and pencils for the day).

America's National Public Radio has reports that the number of companies ending their association with the NRA is growing¹. This includes companies that trade in the UK such as the car rental firm Hertz.

But the tentacles of the National Rifle Association reach around the U.S. and abroad. Their members can stay in the better hotels in London at significant discounts: at the Sofitel St. James, the Savoy on the Strand, the Radisson on Leicester Square, Citadines on Trafalgar Square, the Strand Palace, the Hotel Marriott, as well as at modest places like the Hotel Strand Continental, where an NRA membership will cut your bill considerably.

All of them, and others like them, are supporting the NRA. Not as obviously as the current resident of the White House, who now claims he would have rushed in, even if unarmed, to save the students in Lakeland, Florida, and who may well owe his victory over Hillary Clinton to the National Rifle Association.

Christine Graf

¹ <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/02/23/588233273/one-by-one-companies-cut-ties-with-nra>

Guinea Foul

Cellou Dalein Diallo's Union des forces démocratiques de Guinée performed well in Guinea's local elections last month, despite claims of electoral fraud, corruption and political violence, which have been addressed by the LI Bureau.

The elections on February 4 were the first since the end of military dictatorship. Eight years of delays were blamed on lack of funds, political infighting and the 2013-16 Ebola crisis. However, with 60% of Guinea's population under 25, memories of the dictatorship itself are distant. Failing schools, high unemployment, electricity shortages and corruption allegations were the main campaign issues. Of over 30,000 candidates, some 7,000 were women.

President Alpha Conde's ruling party won a significant majority although the main opposition party took the capital, Conakry. Conde's Rassemblement du Peuple Guinéen (Rally for the Guinean People - RPG) took 1.35 million votes, electing 3,284 councillors. The RPG is a member of the Socialist International and regards itself as social democratic.



Cellou Dalein Diallo's Union des forces démocratiques de Guinée, (Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea - UFDG) won 893,000 votes to gain 2,156 councillors. Mr Diallo had previously expressed confidence in his party to scoop a large share of the vote in the poll having registered candidates in 95% of the 342 constituencies that were up for grabs in the long-delayed elections. "The electorate understands that the lack of foreign and direct investment, the worrying insecurity and lack of hope and employment for our young people is a direct result of the mismanagement and the amateurism of this current regime", said the Liberal leader.

A second opposition party, the Union des Forces Républicaines (Union of Republican Forces - UFR), which also regards itself as a liberal party and is led by Sidya Touré, won 190,000 votes for 447 councillors, all according to figures released by the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI).

In Guinea, coalitions are common at the council level, meaning overall control of the country's 342 communes will not be known until deals are struck.

Although Conde's RPG dominated nationwide, his overall loss in the capital is a blow given that almost a quarter of the population live in Conakry. Conde had controversially replaced council executives when their mandate ran out in 2010 with his own appointees, contributing to anger over eight years of delays in holding the vote.

At least ten people have been killed in violence since the election. Accusations of fraud led to arson and rioting on the streets by disgruntled opposition supporters. The problems continue. Aboubacar sidy Diallo was assassinated on 26th February; the UFDG website claims that this was 'by the police extrajudicially'.

In response to this the LI Bureau has called upon CENI to publish results reflecting the free choice of the people. Liberal International (LI) has closely followed the organization of local elections in Guinea, held for the first time in more than a decade. The LI Bureau has issued the following statement.

Liberal International welcomes the Guinean authorities move to finally conduct these elections across the country's 342 councils. LI also hails the Guinean people for their conduct and keen desire to peacefully exercise their rights to vote.

LI congratulates the Electoral Commission not only for its distinct efforts to organise the local elections but also for working closely with all stakeholders. Though, there were cases of electoral fraud and serious failings, among which:

1. The unlawful use of State resources by members of the Government and some senior officials, in an obvious contempt of the public servants' principles of equality and neutrality during an election;
2. Misuse of the proxy-vote and the distribution and use of pre-marked ballots papers;
3. The illegal annulment of the election returns from polling stations favourable to the Opposition by Magistrates when centralising the results;
4. The meddling by government officials in the day-to-day running of the Electoral Commission hence hindering the sincerity and transparency of the counting of the ballot papers during the process.

Liberal International expresses its deep concern at the extent of the frauds and irregularities and the post-election violence which ensued, sadly resulting in loss of life in the cities of Dinguiraye, Kindia and Conakry. This violence was also characterised by the destruction of private property and numerous arbitrary arrests.

Liberal International condemns any act of violence – regardless of the origin or political motivation of the perpetrators. That is why we strongly condemn the targeted attack on the private homes of the Leader of the Guinean Opposition, Cellou Dalein Diallo, on 8th February and in the early morning of 28 February 2018.

Liberal International encourages all stakeholders to use legal channels to protest against these irregularities and frauds. All electoral disputes should be scrutinised in a transparent manner, strictly following the rule of law.

Liberal International calls on judges to make decisions based solely on the law to restore truth of the ballot box, as this will not only promote peace and stability, but it also builds trust between the people and the judiciary.

In addition, Liberal International calls on the Guinean authorities to launch an independent investigation into all electoral violence so that the offenders and the sponsors of such acts can be brought before the law and punished. As the lack of a restorative justice for the victims, and potential investors, will adversely affect any prospective investment in Guinea and send the wrong message to investors.

In this context of economic, social and political crisis, Guinea must promote foreign and direct investment and thus reduce the uncertainties faced by both foreign and domestic investors. That is why Liberal International calls on all political parties to firmly instruct their supporters to refrain from any violence or behaviour that may undermine the democratic process, the peace and prospective investment.

In addition, the Guinean authorities must, in all circumstances – whether during the election period or not) – guarantee to all its citizens, without any discrimination, the right to safety and to exercise public freedoms. This is why Liberal International calls on the Guinean authorities to:

5. Release immediately and unconditionally all those arbitrarily arrested during this election period;
6. Compensate the victims who have lost their homes and their livelihoods;
7. Respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Guineans.

Finally, Liberal International recommends that the Guinean authorities take concrete action to address the concerns raised by stakeholders in this election and also to implement the recommendations of the previous election observation missions from the European Union. This would contribute to improving the quality and transparency of the forthcoming legislative and presidential elections.



Cellou Dalein Diallo

Canon in John Major.

Kiron Reid

On 1 February in the Art Deco function room of the Grade II listed Crown Hotel, on Liverpool Lime Street, a select and engaged audience heard Dr. Kevin Hickson and Dr. Ben Williams talk based on their 2017 edited collection *John Major: An Unsuccessful Prime Minister? Reappraising John Major*. (Biteback).

There is a wide range of contributors to the collection, including Paddy Ashdown. An impressive array of short essays by journalists, academics, public servants, policy makers and politicians across the spectrum. Kevin and Ben touched on aspects of interest to internationals and Liberals in particular. In their talk, Kevin gave an overview of how the book came about, the aims and a broad outline of the coverage; while Ben drew out the foreign policy and Europe related themes from a couple of chapters (by others, his was on social policy) and made some conclusions from those and his own analysis. There was a lively discussion, the audience including Cllr. Richard Kemp Leader of the Liberal Democrats in Liverpool, Mayor of St

Anne's Cllr. Karen Henshaw and Philip and Enid Lodge, stalwarts of the Liverpool branch of the United Nations Association. It was a nice touch that Ben Williams, as a school student, had participated in one of the Model United Nations General Assemblies that Enid and Philip have organised for many years. Executive Member, Howard Henshaw, had given an introduction to Liberal International. Howard himself knew John Major before he (Major that is) went into politics when they both worked for Standard Chartered Bank. After postings in Africa and Asia (Howard) and Africa (Major) they met from time to time in London Howard's stories he enlightened us with are not all re-printable. Peter Hirst, from Cheshire, added to the informed discussion of those who remembered Major's government, while Sam Buist, a Liberal Democrat relatively new in Liverpool, was able to give a perspective from a 30 something interested in politics. [See more below]. While the book leaves readers to make their own judgment, this audience were fairly sympathetic to John Major. Especially given the work that started on the Northern Ireland peace process under his premiership, and the resonance of his dealing with the "Bastards" band of hardline anti-EU MPs that consistently undermined his time in office.



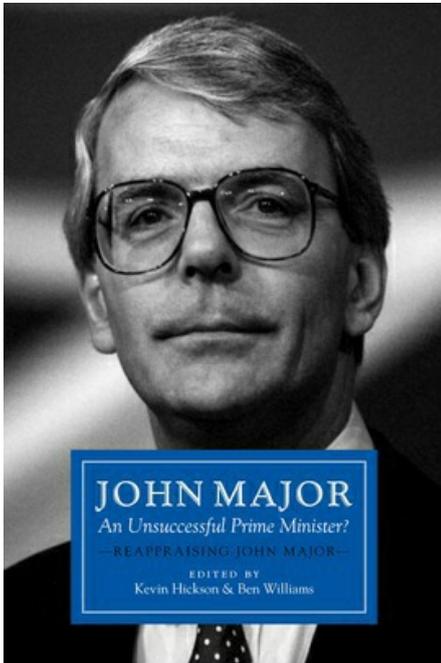
Kevin Williams & Ben Hickson

The meeting had a very cross party feel, not only because Kevin (Senior Lecturer in Politics, University of Liverpool) has written extensively on Labour politics (including with Andrew Crines a reappraisal of Harold Wilson) and is a former Crewe Labour councillor; while Ben (tutor in politics, University of Salford) is a former Labour Liverpool City Councillor and party member. Kevin being pro-Brexit and having left Labour for the current incarnation of the SDP certainly livened up discussion. Philip and Enid Lodge coming from the Methodist internationalist wing of the Labour movement were forthright.

With thanks to Jen Yockney of North West Liberal Democrats for helping to publicise the meeting.

The audience I think generally agreed with a line from the book: "Major's government ... left behind a more enduring legacy than his critics allowed at the time or since".

Sam Buist writes: "As a 15 year-old in 1997 I always felt John Major had been harshly treated, by both his own party (especially the right) and those outside it. It was when reading an article by the commentator Peter Osborne about his regret about the way he and the fellow press had treated him, that I started to feel over time that history has started to move, and treat him a little more kindly. However, it is always refreshing to



hear issues re-visited and a Prime Minister's tenure put more fairly into the context of the time. Kevin Hickson and Ben Williams's talk left you wanting to read the array of commentators and politicians they had compiled to analyse Major's tenure. At one stage the authors mentioned re-visiting the premiership of Jim Callaghan, which is also a much needed venture."

Philip and Enid Lodge added:

"It was interesting to meet people from a different background and to hear of John Major's interaction with Ireland and his paving the way for Blair to continue. Always good to hear of non-establishment background making good - even if a Tory! Glad to hear that the Mayor of Lytham St Anne's is a Methodist."

Kiron Reid

John Major and Foreign Affairs – LI(BG) North West meeting, 1st February 2018. The Crown, Lime Street, Liverpool.

Dr Kevin Hickson is senior lecturer in British politics at the University of Liverpool and has published over ten books on British political ideologies and party politics. He is co-editor of *Harold Wilson: The Unprincipled Prime Minister?* Kevin studied at the University of Warwick and the University of Southampton. Dr. Hickson is a town councillor in Crewe.

Dr Ben Williams is a politics tutor at the University of Salford. He completed his PhD on Conservative social policy at the University of Liverpool, and previously an MA in politics and Irish Studies. Ben has written for a range of books, magazines, blogs and journals covering British politics. Dr. Williams is a former Liverpool City Councillor for Clubmoor in the 2000s.

Jewish Book Week Future of War Event

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote a story in 1912 about a war fought from underwater submarines that sank passenger ships. Nobody believed it because nobody imagined that a civilised nation would ever cross that moral threshold.

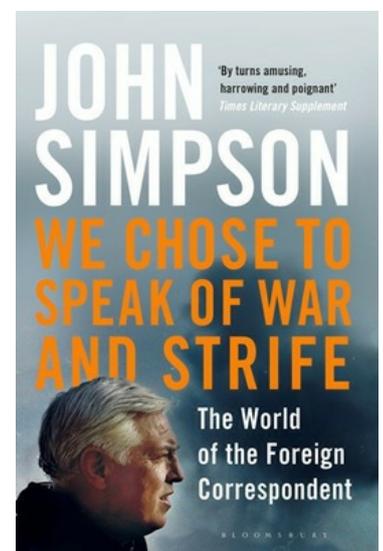
Veteran foreign correspondent and world affairs editor, John Simpson, joins Lawrence Freedman (Emeritus Professor of War Studies at King's College London) and Richard Norton-Taylor (Security Editor, The Guardian) to discuss the past, present and future of conflicts across the world.

Simpson began his career with BBC Radio News in 1966, and has since reported from more than 120 countries. The panel will investigate the extent to which our understanding of past and present conflicts prepare us for the cyber wars of the future.

Thursday, 8 March 7.00pm Kings Place, London N1 9AG. £14.50

Jewish Book Week runs in London from the 3rd to 11th March.

www.jewishbookweek.com



Lord Ashdown in Hong Kong

Lord Paddy Ashdown, Liberal Democrat leader and Patron of CLDs, had a two-day fact-finding mission to Hong Kong (27 Nov 2017 - 28 Nov 2017).

Speaking to the Foreign Correspondents' Club, Lord Ashdown said Britain must remember its obligations to its former colony Hong Kong, even as it pursues post-Brexit trade deals with Beijing. *"This is not a promise that can be lightly laid aside because it proves inconvenient to a British government obsessed with finding trade deals because it wishes to be outside Europe. As Chris Patten [former Hong Kong governor] has said, Britain risks selling its honour here,"* Ashdown said.

He added that it is in Beijing's interest to demonstrate that it is living up to its obligations to uphold human rights and freedoms in Hong Kong agreed under the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984. *"One Country, Two Systems is the slogan under which Beijing may want to draw others back to the fold,"* he said. *"Honouring scrupulously the Anglo-Chinese deal in both letter and spirit will enhance that possibility. Any perceived failure to do so will weaken it."*

In view of the alleged kidnap of Causeway Bay bookseller Lee Bo and prosecution of prominent student leaders Nathan Law, Joshua Wong Chi-fung and Alex Chow over a protest that sparked the 2014 Occupy Movement, Lord Ashdown suggested that some of Beijing's actions undermines confidence both in the rule of law and in the principle of free speech.

Ashdown also met student leaders, lawmakers and representatives from the legal sector during his trip.

Kevin Cheung

Kevin Cheung, Chinese Liberal Democrats intern (2013) and staff member of the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong SAR.



Lord Ashdown at the Foreign Correspondents' Club

International Abstracts

Ethnic Germans hemmed in and hounded by Putin's steamroller, by Matthew Campbell. The Sunday Times, February 25th 2018.

Commentary of Russia's military build-up in Kaliningrad, a piece of Germany annexed by Russia after World War II and the impact on the town's German minority. Includes comments on YABLOKO.

Liberator 388.

Blood flows in Myanmar, by Phil Bennion. Abandoned to its Fate (ethnic-cleansing in Cameroon & HMG's indifference to the plight of a former colony), by Becky Tinsley. Bidding for No Trumps (confronting populism), by Adrian Slade. Other articles on Brexit by Tony Greaves and Adrian Sanders. Otherwise Trevor Smith writes on the commercialisation of higher education, Allan Biggar on Corbyn & Clegg, Helen Flynn and Geoff Payne write on the Social Liberal Forum, Michael Meadowcroft writes on the late Bill Pitt and John Thurso on Tolerance.

Michael Ignatieff Academic Freedom and the new Populism

Michael Ignatieff, former leader of the Liberal Party of Canada and Rector and President of Central European University in Budapest, gave a lecture at the London School of Economics on the threats to academic freedom for the new populisms of left and right on 8th February 2018. Particular reference was made to his own Central European University in Hungary and the wider problems of which Brexit is a manifestation. Funded by George Soros, the CEU has an independence which is unusual in post-Communist academia. Central to Ignatieff's argument was the response of elites to the marginalized. The LSE's Professor Simon Glendinning was in the chair. The lecture runs for roughly one & a half hours, with some incisive questioning.

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/website-archive/newsAndMedia/videoAndAudio/channels/publicLecturesAndEvents/player.aspx?id=3987>

James Joyce "Ulysses" in Kurdish: Across snotgreen seas

Let's not pretend that James Joyce was a liberal, but some things are just too irresistible... Author and translator Kawa Nemir has just finished translating James Joyce's masterpiece of Irish literature into the Kurdish Kurmanji dialect. His aim? To build bridges between the Kurdish culture and world literature. You didn't read it in English, now's your chance to brush up on your Kurdish as you go!

<https://en.qantara.de/content/james-joyce-ulysses-in-kurdish-across-snotgreen-seas>



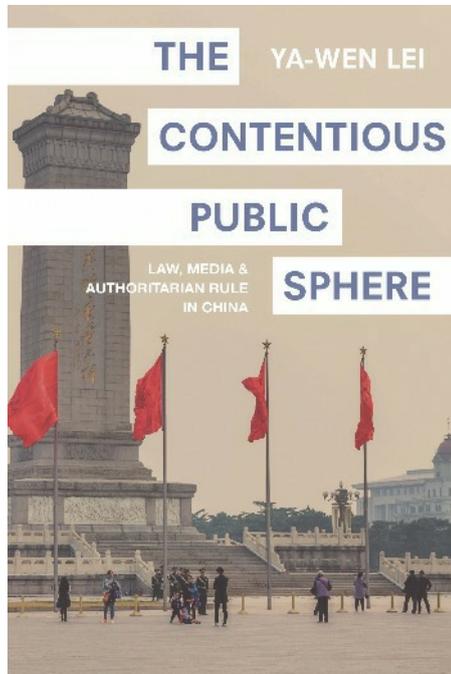
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reviews

The Contentious Public Space - Law Media and Authoritarian Rule,
by Ya Wen-Lei.
Princeton 2017

Given the way state institutions, whether in authoritarian or liberal societies, manipulate the public space in recent years, this is a timely book by author, Ya Wen-Lei. It explores the factors encouraging or discouraging open public discourse. Although the primary focus of the book is on the contentious public space in China, there are broader lessons to be drawn as populism with authoritarian tendencies seems to be gaining ground in western democracies.

Economic development and the subsequent relaxation of public discourse in the early 2000s led to the development of a public contentious space in China, where journalists, lawyers and the general public were able to criticise and challenge wrong doings by the authorities and corporate enterprises. Given the authoritarian nature of the Chinese government, the emergence of any kind of public contentious space is remarkable. The author therefore charts the development of the public contentious space in China over the last 20 years to understand the political, social and market dynamics that encouraged as well as constrained the development of a public contentious space in China.



The author posited that the Chinese government attempts at gaining legitimacy through *rule by law* (rather than rule of law), when paired with fragmentation of control due to marketisation, especially of the media, have led to unintended consequences and created spaces for public contention. The book provides many examples of public discourse, legal cases and public incidents from the Chinese media and the internet to illustrate how the public contentious space evolved and, at the same time, how the Government adapted to regulate and exert control.

At present, the Chinese under President Xi Jin Ping is re-asserting its authority over the public space. The future, however, is less certain and China today stands at a cusp. Will the Chinese State be able to walk the fine balance between responding to public demands for accountability and authoritarian rule? Can a public contentious space thrive under 'responsive authoritarianism'? Or, will the State attempts to impose its ideological notions of democracy, patriotism and civility, as well as the protection of its own power, suppress all other opinions and challenges to its authority?

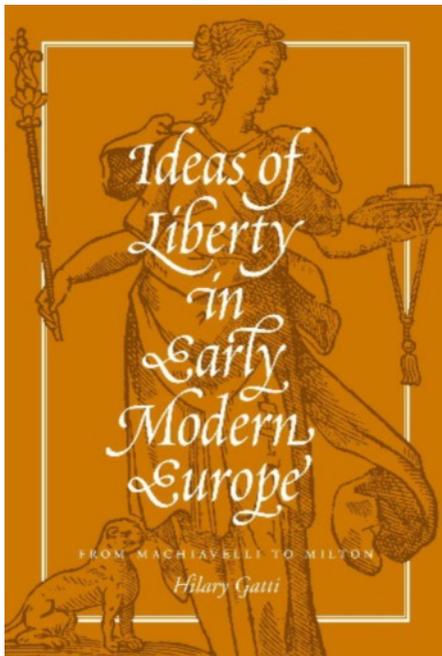
Through careful research, the author has developed insights into how a public contentious space developed within an authoritarian regime. A critical question is

whether an authoritarian State can adapt to, work with or harness the energy of the public contentious space to promote public interests and address abuse of public power? I agree with the author that *'the common measurements that social scientists have been using to determine level of liberty and regime types do not fully capture the dynamics of political and civil life in China.'* Certainly, there is a need for better understanding of how democracy, or aspects of democracy, may work under different regimes and society norms. This book is a good start.

Dr Yeow Poon,

Ideas of Liberty in early modern Europe, from Machiavelli to Milton,
by Hilary Gatti.
Princeton 2017I

A romp through recent studies of republican ideas in early modern Europe, with, as might be expected, a focus on the Italian. Developing on Skinner (interLib xxxx) and others, Gatti questions whether Berlin's postulates of negative and positive liberty are applicable to the long 16th century. Taking Machiavelli's republicanism as a starting point, Gatti finds it sound for its time, referencing lesser known works as well as



The Prince and The Discourses. There is an interesting interlude on More and Machiavelli. More may have been a martyr but never a saint; whilst he may be a benchmark for the liberty of conscience himself, this was not a liberty that he would have extended to anyone who disagreed with him.

Examining Bacon, Bruno and Galileo, calling on Hooker and Arminius et al., we look at the need for freedom of philosophical discourse, especially in the light of scientific facts (ie: The Earth goes around the Sun). As Bacon and Machiavelli concluded, there was a necessity to protect the individual citizen through the law. The knowledge that we still have to keep addressing these issues is distressing.

A little over half way through the book we meet the Areopagitica, bringing us, to some extent, to a continuum to Liberalism per se. Getting there we have ploughed through De Thou and the French religious wars and Sarpi and the Council of Trent. Quite an adventure, especially valuable because the sources that trace this saga will not

necessarily familiar to the cloistered Anglophone academe..

Stewart Rayment

Skerryvore: A Tale of Terror, by Michael Punter. The Old Operating Theatre 7th-9th March

The Old Operating Theatre will be a perfect setting for Mike Punter's latest play, Skerryvore. The audience, if able, should take full advantage, entering through the narrow spiral staircase to absorb the feeling of a lighthouse before the play starts (there is, of course, a lift for the claustrophobic). The play was written for the venue – it is a Victorian lecture in an appropriate space, similar to that in which Jean-Martin Charcot, the French neurologist, best known for his work on hypnosis and hysteria, would have given demonstrations in Paris in the 1870s.

Skerryvore is a remote island, reef better, with a lighthouse, south-west of Tiree, in the Outer Hebrides. The lighthouse, which shares the name of the reef, was built by Alan Stevenson in 1844; it took him six years to build, almost driving him to despair, though, coming from a family of lighthouse builders, there would be many more. Stevenson's testimony forms part of the play.

But providing the wild setting (brilliantly captured 'on wax cylinder' by the soundscape of Gary Ryan) aside, the lighthouse itself is incidental, as events take place at a public lecture where Professor Barrett (Bill

Alexander) will attempt, through Mesmerism, the cure of a hysteric, Mary Campbell (Rachel McCarron), survivor of the mysterious incident that befell the island in 1876. The inspiration for these events, the disappearance of the three lighthouse keepers, recalls an actual event on the Flannan Islands in 1900 (another lighthouse of the Stevenson family, this time, David). That story will be familiar through Peter Maxwell Davies' opera, The Lighthouse and other settings.

Opening with the words 'Good evening,' too which the first night audience at The Stables Theatre, Hastings, automatically replied; a pause and Barrett follows with 'gentlemen' – a gasp, and 'Oh' from the audience. Punter, is setting this in the late Victorian context that fascinates him; there would not have been women in Barrett's audience. Barrett will take us through 'the four stages of hysterical seizure too



which all females are prone'. But a much darker story than Barrett anticipated unravels as McCarron voices the missing protagonists, and the ensuing female empowerment will have on-going consequences. If you didn't enter the theatre by the stairs, and are able, do descend... if you dare, after this tale of terror.

Skerryvore: A Tale of Terror is at the Old Operating Theatre Museum & Herb Garret, 9a St Thomas Street, London SE1 9RY, Tuesday 6th March to Thursday 8th at 7.00pm. Nearest tube: London Bridge.

Stewart Rayment

**Ideology in the Supreme Court, by Laurence Baum
Princeton University Press 2017**

Given that members of the United States Supreme Court are appointed by the President, it is a surprise to no one that those judges vote along political lines. If Baum had simply written a book proving this well-known fact, it would be unworthy of publication, let alone review. Baum's skill lies in showing what "political" means. By analysing decisions on "hot" topics, he shows that judges do not, in fact, vote along ideological lines, but vote to favour their preferred groups in society. What does this mean? Well, instead of thinking "Republican = in favour of limited government influence = extensive free speech for all" or *vice versa*, their thought process is more like "Who is claiming free speech in this case? Is this claimant a member of a group that my party aims to help?" This is the theory of group affect.

The first example is freedom of expression. Baum looked at all relevant non-unanimous decisions from the Supreme Court's 1910 – 2012 terms. Over time, the pro-claimant justices changed from being liberal to being conservative. Baum explains this switch by the change in claimants seeking to protect their freedom of expression. In the earlier period, free-speech claimants were often left-leaning political groups who were targeted by legislation, such as socialists, or trade unions using speech to argue for better labour conditions. These people received the support of liberal justices. In the later period, claimants were people who wanted to make large political donations or express hateful views against minorities. Conservative justices tended to side with these claimants.

Baum does not just look at the data, but also explores what was happening in wider political discourse. In the case of free speech, he suggests liberals turned to free speech in the early part of the 20th century to argue for their right to challenge the *status quo*. But they then started arguing for government intervention to achieve their desired social projects, such as protecting vulnerable groups or increasing political engagement. These policies then restricted the speech of the traditionally dominant groups that conservatives wanted to protect. In the case of criminal justice, another topic examined in the book, when there was an increase in liberal laws criminalising corporate behaviour, conservative justices were more likely to favour defendants.

The group affect theory is important from a tactical point of view, because it suggests that justices want to know who in society will benefit from their decision. When litigators bring key test cases to change an area of law, their chosen client will in many ways determine the outcome – is this a person the justices want to help? Further, Baum argues that justices pick up signals about who they should side with from other participants in a case. If the American Civil Liberties Union files a brief in support of a claimant, this makes liberals more likely, and conservatives less likely, to support the claim. They also follow how the issue is being treated in the wider political debate.

It is easy to think that this book is only of academic interest to non-Americans, as we do not have judges with such clear political leanings. However, tribalism and the unthinking allegiance to a party is being revived on this side of the Atlantic as well. Alabama is not the only place where a large percentage of the electorate would happily vote for someone of questionable character because they believe he would advance laws in their favour. Much of the current political debate is not internally coherent and is often guided by *animus* towards certain groups in society. Perhaps we should all focus more on the moral and ideological basis of our political beliefs instead of being distracted by the beneficiaries who shout the loudest.

Eleanor Healy-Birt

Liberal Democrats Spring Conference

The International Bits...

Whilst the formal agenda is devoid of international content, the all important consultative session on Immigration, Refugees & Identity aside (an emergency motion of Afrin perhaps?), the fringe, as usual, fills the gap...

Friday 9th

15.00-17.30 Consultation session: Immigration, refugees & identity. Ramada Plaza, Hesketh 2 & 3

Saturday 10th

13.00-14.00 Alternative War: How Russian cyberattacks threaten Western Democracy.
Social Liberal Forum. Waterfront 6

LDEG Annual General Meeting Liberal Democrat European Group (LDEG)
Ramada Plaza, Hesketh 2

Pressing topics in International Development Lib Dems in International Development.
Executive Suite, 2nd Floor

18.15-19.15 Anglo-Irish relations in the face of Brexit Catherine Bearder MEP & ALDE. Promenade Room, lower floor

19.45-21.00 The UK's broken asylum system: filling the holes and fixing the process
Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary. Ramada Plaza, Hesketh 2

22.00-01.00 Glee Club. Marine Suite, 1st floor



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 that 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.

Speakers

Helen Lackner (TBC) is an author and international adviser on social aspects of rural development in poorer countries and a research associate at SOAS, University of London. She has been involved in Yemen since the 1970s,

Dr Alan George is a visiting senior research Fellow at King's College London. He is a former assistant director of the Council for Arab-British Understanding,

Osamah Al-Rawhani is the programme director of the Sana'a Centre for Strategic Studies, an independent policy and research think-tank that provides new approaches to understanding Yemen and the surrounding region.