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# INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



**POPULISM    AUSTRALIA BURNS    IRAN**

**HONG KONG    TRUMP**

# EVENTS

**17<sup>th</sup> February** LIBG Forum: The Situation in Hong Kong. NLC 6.30pm

**13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> March** Liberal Democrats' Spring Conference, York.

**21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> March** Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Cynhadledd y Gwanwyn – Welsh Liberal Democrats' Spring Conference. Marriott Hotel, Swansea.

**24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> April** IFLRY – 47<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, Kyiv, Ukraine.

**27<sup>th</sup> April** LIBG Forum: How to and how not to stop Deforestation. NLC 6.30pm

**22<sup>nd</sup> -24<sup>th</sup> May** Scottish Liberal Democrats' Spring Conference. Peebles Hydro, Peebles.

**25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> June** 63<sup>rd</sup> Liberal International Congress, Sofia, Bulgaria.

**26<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> September** Liberal Democrats' Autumn Conference, Brighton.

*For bookings & other information please contact the Treasurer below.*

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

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Week.



## LIBG WINTER/SPRING PROGRAMME

# THE SITUATION IN HONG KONG



LIBG has organised a forum meeting on the situation in Hong Kong on 17 February, with speakers including

**Emily Lau** a former member of the Hong Kong Legislative Council and former chairperson of the Democratic Party.

**Professor Chris Hughes** of the LSE, teaching international politics in the Asia-Pacific region and Chinese Foreign and Security Policy.

This meeting is at 6.30 pm on Monday 17 February at the National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE. - Underground: Embankment or Charing Cross.

Full details may be seen at:

<https://libg.co.uk/en/event/detail/2020-02-17/libg-forum-on-situation-in-hong-kong>

Enquiries: [generalenquiries@libg.co.uk](mailto:generalenquiries@libg.co.uk)



## HOW TO AND HOW NOT TO STOP DEFORESTATION



The Liberal International British Group welcomes three speakers to share their ideas on how to and how not to stop deforestation.

**Duncan Brack** is an environmental policy analyst focused on forest issues. He is an Associate Fellow at Chatham House, and an associate of Forest Trends. From 2010-12 he was Special Advisor to Rt. Hon. Chris Huhne, UK Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change.

**Paola Despretz** is an Economist at Vivid Economics. She leads Vivid's statistical and spatial analytical work on the application of Earth Observation and economic risk analysis for the prevention of deforestation in Côte d'Ivoire.

**Jon Shepard** is a Director at Global Development Incubator, where he is overseeing the Emergent Forest Finance Accelerator to overcome barriers for both buyers and sellers on the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) credits market.

This meeting is at 6.30 pm on Monday 27 April at the National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE. - Underground: Embankment or Charing Cross.

Enquiries: [generalenquiries@libg.co.uk](mailto:generalenquiries@libg.co.uk)

# The Rise of Populism – Revolt of Democracy.

## Imad Ahmed

Entitled ‘Rise of Populism – Revolt of Democracy’, the conference had participants of ALDE and ELF partners and associates from Russia, the Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Turkey, Bosnia and the UK present on various themes related to populism.

I presented on the first evening in Tbilisi with Ambassador Giorgi Badridze, former ambassador to the UK, and with two other ambassadors in attendance, Amb. Gia Japaridze and Amb. Mamuka Kudava. Besides these two, also in the audience was the Head of the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung in Georgia, Peter-Andreas Bochmann, as well as probably in excess of 120 young people who packed the room.

I gave a couple of interviews. One appeared on Georgia’s Trialeti TV and the other online on Through the News.

Of the other participants, the most noteworthy presentations were given by the representative of our ALDE ally from Bosnia, Associate Professor Valida Repovac Niksic, who spoke on the political sociology of Bosnia today, and by 21 year old political activist Nikita Lyakhovetskiy, who told us about the opposition to Vladimir Putin of the Yabloko Party at the grassroots level, and the otherwise lack of political opposition in Russia. The Bosnian representative also told us how discouraging it was for Bosnians to hear that Macron and ALDE allies in the Netherlands had refused North Macedonia and Albania’s requests to commence negotiations to join the EU.

Besides the presentations, the Europe Georgia Institute gave us a good survey of Georgian cuisine, culture, history and politics. We were wined and dined twice a day, presented traditional Georgian dancing over dinner at Ethno-Tsiskvili in Tbilisi, taken to see Stalin’s home and carriage in his hometown, and taken to the line of control between uncontested Georgia and South Ossetia, where we were accompanied by a Georgian government representative and police escort. We were told that the Russian’s had de facto divided and occupied Georgia to prevent it from attaining membership of NATO and the EU.

A recurring theme throughout the conference was the portrayal of the Russian state as a force for bad: its media outlets spread misinformation in other countries; it encouraged populism; and it even invaded sovereign nations on the pretext of ethnic politics. One needs to consider why the Russian state would act in this way.

NATO’s continued existence and actions in the Baltic and Balkan regions without Russian consultation since the Soviet Union dissolved seem to have been counterproductive, as was George W Bush’s call to expand NATO to the Ukraine and Georgia. The threat of EU accession of these two Russian neighbours would have severe consequences for employment in Russia. Going forward, we need to figure out how to align Russia’s interests with the interests of the EU and its neighbours in the South Caucasus, if not at first with liberal values.

### ***Imad Ahmed***

*Imad Ahmed is a Liberal Democrat activist, and an economist at University College, London. He was invited to participate on behalf of the Liberal Democrats and Paddy Ashdown Forum at the conference organised by the Europe Georgia Institute and sponsored by our ALDE German counterpart Freie Demokratische Partei’s think tank, the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung fuer die Freiheit on 22-26 October in the Georgian towns of Tbilisi, Khashuri, Gori (Stalin’s hometown), Marneuli (a predominantly Azeri and Muslim town) and Telavi (where Georgia’s Khvanchkara wine is fermented).*

# A BURNING PRIORITY

## STEVE YOLLAND

Australia is known for many things. Lovely beaches, great cuisine, a laid-back attitude, world-leading arts, egalitarianism, and now ... fires. Blistering, unstoppable and unprecedented fires.

This essay will, of necessity, be impressionistic. The fires in Australia in the last six weeks or so have been so vast, so complex, and so terrifyingly new in their scale and ferocity, that all a member of the general public is left with are ... impressions. Facts are hotly disputed. News is garbled. Political agendas abound, and they skew people's reportage. People take sides, and seem incapable of getting out of their trenches once in them.

Certain facts, however, bear repeating, as they are undisputed.

New South Wales has officially been in drought for three years. The last three years have been the driest on record. We have family in rural New South Wales whose gardens have turned to dust. Farmers in their hundreds are just shooting their animals, or weeping over their inability to grow crops, and walking off the land. Great swathes of rural Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland are drier than at any time in recorded history. On top of this, the heat. The mind-numbing, seemingly never-ending heat. 2019 was New South Wales' hottest year on record.



*Fire and Rescue NSW Station 428 Queanbeyan in action*

The political debate is split between those who figure this is the inevitable result of untackled climate change, and those who say “well, Australia is a rugged place with a history of fires, drought and floods *et al.*” What very few have said is that both points of view have validity. We have always existed “on the edge”. But the climate indicators are now unmistakably trending all one way. And what is now blazingly clear is that in the driest continent on the planet, this means earlier fires, and worse fires. Fires that now seem inevitable.

What is also clear and undisputed is that the Australian fires show us starkly what happens when climate change impacts the unwary or the ill-prepared.

Despite the heroic efforts of the emergency services and fire-fighters, many of them volunteers, and some of whom have paid for their service with their lives, Australia was and is quite unable to effectively fight fire fronts running to hundreds of miles, on 40 degree days, across four states, with high winds, and without the equipment or the personnel to finish the job.

And whilst they may have left the headlines as their immediate ferociousness has dimmed, the fires are still burning, and three American contractors were killed just yesterday when their “water bombing” plane crashed in bushland.

There is so much to tell you, dear colleagues, that it is hard to know where to start. The affect on the nation's psychology has been profound. Almost everyone knows a family touched by fire, whether that be people directly impacted – injured or worse, or lost homes and towns – or simply people inconvenienced, forced to sleep under the stars – if you could have seen them through the smoke – holidays ruined, children

terrified, and hundreds lifted off beaches on naval vessels. Everyone knows people who were forcibly evacuated from the holiday locations their families had travelled to for generations, driving circuitous routes home to avoid incineration.

Something of a Dunkirk spirit has grown up – vast sums of money are being raised for those whose lives have been turned upside down, and a grim determination to survive is on everyone’s lips. A sense of the seriousness of this affect is that after most newsworthy events, gallows humour usually surfaces in off-colour jokes that everyone enjoys, despite themselves. But not this time. No jokes. When half your country is impacted, it’s no joke.

That’s not to say that *politicians* are not the butt of jokes. Politicians are always fair game in Australia. When Prime Minister Scott Morrison, until very recently the hero of the unexpected Liberal-National election victory, disastrously miscalculated and failed to return from his family holiday to deal with the crisis, and even refused to reveal, for a while, that he was on the beach in Hawaii, and was roundly castigated as a result. It may yet prove to be a fatal wounding of “The Prime Minister for Hawaii”, as he was immediately dubbed. When he did return, his tin ear was again demonstrated when he



visited fire-ravaged towns and insisted on shaking hands with people who clearly wanted nothing to do with him, and engaging with fire fighters who simply delivered him trenchant and swear-word laden on camera criticism of the country’s lack of preparedness. And later, incredibly, he visited Kangaroo Island in South Australia and was delighted no-one had died. In fact, two people had. He corrected himself in due course, and said he meant fire-fighters. Worn out, Australians just lopped 10-15% off his opinion poll ratings, and – reflecting his past career before politics, and his apparent incompetence and lack of gravitas in a crisis – promptly christened him #ScottyFromMarketing. The sarcastic tag has stuck, and will haunt him.

Some politicians came out of it moderately well, but the political class as a whole is even more distinctly on the nose than it usually is. Australia, which prides itself on being a rich and capable country, has been shown to be largely helpless in the face of such challenges, hoping and praying for cooler weather and rain. Of that we’ve had some, but everyone knows it is likely to be just a temporary respite.

Increasingly, what we have endured in recent times starts to look like “the new normal”, and it has introduced intense fear and introspection in the population. It’s not just in “the country”, as everywhere outside the major cities is universally called. Australia’s cities have also been inundated with smoke, ash, and dust. Last week, my home town of Melbourne had the unhealthiest air quality in the world. People scrambled to buy face-masks, which rapidly sold out. The alternative was to stay indoors, and set cooling and heating systems to recirculate. Smoke haze became so common it was hardly worth commenting on after the first few days, until it became so bad that people couldn’t see the end of their gardens. The blanket of choking smoke lay thickly on the cities hundreds of miles from where the fire fronts actually were. Our natural environment has been devastated. Perhaps half a billion living creatures have been destroyed, perhaps even more. Too early to tell. And anyway, it’s not over yet. It’s not so much the primary animals like kangaroos and koalas that ultimately matter. They should rebound. It’s the unknown and unmeasurable destruction of insects and pollinators, which may inhibit the re-growth of natural flora, which will in turn inhibit the usual re-establishment of the food chain. Our native lands may well have been altered forever. In just one month.

Water catchments have been razed, which will lead to uncontrolled run off when it does eventually rain steadily, clogging and pollution of water courses, with its knock-on effect on fish and other water creatures. Some have tried to lay blame for the fires at the feet of ecologists and “Greens” who have argued, it is claimed, that we should reduce “back burning” and removal of undergrowth to reduce the severity of any fires.

But that has been shown to be a furphy, a mis-casting of the truth driven relentlessly by the fossil fuel industry and the Murdoch media. Because, you see, it simply doesn’t matter how much “fuel load” there is in the forests, when whatever is there is tinder fry, because it hasn’t rained for three years.

In short, a more stark example of a sudden and massive climate catastrophe you could not imagine than this year’s Australian fires.

And the rest of the world needs to take urgent note. Because in our case it was fires. In yours, maybe floods, winds, snow, or other phenomena. Or maybe, if you live on the edge of comfort like Australia, you may experience a bunch of them.

Australians have been deeply gratified by the friendship offered by the rest of the world. We are a reasonably inoffensive little nation – except perhaps on a cricket pitch – and this seems to have been reflected in the response of people from the great and good donating millions of dollars to the widow sending us her mite. And the money *is* desperately needed. The costs of these fires will run into sums that even one of the richest countries in the world cannot afford, and the money is needed now. Charities and governments will inevitably fiddle and faff around, but there is a great will to get the relief funds through to those who need them most.

But it won’t end there. After we deal with the immediate effects, infrastructure will need to be repaired, there are massive restorative works required in the bush, and the disruption to our economy will be incalculably large. A fundamental re-think of where people live, and how we farm (we have one of the biggest agricultural sectors in the world) is already underway.



***Queanbeyan City Rural Fire Brigade***

So please: send whatever cash you can to the many people trying to help. Hold jumble sales and raffles, or just send your pocket money. Persuade organisations with whom you have influence to donate. We really do need it.

But at the same time, turn on those climate change deniers who think that dealing with the problem is economic suicide and unnecessary, and ask them what they think the cost of NOT doing anything will be. Ask with fury.

We are. Because over here, we *know* what it will cost: it will mean reduced social spending,

increased taxes, a budget out of whack for years, and an uncomfortable and unfamiliar reliance on the generosity of others. We simply didn’t do enough to tackle climate change – Australians are the second worst carbon polluters on the planet per head of population – and now we’re going to pay for it. Not just in pain, and social disruption, but in cold hard cash. Inaction on climate change is economic madness. Spread the word.

With changes, Australia will be OK. We’re “tough as old guts” over here, to use that wonderful Aussie phrase, and we’ll make it through, with a little help from our friends. But nothing will ever be the same again.

Two nights ago it rained – hard. People cheered on social media & down the phone to each other. Then we got up the next day, and discovered the rain had also dumped a huge dust storm on the city while we slept.

Having just spent a couple of days solidly cleaning our swimming pool and making it sparkle, my wife and I regarded our newly orange billabong balefully. A first world problem, to be sure, and apart from the cost in time and chemicals to clean it up again, hardly registering on the Richter scale of Australia's problems this summer. Until my wife quietly muttered "Some farmer somewhere is missing his field."

Quite. Across much of Australia, for hundreds of years the agricultural landscape has been denuded of trees to make room for livestock. But our topsoil is only about two inches deep. Below that, solid rock. And when that topsoil is all blown away, nothing will grow. Which is bad news not just for our domestic consumption, but we are a food bowl for much of Asia and beyond. And the hotter it gets, and the drier it gets, the more often it will simply just blow away, and the less we will grow. Farmers who are now carefully curating their land and re-planting native forest as fast as they can may not have time left to make effective restitution. And even if they do, will re-forestation simply create another problem, with more fuel for fires?

Do we, effectively, just have to abandon large parts of the continent?

That's climate change. Welcome to the new normal.

***Steve Yolland***

*Stephen Yolland is owner of the consultancy Decisions Decisions, and partenaire at Magnum Opus Partners; he contested Fareham for the Liberal party in 1983 before moving to Melbourne.*

Photos from Fire and Rescue NSW Station 428 Queanbeyan & Queanbeyan City Rural Fire Brigade  
<https://www.facebook.com/queanbeyanfireandrescue/>

## **DONATE TO THE AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS TO HELP VICTIMS OF THE FIRES**

Ordinary people's lives have been affected by the still-ongoing Australian bushfires. As I write on 31<sup>st</sup> January, the Queanbeyan Firefighters are dealing with 21 fires, 3 of them yet to be brought under control. Yolly has suggested that we make donations to the Australian Red Cross to help them. Aussies have dug deep in their pockets to help us in the past, so please do your bit.

<https://www.redcross.org.au/campaigns/disaster-relief-and-recovery-donate>



Your donation helps Red Cross give people the support they need in disasters, whenever and wherever they happen. We have decades of experience in caring for people affected by earthquakes, cyclones, floods, storms, fire, drought and other emergencies.

This includes:

- recovery programs and emergency assistance in communities affected by disasters like bushfires, heat, floods cyclones and other emergencies
- helping people and communities prepare for disasters and protect what matters most
- training, equipment, logistics and coordination of our volunteers

# Statement on Iran.

## Ed Davey

We are living in dangerous times.

**The assassination of a key Iranian leader, General Suleinami, ordered by President Trump, has raised tensions across the Middle East.**

It's too early to know if today's (9<sup>th</sup> January 2020) inevitable if unacceptable Iranian response will lead to further US retaliation but huge diplomatic efforts must be made now to de-escalate.

Britain must continue to work with European allies to lead that diplomacy.

And to help reduce tensions, Prime Minister Johnson must rule out British involvement in any attack on sites in Iran.

**We must not allow President Trump to drag the UK into yet another war, like Iraq.**

Liberal Democrats were right to lead the opposition to the Iraq War - which proved so damaging to peace and security across the Middle East.

Now we must remember the lessons of that illegal war.

**Boris Johnson's unwillingness to stand up firmly as a critical friend to the White House is lamentable.**

Liberal Democrats will continue to hold the Conservatives to account if they yet again fail to show true leadership and fail to follow international law and a strategy of engagement in the Middle East, side-by-side with our European partners.



Best wishes,

**Ed Davey**  
*Acting Leader of the Liberal Democrats*

9<sup>th</sup> January 2020

## Iran Update

Iran shot itself in the foot following the assassination of Qaseem Soleimani with the downing Ukrainian International Airlines Flight 752. Things have been quiet (or largely ignored in the West), probably on account of that.

This does not, as was clearly stated, mean that the issue has gone away. Iran is clearly the winner.

Internally, it has been a boon to the powers in Iran; bringing the country together at a time when US sanctions were certainly biting. The public response on the streets at the funeral must have transcended expectations, going beyond Islamism to a more nationalist response that can be harnessed by conservative forces in February's elections. It has provided an excuse weakening the already damaged (by Trump) Iran Nuclear Agreement; Iran will no- longer limit its uranium enrichment programme, though it has allowed

International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) inspectors to remain in the country. So far, Ukrainian Flight 752 aside, the Iranian response has been nuanced, the rocket attack on US airbases was carefully controlled.

In Iraq and Lebanon, Iran was starting to lose its grip. There were mixed views on Soleimani's assassination according to your perspective, but overall it played into Iranian hands. The vote in the Iraqi parliament for the withdrawal of American forces was an immediate consequence. In Iraq, since the Autumn, there had been a steady growth of young people demonstrating against the body politic and their Iranian backers. Repressive measures, either by the army or militias, were having no success in curbing the demonstrations, but now, as in Tehran, the political elite are able to appeal to a wider nationalism and anti-American feelings. One should not forget that Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy chief of Al-Hashd Al-Sha'abi, the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq and General Secretary of Kata'ib Hezbollah, was also killed in the attack on Soleimani.

Muqtada alSadr, the Iraqi Shia cleric and leader of alTayyār alSadri, had been speaking against Iran prior to the assassination, is now calling for " the immediate cancellation of the security agreement with the US, the closure of the US embassy, the expulsion of US troops in a 'humiliating manner', and criminalizing communication with the US government.". However, after Iran's putative revenge strikes, he urged his followers not to attack Americans in Iraq. According to The Jerusalem Post, his home had been targeted by drones in December 2019. Muqtada al-Sadr's people had been protecting the Iraqi anti-government protestors, but withdrew on 25<sup>th</sup> January. He has since visited Iran and their media has reported a closer accord.

Hezbollah might be the Iranian proxy that first comes to mind in revenge attacks, but they too were under internal pressure in the Lebanon, and in any case American targets are limited in that country, or Syria. Chatham House's Lina Khatib is perhaps, over optimistic in comparing their rhetoric with that on the assassination of Imad Mughniyeh in 2008; there were several attempts, but they were successfully foiled, in India, Thailand and Azerbaijan, until 2012 in Bulgaria. Mughniyeh was probably more important to Hezbollah in his death than in his lifetime. Soleimani was undoubtedly a much bigger player.

More rhetoric, Houthi media minister Dhaifullah al-Shamy said "The blood of Soleimani and al-Muhandis will turn into intercontinental missiles and weapons that destroy American warships and end the American presence in the region." But they certainly have a track record, and the assassinations may well draw them closer to Iran. You may recall that at the LIBG Forum on Yemen (interLib 2018-03), Helen Lackner said that links between Iran and the Houthis were exaggerated in the West, but that, whilst denying, the Iranians were happy to go along with them, as it made them appear to have more clout than was actually the case.

There wasn't much support for the assassination of Soleimani Stateside. It resulted in the deaths of 176 people, mostly Canadians, on Flight 752, and that resonated with the public. The assassination was a violation of American law, so it seems, but that doesn't mean very much. Otherwise, no one seems to talk about it. It's never topic A, or B or even C. US news outlets communicated the fact that Soleimani was a terrible person, but that Trump's action was ill-advised. People writing to the New York Times were furious, many of them saying that this action had been suggested in a list given to Trump by top people in the military, and that they'd thought he'd reject it as too extreme; instead, of course, he latched on to it. Targeting 52 Iranian cultural sites was a crass statement, even from someone known to be a philistine (but another boon to the Islamic Republic at home).

What can we say so far? The Iranian response in dealing with the West has been clever; limited and keeping doors ajar, whilst enabling them to paper over the cracks that were beginning to appear at home and across that part of the region where they are active. Let us hope that they leave it like that. But the West has a short memory and its crimes in the region stretch back over a century. The vengeful on the other hand, sit and wait.

*Saeed Rahman*

# We should take actions to protect Hong Kong citizens

The conference motion and the 2019 General Election Manifesto

## Larry Ngan & Nicholas Chan

At the Liberal Democrats Spring Conference, the motion for Foreign Policy calls for 1. The Liberal Democrats to pursue in Parliament all routes to ensuring that the UK honours our legal and moral duty to the people of Hong Kong by reopening the British National (Overseas) Passport offer, extending the schemes to provide the right to abode to all holders. 2. The UK government to use Britain's diplomatic and trading relationship with China to help ensure Beijing refrains from using excessive or military force to end the protests. 3. The UK government to ensure that the UK and our international partners indefinitely suspend all export licenses for crowd control equipment to Hong Kong. Liberal Democrats voting members will have the opportunity to deliberate on the motion.

The 2019 General Election Liberal Democrats manifesto calls for standing to a peaceful world; not only because this is our value, but also everyone deserves a better world. Internationalism allows for cooperation, providing more support and security for our defence. Facing the challenges in supporting liberal democracies from the people fosters stable partnerships for the future. One such alliance calls for "Honour our legal and moral duty to the people of Hong Kong by reopening the British National Overseas Passport offer, extending the scheme to provide the right to abode to all holders". The Young Liberals also stood on this platform together with human rights issues in Kashmir. But are these words suffice to support the civilians in Hong Kong who are among those standing in defiance of brutal dictatorships?

Fulfilling our moral obligation to British National (Overseas) is also a support to a populace who will cherish liberal democracy and stand together to confront populism in our fragile democracy. Quoting from Paddy Ashdown, "against their wishes, Hong Kongers were stripped of their right of abode and many of the core rights which they desired and deserved, and given the option to apply for 'British National (Overseas) Passports' or the 'BNO' with their rights limited to holiday travel and the right to vote." Indeed, when the Joint Declaration was signed in 1984, opinion polls shows less than 20% agrees to the transfer of sovereignty. As party leader, Paddy worked tirelessly to guarantee the welfare of British subjects in Hong Kong following the TianAnMen massacre. There was neither consent nor a referendum. Christopher Patten (Lord Patten), then Governor of Hong Kong, recently mentioned in a lecture that this is a "price of history". We have to ask: 'Is this the price of history that the people of Hong Kong should pay?' or 'Is this the price of history that Britain cannot fulfil her moral and legal obligations?'



*Larry Ngan at a Hong Kong Extradition Protest last year.*

Is this the price of history that the people of Hong Kong should pay? or Is this the price of history that Britain cannot fulfil her moral and legal obligations?

The electorate appreciates our party values on International human rights. When Paddy Ashdown begin the campaign for the right of Hong Kong citizens to be given 'British Citizens' passports after TianAnMen massacre and pressing for western action on Bosnia and Kosovo in addition to local issues such as a 'penny for education', the electorate agrees this is in service to the constituents. The events since June 2019 have only made it more relevant to continue on Paddy Ashdown's work. It becomes more justifiable to accept the motion as policy.

## Excessive police brutality

Since the 2019 autumn conference, the situation in Hong Kong deteriorated even further since the dawn of 2020. Police attacked protesters with excessive forces in the name of dispersing the crowd, which resulted in presumed deaths of countless protesters. In October and November 2019, the protesters started occupied university campuses in the city centre in order to paralyse the major transport networks which are all located near the university campuses. Instead of persuading the protesters to disperse, the Hong Kong Police chose to attack protesters including students and Vice Chancellor of Chinese University of Hong Kong inside the university campuses by teargases, and arrest students during the action. The Polytechnic University of Hong Kong was under siege on the week before the District Council Election on November 2019 while the police surrounded the campus and did not allow the protesters to leave the campus. The police first used teargas to attack the protesters, then using sonic weapons towards the crowd of protesters. Numbers of injuries were reported including bleeding in ears caused by sonic weapons, and injury in the eyes caused by the teargas canisters. While the medical volunteers retreated from the campus, number of them were arrested by the police despite they did not join the protest itself. Police even hid themselves inside ambulances and attacked protesters while professional medical volunteers approaching them. It was clear the police were abusing their rights in order to suppress the protests, and intentionally used the crowd control weapons to take revenge on the civilians, no matter they participated in the protests or not.

Soon after the siege in Hong Kong Polytechnic University, there were reports of protesters being transported to Mainland China for torturing by mainline train in midnights or early mornings. One report even showed the train stopped in the middle of the city centre and screams from protesters for help can be heard from inside the carriage. It lasted 5 minutes before the train started moving again. By the end of December 2019, more than 7000 protesters had been arrested according to the figures from Hong Kong Police Force, but it did not include those disappeared after arrests, or those being transported to Mainland China. 2/3 of those arrested were between 11 and 25 years old, and 1/2 of them were students. Among these 7000 arrested, only 1050 protesters were charged so far, and more than 4800 cases were still under investigation. Quite a lot of the disappeared were later found dead under suspicious circumstances, though the Hong Kong police repeatedly denied the accusations.

Indeed, the actions of protesters have massively escalated from the largely peaceful protests in June 2019. Yet, this comes back to the question of policing by consent. When Sir Robert Peel pushed for the establishment of a professional police force in England – which became the Metropolitan Police, politicians took extended lengths to establish the concept of ‘policing with consent’. The selection and their code of conduct was strict, the Peelers stood out in public and, more importantly as a symbol of being accepted to patrol the law, they were unarmed. When Governor MacLehose re-organised the Hong Kong Police Force, he was mindful of the need for a police that appeals for the consent from the citizens. One determined action was the establishment of an independent corruption board, as corruption was then a root cause to the lack of credibility to the Hong Kong Police. Successive administrations were able to build upon this framework and by the early 1990s, the force was well regarded by the public.

Arguably, with a wider proliferation of weaponry, police forces resort to armament. However, this is not the threshold to deploy abundance tear gas and indiscriminately, directly firing rubber bullets at unarmed protesters on day one when protests are recorded as peaceful. <sup>1</sup>New York Times investigations revealed police tactics on the day nearly caused a mass stampede as police deployed tear gas without warning, cornering civilians into a dead end. Demonstrators in that incident averted mass injuries by shattering glass and forcibly entering an office building for refuge. When citizens lacked the channels for their voice to be heard, the situation will only be intensified by inhumane crackdown on legitimate voices that calls for liberty.

In light of these brutalities, the UK government should first stop providing the tools to the Hong Kong Police Force to carry out these atrocities. Crowd control equipment, weapons, and police training what have been

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<sup>1</sup> *Hong Kong Tear Gas, 18 August 2019* <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/18/world/asia/hong-kong-tear-gas.html> & *Did Hong Kong Police Use Violence Against Protesters? What the Videos Show* <https://www.nytimes.com/video/world/asia/100000006602584/hong-kong-police-protest-video-investigation.html>

consistently provided by the United Kingdom should cease immediately. Next, diplomatic pressure should be asserted to ensure further disproportionate force is used against protesters.

## Further Civil Right Curtailment

While limited acts of violence have sprung out of the protests, support for the democracy movement remains undented in all walks of life. As lately as New Year Day 2020, a million citizens of Hong Kong, which only had the population of 7.2 million, marched onto the street calling for democracy. News reports shows families and senior citizens among the demonstration.

Despite the pro-democracy parties winning a landslide victory during the District Council election on November 2019, the Hong Kong authorities continues on further oppressing the people of Hong Kong. Further referring to the New Year protest with over 1 million Hong Kong citizens on the streets in a legal demonstration, halfway through the demonstration, the Hong Kong Police force requested the organisers to abruptly end the protest with only a 45 minutes notice. Even with demonstrators abiding to such a request and begin to disperse, the police abused them with tear gas and arrested around 200 civilians. Within an hour, the police attacked civilians by pepper sprays and water cannon. An opposition legislator, Ted Hui, who stood between those civilians and police, was first accused of not controlling the crowd of civilians behind him, then having his goggles forcefully removed by one of the riot police and was teargassed into his eyes within a very short distance. 400 additional civilians were arrested later that night, while some were not even involved in the protests.

The avoidance of public opinion is further amplified since the outbreak of the n-Coronavirus 2019. Medical staff including <sup>1</sup>professors from the Faculty of Medicine at The University of Hong Kong have called on the implementation of border control on Mainland Chinese. In addition, they have called for the release of stockpiles of preventive supplies such as face mask and an independent audit into the use of the stockpile. After weeks of demand, their demands are ignored and there were no negotiations between the Hong Kong Authorities and medical personnel. On 4<sup>th</sup> February 2020, HA Employees Alliance, a union of Medical Professionals, responded to a ballot on a call for strike. 3,123 medical staff supported the motion while 10 rejected. <sup>1</sup>The union announced on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2020 that 9,000 medical personnel will respond to the strike action over the next 5 days. News reports at the time of writing this article pointed that more industries such as the Union for Public Bus Drivers may join in such protests at a later date.

Hong Kong has a liberal way of life such as the common law system and the protection of civil liberty. Her citizens are at the forefront of a battle between the free world and an increasingly authoritarian China who continuously denounced The Treaty and promises for greater democracy in Hong Kong. Britain, has a legal and moral duty to ensure that the promises made by her counterparty in the Joint Declaration is kept and that the way of life in Hong Kong should remain unchanged. The people of Hong Kong are determined and resilient; yet through Britain's bond, they should not walk alone.

## Recent opinion polls on Hong Kong issues

Hong Kong used to be under the British rule, and the opinion poll showed the British public concerned about the development in the City. According to the recent opinion poll conducted by Savanta ComRes and commissioned by Friends of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Watch on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2019, shows more than 63% of respondents were concerned about China eroding the human rights and freedoms of people in Hong Kong, while 56% concerned about China trying to undermine Hong Kong's self-rule.

<sup>1</sup> 'HA Employees Alliance approved the strike with 99% of votes and was now in the final showdown with Carrie Lam's government', RFI Hong Kong, 02 February 2020  
<http://www.rfi.fr/tw/%E6%94%BF%E6%B2%BB/20200202-%E9%86%AB%E8%AD%B7%E5%B7%A5%E6%9C%83%E6%8A%95%E7%A5%A899%E8%B4%8A%E6%88%90%E7%BD%B7%E5%B7%A5%E4%BB%8A%E8%88%87%E6%9E%97%E9%84%AD%E6%94%BF%E5%BA%9C%E6%9C%80%E5%BE%8C%E6%94%A4%E7%89%8C?fbclid=IwAR1ounSFaPjf3juhsakFK-PUTsPsNd7Bz4LCzBhOSBFDKbbV6AljrojEio>

When being asked whether they support or oppose various actions for the UK government to take on the Hong Kong citizens, 51% of the respondents thought it should be easier for students from Hong Kong in the UK to remain in the UK after their studies while only 15% opposed the idea.

The Lib Dems policy on BN(O) received substantial support too according to this poll: 46% of the respondents supported the policy on extending the rights to live in the UK to any British National (Overseas) passport holders from Hong Kong while only 20% opposed it. 38% of the respondents supported reopening the offer of a BN(O) passport to Hong Kong citizens, while only 22% opposed.

Under the current system, BN(O) holders do not have the right to live in UK, and for students from Hong Kong with a BN(O), they need to wait for 10 years before they can be registered as British Citizens. BN(O) holders are a kind of British Nationality, the system is so unfair and outdated under the current situation in Hong Kong. It is time for the government to act for the sake of protecting the human right particularly those students involved in the protest.

## **What can we do to protect Hong Kong citizens**

Offering right of abode to British Nationals is not novel. When Ugandan Asians were expelled from their homes in 1972, 'British Protected Persons', who are British Nationals were evacuated to the United Kingdom in numerous airlifts. Those evacuated in the hundreds of thousands include the family of today's politicians – The Home Secretary Priti Patel and Lord Poptat. Minister of State (Minister for the Commonwealth, UN and South Asia) has advised <sup>1</sup>248,000 British Nationals maintained a valid and current British National (Overseas) passport. In addition, to restore confidence after the Falkland War in 1982, the islanders of the were also granted full British Citizenship. During that conflict, Hong Kong soldiers fought for Britain and lives were sacrificed honouring duties under the Crown.

Britain is a joint signatory to the Sino-British Joint Declaration. The British government has a duty to protect the well-being of the people of Hong Kong. We are facing uncertainty after Brexit, but it is the time to show the world that the United Kingdom will still be the model of Western Democracy to protect those who suffered from the loss of civil liberties. Therefore, we would urge the British government to take the following actions:

- Granting BN(O) holders the right to abode and reopening the applications of the nationality
- Forbid UK manufacturers to supply equipment for HK police to suppress the protest movement by suspending the export licenses
- UK government should use its diplomatic and economic power to pressure Chinese government not to suppress the HK protest movement by mobilising its military force.
- 

Through the efforts of our party members, there will be an International Affairs and Defence motion on Hong Kong during the Liberal Democrats Spring Conference in York in March this year. It can be a small step, but it can still bring hopes to those who suffered in Hong Kong, particularly when they cannot see where lights laid ahead of them.

We should therefore proceed to actions to achieve our commitments.

***Larry Ngan and Nicholas Chan***  
***Chinese Liberal Democrats***

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<sup>1</sup> Figures quoted from debate in the House of Lords, 24 October 2019.  
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2019-10-24/debates/3333A63E-9A90-4AD0-BD00-E08C13124E3B/HongKong>

# Who's on Trial?

## Tom Arms

It is not just Donald John Trump who is on trial in the US Senate. In the dock before the court of world opinion are 100 senators, the American justice system, the rule of law and democratic institutions in the United States and in every other country which follows its lead in promoting liberal democratic ideals.

Like it or not, America has been historically viewed as the world's leading exponent of the interlocking values of democracy, judicial transparency and the rule of law. It likes to think of itself—as the Puritans and President Ronald Reagan said—as “the shining city upon the hill.” The light has been dimmed by the current administration, but it is still spluttering away. But if the Republican-controlled Senate block the calling of witnesses in the trial of President Trump it will be pouring a bucket of water over that light.

American law is based on English common law. And one of the basic tenets of English common law is that everyone – regardless of their position in society– is entitled to a free and fair trial. The obvious question is: How can you have a fair trial without witnesses? How can you determine a person's innocence or guilt until all the evidence has been heard and the witnesses have been interrogated and cross-examined? In fact, if I were President Donald John Trump, I would be insisting on the maximum number of witnesses and the greatest possible transparency. Because he is doing the opposite, it raises the accusation that he has something to hide and that something is simply guilt.

Trump and his Republican majority in the Senate claim that all the necessary witnesses have been heard by the House of Representatives. Untrue. President Trump put a blanket ban on all administration officials testifying before the House Judicial Committee. The result was that those who risked their careers by appearing were able to give only second-hand testimony on the charge that the president used his office to gain personal political advantage. The staff who could have confirmed their testimonies were subpoenaed but refused to comply. So that charge remains unproven.

Republicans claim the Clinton impeachment set a precedent for disallowing witnesses from the Senate trial. There are two things wrong with that argument. First, that President Clinton admitted his guilt and apologised, and secondly that every conceivable witness was interrogated ad nauseum by the House Judicial Committee. There were no evidentiary gaps.

The second charge—obstructing Congress— is fairly obvious. Trump told his staff to refuse compliance with congressional subpoenas. Trump refused to release documents requested by Congress. That is a clear obstruction of Congress. Unless, as Trump's defence team is likely to argue, there was no offence to obstruct in the first place.

Of course, all the above is academic. The 100 senators, including 53 Republicans, have sworn an oath to be impartial jurors. But that will be ignored. Most of them made it clear weeks ago that they would vote either to dismiss the charges altogether or to declare Donald Trump not guilty of any wrongdoing. As the Republicans command a majority in the Senate, they will vote to clear their Republican president.

Does this make the trial a farce even if witnesses are banned? Not quite. If men such as White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney, Former National Security Adviser Ambassador John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo are allowed to give testimony then the public will at least obtain a clearer picture of the facts. This will help them decide where to cast their ballots in the November elections.

In the meantime, China and Russia are rubbing their hands with glee. They have been arguing for years that the liberalism, democracy and the rule of law has had its day. That the great American experiment has become flawed by division and systemic corruption. The world – insist Beijing and Moscow– should turn to their totalitarian system as the world's model for the future.

In the lookaheadtv broadcast my co-host Lockwood and I clashed. The reason was the subject of that week's blog—the impeachment of President Trump. My co-host is taking the Republican Party line and saying there is no need to call witnesses or even bother with the trial. As you can see from above, I strongly disagree. As I am currently putting the finishing touches on a book about British influences on America ("America: Made in Britain"). I thought it might also be worth noting that the laws involving the impeachment of public officials had its genesis in Medieval England. There are literally hundreds of examples of examples of British officials being impeached, many of them for what we would regard today as unacceptable charges such as "giving pernicious advice to the Crown." When the American founding fathers came around to drafting the constitution, they accepted the need for an impeachment clause but were of the opinion that the precedents in English Common law (upon which US law is based) were both too broad in their application and interpretation. So, they restricted it to "high crimes and misdemeanours" and applied only to federal judges, the president and the vice president.

Lockwood and I also had some strong words to say to each other about climate change following President Trump's Davos speech on the "prophets of doom." Lockwood claimed that the US was one of the world's great environmental protectors. If that is the case then why have carbon emissions by the US have increased by 3.5 percent over the past three years after eight years of declining? If that is the case why has Trump this week announced plans to dismantle federal protection for more than half of America's wetlands and small waterways? •If that is the case why has Trump slashed regulations for oil and gas development; weakened fuel emission standards for cars and proposed changes to the Endangered Species Act? •The answer is simple: Money. Fewer environmental regulations boosts profits, increases the GDP, helps the stock market, creates jobs and wins blue collar votes and the support of big business. On this point Lockwood and I are agreed. But as I said: "What is the point of a booming economy on a dead planet." Perhaps I overstated the problem to make a point. Or did I?

The Coronavirus is spreading. As of this writing, three Chinese cities with a combined population of about 15 million are on lockdown. Beijing's Chinese New Year's celebrations have been cancelled. Six suspected cases of the disease are confined to an isolation ward in a Scottish hospital. Other cases have been reported in the US, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau. Part of the problem is that southeast China is the perfect disease incubator. The climate is hot and humid; the population is packed into cramped and unsanitary living conditions; and there is a strong culture of buying live animals in unregulated food markets. The Bubonic Plague which wiped out half of Europe's population in the 14<sup>th</sup> century originated in China. In modern times two flu pandemics—in 1957 and 1968—started in China as did the SARS epidemic of 2002. •In the past, the Chinese authorities have been reluctant to work with international bodies when a disease has reared its ugly head. This time they appear to be cooperating fully, but they are battling against nature.

Brexit is far from over. The Brexiteers have secured the political framework for withdrawal from the EU, but the devilish detail of trade talks is still to come. Two events this week underscore the difficulties ahead: Chancellor Sawid Javid's insistence that there will be "no alignment" with the EU in any trade deal and US Treasury Secretary Stephen Mnuchin's threat to slap tariffs on British car imports if the British tax US-based digital giants. The latter is a pointer to the difficulties faced in negotiating Trump's "great" US-UK trade deal which Boris Johnson hopes will be a giant step to replacing lost trade with Europe. And refusing any alignment in trade regulations with EU is almost certain to reduce Britain's trade with the continent which currently stands at 48 percent of the country's overall trade relations. The next year will see a flurry of trade negotiations, not just with Brussels and Washington, but with dozens of other capitals as well. The Department of Trade will be involved in a global three-dimensional chess trade game as Britain attempts to completely restructure its trading relations.

Sometimes the Trump Administration does something right. It appears that this is the case in their decision to act as honest broker in a dispute over the waters of the iconic Nile River. The specific honest broker has been Treasury Secretary Stephen Mnuchin who has been chairing a Washington conference to prevent a war between Egypt, Ethiopia and possibly Sudan, over water rights. At issue is Ethiopia's building of the \$4 billion Grand Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile. It is 80 percent complete and when finished will provide electricity for all of Ethiopia with some left over for energy exports to Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea and Djibouti. The problem is that the dam also threatens to reduce the flow of the Nile downstream in

Egypt, which depends on the river for 90 percent of its water needs. The compromise is that the Ethiopians have agreed to regulate the filling of the reservoir behind the dam in order to minimise disruption of the water flow. Of course, it remains to be seen how this procedure will work in practice.

I am sorely tempted. The source of this temptation is a social media advertisement for the post of caretaker on the isolated and rarely-visited island of Blasset off the west coast of Ireland. It could be the perfect place for me to put my nose to the grindstone and finally finish my book and maybe even start on my next literary effort. There are a few drawbacks, such as no electricity or running water. But that is offset by the fact that the island has only about a dozen visitors a year and no one else lives there. It appears, however, that I am not the only one with designs on this dream job. So far more than 20,000 people from around the world have applied for the position. If you want to learn more—and listen to the dulcet tones of Lockwood and myself.

### **Tom Arms**

*Tom Arms is membership secretary for Tooting Lib Dems. He broadcasts on foreign affairs for US Radio, regularly contributes to Lib Dem Voice (where part of this article appeared on 24<sup>th</sup> January), lectures and is working on a book on Anglo—American relations which is due to be published next year.*

## **International Abstracts**

### **UK**

Power Failure, by Jonathan Parry. London Review of Books 21<sup>st</sup> November 2019.

*Reviewing *The End is Nigh, British Politics & the Road to the Second World War*, by conservative historian Robert Crowcroft, Parry draws parallels between 1938-39 and the Brexit dilemma.*

### **Israel**

The precarious position of Benjamin Netanyahu, by Ruth Margalit. The New Yorker 8<sup>th</sup> October 2019

‘King Bibi’ seems to be following in the footsteps of the Biblical kings of Israel. Their God did warn them.

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/letter-from-jerusalem/the-precarious-position-of-benjamin-netanyahu>

### **Russia**

Gorbachev tells the BBC world in colossal danger.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-europe-50265870/mikhail-gorbachev-tells-the-bbc-world-in-colossal-danger?>

### **Liberator 398**

Bernard Greaves looks at the direction the Liberal Democrats need to take after Brexit; internationalism is to the fore. Rebecca Tinsley challenges western counter-insurgency strategies. Kiron Reid’s article on the Ukraine elections (interLib 2019-05) appears in hard copy. Margaret Lally looks at Heathrow’s immigration centres. More disturbing are Liz Barker’s critique of Tim Farron’s book, and the Swinson camp’s ousting of Nick Harvey as chief executive of the Liberal Democrats.

### **Liberator 399**

Is primarily about the short-comings of the Liberal Democrats’ General Election strategy. Iain Brodie-Browne’s *Beyond the Tribes* does maintain the spirit of Internationalism.

### **Journal of Liberal History Issue 105 Winter 2019-20**

John Curtice writes on the Liberal Democrat performance in the 2019 General Election. Otherwise we have Lloyd George’s approach to the Game Laws & Land Reform, the Birmingham Caucus in the 1868 General Election, the contributions of Liberal party health policy to the formation of the NHS.



# Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

## LD4SOS AT SPRING CONFERENCE, YORK

### "Lift the Ban" - campaign for the right to work for asylum seekers.

Our Fringe meeting is on **Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March** 19.45 to 21.00 in the Riverside Room of the Novotel Hotel. **"Lift the Ban" - campaign for the right to work for asylum seekers.** What Liberal Democrats have done, what the situation is elsewhere and how we can get involved at every level. Mary Brandon, Campaign Projects Manager for Yorkshire and Humber from Asylum Matters, Dr. Ruvi Ziegler from LD4SOS and Christine Jardine MP will speak and then answer questions.

Come and see us at the **Exhibition in the Barbican Centre – Stand 13**



### A THOUSAND SMALL SANITIES: THE MORAL ADVENTURE OF LIBERALISM

**ADAM GOPNIK**

**02/03/2020 7:00 PM**

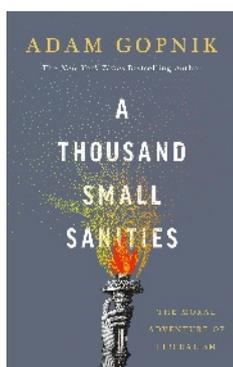
**KINGS PLACE, HALL 1**

**Ticket Price : £16.50**

The journalist and New York Times-bestselling author **Adam Gopnik** offers a stirring defence of liberalism against the dogmatism of our time.

Taking us from Montaigne to Mill, and from *Middlemarch* to the civil rights movement, he shows us why liberalism is one of the great moral adventures in human history – and why, in an age of autocracy, our lives may depend on its continuation. *A Thousand Small Sanities* is a manifesto rooted in the lives of the people who invented and extended the liberal tradition. Adam Gopnik argues that liberalism is not a form of centrism, nor simply another word for free markets, nor merely a term denoting a set of rights. It is something far more ambitious: the search for radical change by humane measures.

<https://www.kingsplace.co.uk/whats-on/words/a-thousand-small-sanities-the-moral-adventure-of-liberalism/>



Followed at 8.30 pm by What's Next for Iran? With Jack Straw, Sanam Vakil and Nazenin Ansari, chaired by Lawrence Freedman. Ticket Price : £16.50



# reviews

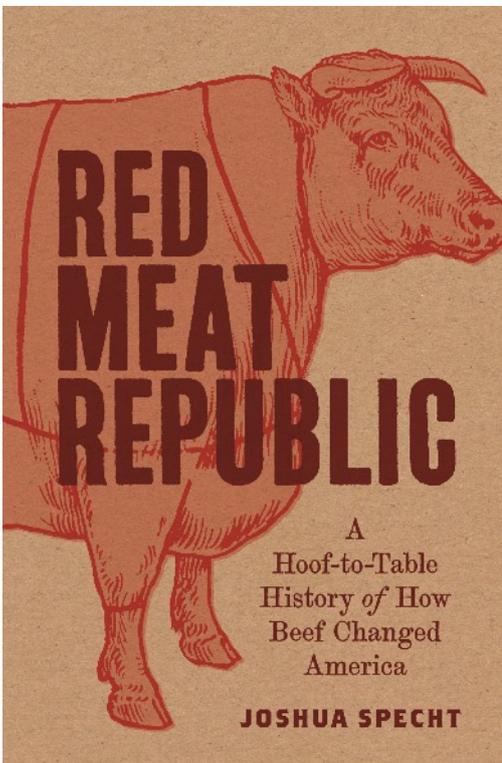
**Red Meat Republic: A Hoof-to-Table History of How Beef Changed America, by Joshua Specht.**

Princeton 2019 £22.00

isbn 9780691182315

eBook isbn 9780691185781

*The Blues Brothers* aside, *Rawhide* is probably a fading memory or a mystery to most people. A popular television series running to some 217 episodes between 1959 and 1965, days when Westerns dominated our television viewing. In many respects it launched Clint Eastwood's career through the role of Rowdy Yates, although he wasn't totally happy with the part. On the other side of the spectrum, the American cattle industry brought us Howlin' Wolf's *Killing Floor* – rather a metaphor for doubtful sexual relationships, many black Americans worked in the slaughterhouses of Chicago, typically getting some of the shittiest jobs – a friend of mine lasted three hours in such employment.



Whilst certain Continentals refer to the English as Rosbifs, the epithet might be even more appropriate in America, with their beef-oriented diet. Specht is primarily concerned with the early development of the meat industry, back in the nineteenth century. By the 1870s cattle ranchers are starting to expropriate Indian lands. Nomadic peoples don't fit into their pattern, two genocides result, of the Indians, First Nation(s) or whatever, and the buffalo, with whom they had a symbiotic relationship. The Civil War had given them an edge, but its end brought battle-hardened soldiers against them. The demise of the Plains tribes allowed the expansion of ranching, but not its ability to cope with the environment, which in turn conditioned the supply side of the industry.

The Civil War was partly won on railways; they too expanded, providing the means to take the herds to the more populous east. It is easier for economies of scale to develop at the slaughter and processing end, particularly with the arrival of refrigeration. The argument the meat packers always put against their shoddy treatment of ranchers, workers and small local butchers was consumer interest. They democratised beef consumption in America – the rich didn't like it.

Certainly, at the farming end, I'm less sure of how American practices shaped the industry globally. Droving was commonplace in Britain, many of the open spaces in central London being the remains of an old cattle market. The same problems are still with us. Late last year, Irish cattle raisers were boycotting slaughterhouses because of the price they were getting. It didn't work out too well, as small farmers worried about the on-costs of keeping bullocks over Winter if they weren't sold. Beef has become controversial environmentally, Specht's book outlines how we got to this position. Goldsmith's University has banned beef products from its cafeterias; change is in the air. However, if you want to make sense of those arguments, Joshua Specht is your starting point for the background to the industry.

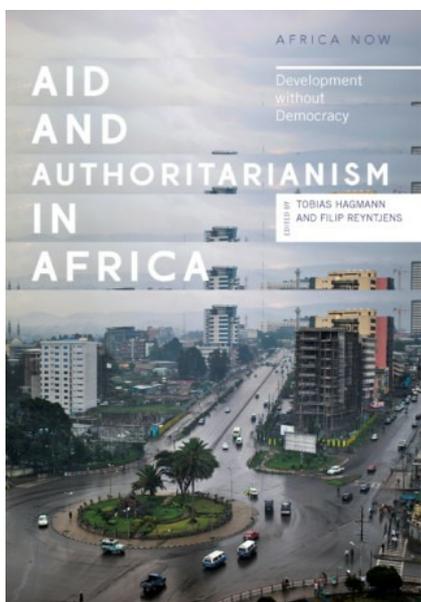
*Stewart Rayment*

**Aid and Authoritarianism in Africa, development without democracy,**  
edited by Tobias Hagman and Filip Reyntjens.  
Zed Books 2016 £24.99 isbn 9781782606283

Anyone who instinctively thinks the governments of prosperous nations should give 0.7% of their GDP (a goal promoted by Tony Blair, David Cameron and others) in foreign aid should read this book. Far from spreading democracy and prosperity, government-to-government development aid can embolden and entrench the worst authoritarian regimes.

Dictators may use direct budget support from wealthy nations to (sometimes) provide education and health. But, this series of essays argue, by removing that responsibility from authoritarian governments, we remove the ability of citizens to hold their rulers to account and to demand transparency. Aid used by dictators also allows regimes to award jobs, contracts and licenses to their party supporters. Consequently, our aid fosters a resilient, stable, if sinister, political order, backed by well-armed security services, with little fear of political or social backlash that might lead to change benefiting citizens.

Western nations show a “predilection for authoritarian governments,” because the “technocratic” dictators running them speak the correct “modern” jargon, convincing donor nations that they will use the funds efficiently. The wealthy world also likes bolstering regimes that send their soldiers to fight the war on terror in place of their own soldiers; that buy their weapons; and allow Western companies to exploit their natural resources.



“Development programmes financed by foreign donors and implemented in or by undemocratic administrations are characterized by an almost complete lack of accountability,” writes Reyntjens: your taxes at work. It is apparent that the developed world’s best intentions may be undermined by the naïve or wilful ignorance of national or multilateral aid agencies handing money directly to autocratic foreign governments.

Worse, the same donor countries are reluctant to admit they have backed a repressive regime because it undermines their policies (another way to say “egg on face”). Moreover, local aid agency offices tend to downplay the extent of corruption and brutality, wanting to maintain their budget levels and career prospects. Many Western donor nations have also ditched

attaching conditions (such as election term limits, free media, freedom of religion and a respect for human rights) because they know the Chinese and private capital can be tapped by dictators looking for loans. The authors examine Mozambique, Angola, Uganda, Ethiopia, Cameroon and Rwanda, concluding that aid would be better spent helping flawed democracies like Ghana, Senegal, Zambia and even Nigeria that are, at least, making an effort to be democratic, and reflect the dynamism of their young people and urban dwellers.

The good news is that the most consistent growth in Africa comes from Botswana and Mauritius, two of its strongest democracies. Hence, if a Western nation wishes to support democracy and human rights, it should bolster African countries heading in the right direction, rather than imagining democracy will necessarily follow the type of economic growth that rarely benefits the ordinary citizen.

The essays are by academics, and hence are not easy reading. However, they are enlightening and disturbing. Unfortunately, it was beyond the scope of the book to examine the relative merits of foreign aid delivered by faith groups and Western charities. Yet, most impartial observers familiar with Africa will know that these NGOs, make a disproportionate and positive contribution to the well-being of African citizens, if not their thuggish rulers.

**Rebecca Tinsley**

*Rebecca Tinsley’s novel about Sudan, When the Stars Fall to Earth, is available on Amazon.*

The Best of Matt 2019, by Matt  
Orion 2019 £7.99  
isbn 9781409164678

Matt (Matthew Pritchett) is one of the few people who loves the Brexit process,, and it isn't 'done'. For him, it could run and run, having provided a constant source for his Daily Telegraph pocket cartoons over the last three & a half years. Indeed, around two thirds of his 2019 collection are devoted to it or its subplots.



Speaking at his book launch at Chris Beetles Gallery, where the originals were on display, Matt admitted that he was a poor political pundit, having failed to predict the outcomes of the last three general elections and the Referendum. How would the 12<sup>th</sup> December turn out? Well Matt's three children were all voting Liberal Democrat, so they should have a 100-seat majority... we all laughed.

Only three Liberal Democrat cartoons feature in this year's book, most of which predates the upturn in the party's fortunes. Two of those featured in *interLib* 2019-04, the other harks back to the 2018 Brighton conference, where ostensibly trains were cancelled for lack of delegates to take home; I don't recall that, but we are dealing with a fundamentally hostile newspaper, of which, in recent years, Matt's cartoons have been the only redeeming

feature. The Telegraph was up for sale (Financial Times 26.10.2019); one hopes that the new owners will retain Matt. It would probably be asking too much for them to change their political colour – the paper is one of few to have actually declared its political allegiance. Recognition did pick up during the General Election – at least two, but since you'll have to wait for next year for the collection, here's the spoiler.

Matt's work is available from Chris Beetles Gallery and can be viewed online at <https://www.chrisbeetles.com/artist/35/matt-matthew-pritchett-mbe> The originals can be purchased for an attractive £250.00 unmounted, £350.00 framed.

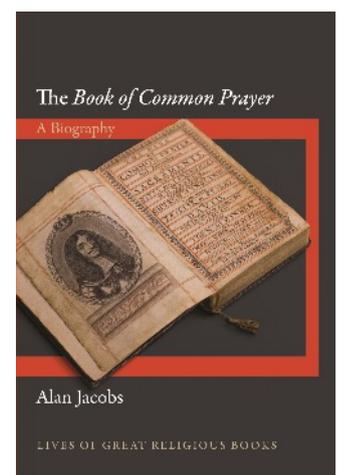
### Stewart Rayment

**The Book of Common Prayer: A Biography by Alan Jacobs.**  
Princeton University Press paperback edition 2019 £14.99  
isbn 9780691191782 e-book isbn 9781400848027

A book about the Church of England's *Book of Common Prayer* might not be an obvious choice of book for review in *interLib*. But as Alan Jacobs demonstrates, some books represent more than the sum of their contents. It was not for nothing that Liberal Party Presidents pass on a copy of Milton's *Areopagitica* to their successor or that Liberal Democrat Party Presidents do likewise with Mill's *On Liberty*.

Like other seventeenth century puritans, Milton was a fervent opponent of the *Book of Common Prayer* which he saw as a form of tyranny with its set liturgy and the compulsion to use it under the Act of Uniformity. As Milton saw it, the despotism of the King was inextricably linked to the despotism of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

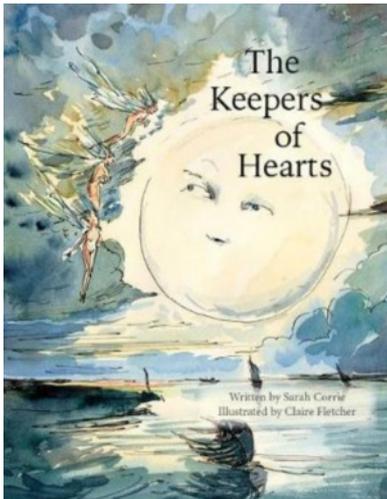
Jacobs tells the tale of this particular book which was intended to unite the kingdom around a particular liturgy and the theology contained within it. It never satisfied the religious extremes but Cranmer's glorious use of words – we need to place the *Book of Common Prayer* with Shakespeare and the Authorised Version of the Bible as the main influences on modern English usage – continues to meet the spiritual needs of many, including this particular Anglican. Together with the



Bible and the Thirty-Nine Articles, it remains the standard for Church of England doctrine, although it is no longer used in many parishes. Its echoes and structures remain in Anglican (and some non-Anglican) liturgies around the world which draw inspiration from it.

It is difficult to enter into the cultural mind set of a past world in which the *Book of Common Prayer* was the cause of religious and political controversy (with riots and many deaths) from its first appearance in 1549 to the refusal of the House of Commons in 1928 to allow a revised edition of the 1662 version to pass into law. The nearest we can enter is to consider the role the *Koran* has in some Islamic jurisdictions where it is a much more than a religious book and allegiance to it demonstrates allegiance to the State. Milton would not be pleased.

### **Paul Hunt**



**The Keepers of Hearts, by Sarah Corrie,  
illustrated by Claire Fletcher.  
Rock-a-Nore Press 2019 £12.00  
isbn 9781527239944**

This is a story of loss and grief, most specifically over-coming grief. In communities that are dependent on the sea, notably the small fishing communities that have been in decline in the UK as successive governments have championed large-scale industrial fishing, death at sea is commonplace, and since these are close-knit, deeply felt within those communities. A friend of mine, 15<sup>th</sup> in line to be laird of his clan when we met, was 7<sup>th</sup> in line when he died, most of his uncles and cousins lost to the sea over a little more than a decade.

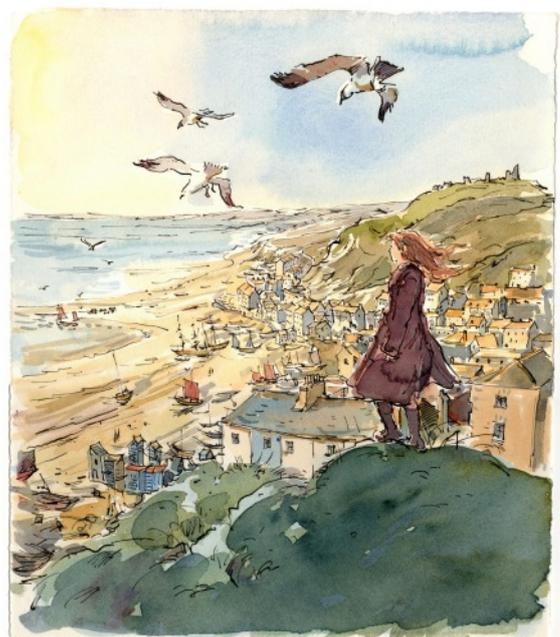
The story is set in the 1850s however, when the fishing fleet in Hastings would have been one of the primary livelihoods of the town. Jack's father drowns at sea, and he sets off in search of the sea faeries in order to *salve* the grief he and his mother feel. In verse, the book took four years to complete, but it was well worth it.

Illustrated by Claire Fletcher, you might remember her for Linda Ravin Lodding's *Painting Pepette* (Templar 2016); a small girl and her toy rabbit's encounters with the artists of Montmartre. The book is available to buy at <https://www.seafaeries.co.uk/>

Despite nostalgia, the fishing industry, still less that of small scale fishing, is of little significance in the UK's economy. That wasn't always the case, but it was sacrificed by an inattentive Edward Heath when we first joined the Common Market, and successive Labour and Tory governments since, who have backed big industrial fishing in the quota handouts since.

The Liberal Democrats would be wise to consider this in the coming months, as France and Spain are very unlikely to want to give up their access to British waters, and whatever promises Gove made to the Hastings fishing community in advance of the General Election, I have no doubt that Boris will betray them.. Graham Watson will probably be a good person to advise; in his day as an MEP he was one of the few who was consistent in his work on the EU Fishing Committee. Unfortunately the fisherfolk of Cornwall stitched him up with a Kipper.

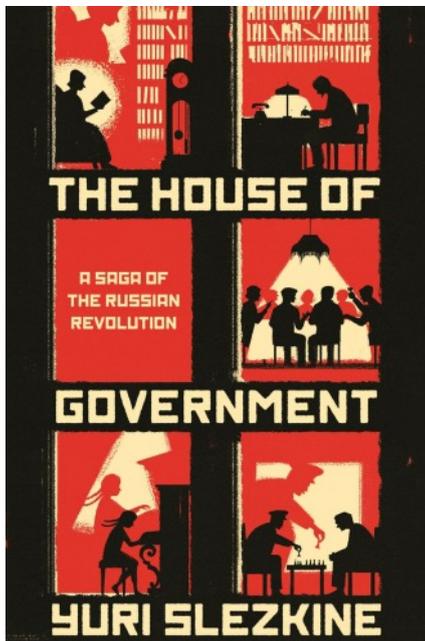
**Stewart Rayment**



**The House of Government, by Yuri Slezkine.**  
**Princeton University Press 2019 £22.00 paperback**  
**isbn 9780691192727**  
**e-book isbn 9781400888177**

I look at the size of yet another Russian novel (980 pages and another 100 or so of appendices), groan, and ask myself ‘why do I read them?’. Hadn’t Tolstoi and Dostoyevsky satisfied a want for human misery? Hadn’t Solzhenitsyn confirmed my prejudices against the Soviet system in the wake of the invasion of Czechoslovakia? Yet here I am struggling through another. As the note after the title page reads ‘This is a work of history. Any resemblance to fictional characters, dead or alive, is entirely coincidental.’

How does one follow that? The fictions of the Soviet empire closely follow real life. If we take Smirnov, one of the most common surnames in Russia and encountered early on; the career of comrade Vladimir Smirnov, always willing, it seems, to speak up on what he perceived as the short-comings of party policy, and that of his associates, follows what actually happened to them (see Wikipedia). But the vodka? Smirnoff was founded by Pyotr Arsenjevich Smirnov in 1864, not Ivan, and rapidly became Moscow’s favourite. Located by the Chugunny Bridge, the factory was further to the east on the island. Was there another?



This is where the House of Government gets built. It is to be home to all of the senior Bolsheviks, bringing them together after their pre-revolutionary days of exile, built on the links formed in those years. As one would expect of a Commissariat, they expect rewards for their trials and tribulations. However, one notes the wisdom of Chairman Mao – ‘we must take good care of our cadres, there are many ways of doing so’. So, for many of them, if they are lucky, it will be back to exile.

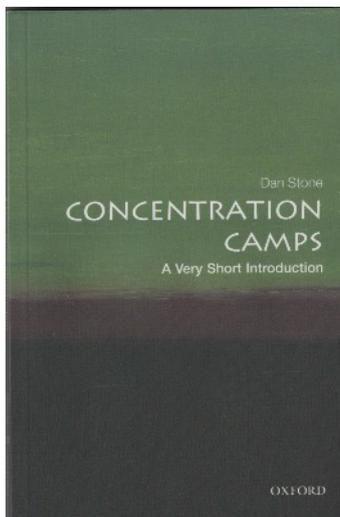
On the way we explore Marxism as millennial religion, Socialism and the decomposition of the family – these things may be real for the average Corbynista, but the rest of us, the vast majority of the peasantry who’ve never reached salvation? If you want to get to grips with what is wrong with socialism, this is a good source. And the building; well the design brief is sloppy, if there’s a brief at all. The execution of the plans even sloppier, and of course, goes hopelessly over budget. Yes, I’m afraid infrastructure projects invariably go over budget; it isn’t unique to capitalism (though fewer people get shot probably).

I chanced upon a Trot of some faction I had not come across before (and have now forgotten) at the CND/Stop the War Coalition No war with Iran demonstration. He was telling me how Trotsky had prophesized all this (Trump and Iran that is), and I told him about the book and its dealings with the Left Opposition, and Trotskyism; it might give depth and insight to his beliefs. But faithful to the line, the book wasn’t written by Trotsky or one of his anointed; what could I say?

Slezkine himself, left Russia in 1982 and is now a professor of Russian history at Berkeley. The concept of a history of Soviet Russia through a building had its roots in a paper published in the early 1990s, but two decades of research in diaries, letters, memoirs and state records that had become recently opened brought the book to fruition. The photographs? Are they the people they claim to portray? It doesn’t matter; just think how much easier War & Peace would have been with a few photos.

It is often said that if you want to get to grips with a time, you should read its novels. By going through the sources of minor players in the Soviet story, post-revolution (or putsch as one recent Russian commentator put it) through the New Economic Programme to full Stalinism, Slezkine has perhaps provided this with materials that would otherwise be inaccessible to most of us. And he has told a story – more than one, but making a common thread. You won’t get through this in one go, but you will keep picking it up, even going back over the bits that you didn’t quite get the first time,

**Stewart Rayment.**



**Concentration Camps, a very short introduction, by Dan Stone.**  
**Oxford University Press 2019 £8.99**  
**isbn 9780198723387**

I have a problem. Not so much with this book, but its subject. I am only a third of the way through, and it has dealt with Nazi Germany. Note the difference between concentration camps and death camps. Ok, so there are the Russian Gulags to follow, but it does not stop there.

Disquieting, there is the chapter ‘Liberal internment’ – specifically America’s rounding up of their Japanese citizens after Pearl Harbour, but also the internment of ‘enemy aliens’ in Britain; panic, prejudice and the press as catalysts for the problem. Then there is the question of displaced persons in the aftermath of the war, were they concentration camps? It could depend who was

running them, and where. In this there is some exoneration of the British and American camps. For Stone, it is a matter of intent, and that stretches back the British camps of the Boer War (notorious for the Nazis borrowing their name. The methods of barbarism were cock-up rather than conspiracy.

Alas, it goes on and on, the chilling last chapter ‘An Auschwitz every three months’ – how does one count refugee camps, or migrant holding centres such as those in Libya? Intent, cock-up, where? These are all factors.

Overall, this is a very well written, and better still, thought provoking book. Suitable for GCSE students onwards, with references and further reading to take you onwards.

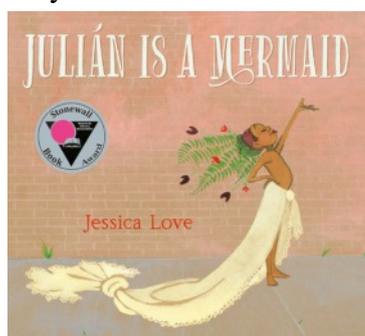
***Stewart Rayment***

**Julían is a Mermaid by Jessica Love.**  
**Walker 2018 £6.99**  
**isbn 9781406286424**

Michael Morpurgo has listed Julian amongst the ten books that every up-to-seven-year-old should have. For those of my acquaintance Santa dropped one off. Indeed, give it to the eternal child in all of your friends.

A praise of tolerance, central to our Whig heritage and something in short supply these days (not least as HMG compounds Windrush with Bum’s Rush) Check out my review in interLib 2019-04 if in doubt.

Order in from your nearest independent bookseller if they don’t have it in stock.



***Stewart Rayment***

