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# INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



**TURKEY-SYRIA HONG KONG  
WOMEN**

# EVENTS

**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.*

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Photographs: Emily Lau, Stewart Rayment, Phil Bennion

# The tragic sinking of the neo-Ottoman dreams of Tayyip Erdoğan

## Raci Balkan

According to Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey is at war. Beginning of this week president Erdoğan used this exact sentence while he was talking to group of journalists. He meant the Syrian front. There are more than 5,000 Turkish troops armed with numerous battle tanks, armed personal carriers, missile launchers and Stinger missiles trying secure the position in and around of Idlib. Every single video and photo from the battle front has already proved that Turkish Army Forces either fighting alongside with jihadists or helping them by arming them the with latest weaponry. Since Idlib became the last surviving pocket of Islamists in Syria, Tayyip Erdoğan has been having sleepless nights. More than five years ago he famously declared that “very soon we will be in Damascus, we will celebrate the victory inside the Emevi mosque” but events proved him dramatically wrong. Russian intervention of the Syrian war caused a miserable crash of Erdoğan’s dream of “Ottoman Empire 2.0”. As it was pointed out by a leftwing Kurdish columnist in the Yeni Yaşam daily paper, Erdoğan’s Syrian war in fact a war against Kurds and Alawites, so it is in a way an ethnic war against these people. This is probably the best explanation so far about this proxy war of Turkey.

While Turkish economy indicators signalling an inevitable downturn maybe even a sudden crash, unemployment figures have already passed eleven percent ( that is if one believes the official numbers of course), central bank reserves are in lowest level, foreign investors are fleeing from the country and every single poll suggest Tayyip Erdoğan’s coalition is losing support as fast as a supersonic missile. Under these dire circumstances it is obvious that his capacity to govern the country is in peril. Like any other autocratic leader his has chosen to go for all-out war. This is one of the reasons that he announced if Syrian forces do not withdraw from the Idlib area by the end of February, the Turkish army would cross the border and war will officially start. In the meantime, he is still trying to find a way around this mess; trying to come out of this victorious but without actually fighting.

This objective is difficult to achieve. The Russians do not agree with his plans, yet they do not want him to lose completely. There is a lot of Russian infrastructure investment tied up in Turkey. Their plan is to push back the terrorists to the Turkish border and give Turkey a fivemilewide strip. Tayyip Erdoğan has become famous for his swift opportunistic policy moves, but the world has moved and no one is buying this anymore. The road he is following is full of dangers; he is completely aware of this fact but there is almost nothing else to do. Erdoğan cannot afford to lose an election. He cannot afford to lose his grip on the country. He is obviously very scared of the consequences of losing power. The payback time is coming and it is causing nightmares around the palaces and residences of his cronies.

Erdoğan has imperialistic ambitions parallel to Ottoman Empire history. Having ambitions are not enough to achieve them, in fact most probably his dreams sunk in Idlib with the death of more than thirty Turkish soldiers at an air attack in the afternoon of 27th of February. This is a biggest single loss of life in one single incident. According to official figures number army personnel died are 33 but there are at least dozen of critically wounded soldiers brought to hospitals. There is a widely accepted belief that government is hiding the real numbers of dead soldiers.

The severity of this attack clearly indicates of decisiveness of Russian Syrian coalition to clear the jihadist factions from the country. In last two months number of Turkish soldiers who lost their lives exceeded fifty. Losses in Libya, Erdoğan’s other adventure are also greater than reported, including at least one senior officer.

This is a very heavy toll and it will certainly affect the Erdoğan’s ability to run the country in the way as he wants. Less than a day after the attack there were articles appearing in mainstream media which questions the Syrian policy altogether.

The country is gradually getting ready for the post Erdoğan era. Every indicator shows the same directions; economic downturn, Syrian policy, Refugee crisis, complete loss of rule of law, historically high unemployment numbers and loss of lives in Idlib.

Immediately after the attack of Turkish forces, government announced that no one will be stop at the borders whose are trying to reach Greece. So, a refugee based blackmailing policy is in effect. There were numerous calls to NATO, USA and EU to help Turkey in Syria either by applying no fly zone or put into effect of Article Four<sup>1</sup>; but none of these calls were answered positively.

So, Erdoğan went to Moscow. On the evening of 5th of March Putin and Erdoğan signed a new ceasefire agreement to end the “funny” war in Idlib. As far as it seems Erdoğan looked like he agreed almost everything was Putin saying for some time<sup>2</sup>; the body language of the press statement said it all. Turkish forces will withdraw behind the M4 motorway and will follow the Sochi and Astana ceasefire with terrorist factions in the area. There will be a safe zone which we assume will be controlled by Turkish army, though Al Jazeera reported joint Turkish and Russian patrols. On the other hand (although nothing is clear yet) Syrian army and Russian forces will keep pounding the jihadists. So, at first instance Putin has got what he wanted. Erdoğan has only won nothing but time. According to some commentators that was what he wanted. His double dealing between west and east did not work this time, it may never work again. Plus, his biggest card, a migrant rush to Europa also ended in vain. He may run out of his usual tricks. If that is the case (I strongly suspect it is) we may see some fundamental changes in Turkey soon. His coalition will start cracking soon because of this new ceasefire. Two new parties will announce their presence and they will snatch some MPs from his AKP. His coalition partner MHP has already started some secret talks with another nationalist party. Depending on the developments Erdoğan might have call an early election or try to push his limits for the purpose of a clear-cut dictatorship. At present he looks like a mad man rather than an experienced politician. Some believe that the Americans were pushing him to go into war with Syria, but that means also having to fight with Russia; he did not take that option, but the ceasefire is fragile. Russia has interests in Turkey, but long-term military commitments in Syria. Tartus is there only naval facility outside of the former Soviet Union and was granted a 49-year lease, renewable, in 2017. Maybe the first time in his era Erdoğan has shown some weakness. He might have remembered that every action has consequences.

So, it seems Erdoğan at last on his own in his selfmade quagmire of Syria. Some argues that he would try to use the present situation for declaring emergency law and consolidate his rule but even if this the case certainly would not last long.

We may after all witness a more democratic Turkey emerging when present smoke cleared out.

### ***Raci Balkan***

<sup>1</sup> Under article 4 of the NATO Treaty, any ally can request consultations whenever, in the opinion of any of them, their territorial integrity, political independence or security is threatened. Turkey called this meeting for 28<sup>th</sup> February.

<sup>2</sup> <https://yetkinreport.com/en/2020/03/06/was-that-all-putin-and-erdogan-got-after-5-hours/>

This website is run by Murat Yetkin, a journalist who was in charge of Turkish Daily News once. About year and half ago he set up this site. It is a bilingual site. It usually offers sane articles. It might be useful for understanding Turkish domestic policies.

<http://www.al-akhbar.com/>

This is an Arabic news site. According to a Turkish journalist there is an article about a series of meetings which took place between Turks, Syrians and Iranians. I have read the Turkish article about these events. As far as I understand there is not going to be any major changes in the near future.

# What should Britain do for Hong Kong?

## Emily Lau

When I visited the United Kingdom in February I was invited by the Liberal International British Group to speak at a seminar on Hong Kong. The other speaker was Professor Chris Hughes of the London School of Economics and Political Science. Sovereignty in Hong Kong was transferred from Britain to China in 1997 according to the Sino-British Joint Declaration. Under this treaty, Hong Kong's liberal way of life, including common law system, civil liberties and personal safety, will be protected by the Chinese Government's policy of "One country, two systems" which will last for 50 years. Britain has a legal and moral duty to ensure that Beijing's promises remain unchanged, at least until 2047.

Protests in Hong Kong which began in June last year were caused by the now-withdrawn Extradition Bill, seeking to allow people to be sent to Mainland China for trial. They have caused anxiety, hatred and apprehension. Serious erosion of civil liberties, human rights abuses by the police and arbitrary arrests have become the new normal for Hong Kong. More than 7,000 protesters have been arrested, yet not a single police officer has been arrested and charged. Hence the people demand justice.

Some protesters have turned violent, but they still received the support of many Hong Kong people, who found the police brutality so repugnant. On several occasions, more than a million people took to the streets to demand independent investigation into the worst crisis hitting Hong Kong. The people also demand democratic political reform.

During my visit to the UK, my message is loud and clear: Britain must urge Beijing to honour the Joint Declaration and respect Hong Kong's "high degree of autonomy" by not interfering in Hong Kong affairs. London should speak out against police brutality and support the Hong Kong people's demand for an independent inquiry into the eight months of protests. Britain should also urge its allies, including those in the European Union, to speak out for Hong Kong and support the people's demand for democratic reform.



To honour the Joint Declaration and offer Hong Kong people support, Britain should offer British citizenship and right of abode to people who hold British National (Overseas) passports. These people have no right to live or work in Britain and can only use the passport as a travel document. Extending right of abode and full citizenship to them would be a strong signal that Britain acknowledges its responsibility for its nationals and would not abandon them.

Apart from speaking at the National Liberal Club, I also spoke to students and academics at Cambridge University, London School of Economics and Political Science and the School of Oriental and African Studies. I met members of "Hong Kong Watch" including Ben Rogers, Luke de Pulford and Johnny Patterson. I also met former Foreign Secretary Sir Malcolm Rifkind and Lord Tom Pendry of the Labour Party, and spoke with last Hong Kong Governor Lord Chris Patten. During these meetings, I was given the impression that the British public accept that Britain has a responsibility for the Hong Kong people.

I sensed support for the difficult situation faced by the Hong Kong people, who have to live under a repressive Chinese Communist regime led by President Xi Jinping. To people in the international community, Hong Kong is at the forefront of a battle between the free world and an increasingly authoritarian state of China.

The survival of a free Hong Kong, underpinned by the rule of law, would mean that Beijing has been persuaded or pressured into respecting the Joint Declaration and cannot ride roughshod over 7 million Hong Kong people. China human rights lawyers said it is importance to preserve a free Hong Kong and that would not just be good for Hong Kong and for China, but good for the international community.

Interference from Beijing and the incompetence of the Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam, who is seen as a puppet of the Communist Party, have resulted in widespread mistrust. The people's level of anxiety was palpable. A commentary in Bloomberg in early February said Hong Kong was showing symptoms of a failed state. Surgical masks and sanitizer gel were bartered for, and there was even a run on toilet paper. These were scenes reminiscent of Venezuela.

On 14 February, I went to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and met FCO Asia Pacific Director Kate White and the Home Office International Director Kirsty Hayes. I told them the situation in Hong Kong was bad and would get worse. Once the Coronavirus epidemic is over, protests will resume with a vengeance, because the people demand justice regarding police brutality, and are hugely dissatisfied with Carrie Lam's disgraceful performance. That being the case, the situation could only deteriorate.

When that happens, what will Britain do? I asked Ms White and Ms Kirsty to convey this question to Home



*Emily Lau, Adrian Hyyrylianen-Trett & Chris Hughes*

Secretary Priti Patel, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab and Prime Minister Boris Johnson. In the past months, questions on Hong Kong were asked in both Houses of Parliament. Liberal Democrats, echoing the call by their late Leader Lord Paddy Ashdown, called on the British Government to give right of abode to the BN(O) passport holders if China reneged on the Joint Declaration. Their MP Alistair Carmichael successfully moved the first reading of the Hong Kong Bill in the House of Commons and has scheduled the second reading on 12 June. I hope it will receive broad support from all political parties.

Tory MP Tom Tugendhat, Chairman of the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, advocates giving British Citizenship to BN(O) passport holders. Tory MP Steve Double has been pressing the British Government give BN(O) passport holders a vital lifeline by allowing them full consular access and easier routes to residency. In the House of Lords, Labour Peer Tom Pendry will move a debate on Hong Kong on 19 March and I hope he and the Labour Party will support giving right of abode to the BN(O) passport holders.

Seeing these developments, the Chinese Government worked overtime to derail the BN(O) campaign. They do not recognize this passport and regard the holders as Chinese citizens. It is also embarrassing for them to see so many Hong Kong people clamouring to become British citizens. A former Hong Kong Governor Lord David Wilson came to Beijing's rescue by asserting that giving right of abode to BN(O) passport holders would be in breach of the Joint Declaration. This was also the line adopted by Foreign Secretary Raab, citing comments contained in a Government Review on Citizenship conducted in 2008 by former Attorney General Lord Peter Goldsmith QC.

On 14 February, Lord Goldsmith wrote a letter to Home Secretary Patel and Foreign Secretary Raab stating that the government assertion was a "mischaracterization" of what he had said. Lord Goldsmith said he stated in the 2008 Review that it would be fair to grant greater rights to the BN(O) passport holders and he continued to hold this position. He also said the UK Government can extend full right of abode to BN(O) passport holders without breaching its side of the Joint Declaration

I hope Lord Goldsmith's letter will assure the British Government that giving right of abode to BN(O) passport holders is not in breach of the Joint Declaration. I also hope members from both Houses of

Parliament will support his suggestion as a way of discharging Britain’s responsibility for the anxious and unsettled Hong Kong people.

In late February, Hong Kong people’s nerves were further rattled when a Chinese court sentenced Gui Minhai to ten years in prison for “illegally providing intelligence overseas.” Mr Gui, co-owner of the Causeway Bay Bookshop which sold gossipy books about China’s leaders, is a Swedish citizen. He was abducted from Thailand in late 2015, detained for most the five years and was forced to renounce his Swedish citizenship on television. His detention has fuelled widespread alarm in Hong Kong about further erosion of political freedoms. Another Causeway Bay Book seller Lee Bo, a British citizen, was abducted from Hong Kong and later released after detention in Mainland China. Three other book sellers were arrested and detained in Mainland China.

To add to the people’s alarm and dismay, the Hong Kong police arrested three pro-democracy leaders on 28 February for taking part in illegal assembly on 31 August 2019. They were news media tycoon Jimmy Lai, Vice-chair of the Labour Party Lee Cheuk-yan and former Chair of the Democratic Party Yeung Sum. Mr Lai was also charged with intimidating a reporter at a brief verbal altercation in 2017.

The arrests were seen as Beijing ordering the Hong Kong government to quash the protest movement lest it should return when the epidemic is over. Lord Patten condemned the arrests as outrageous and said the three men were known around the world as brave and respected advocates of free speech, accountable government and responsible social policy and political liberty. He said the arrests would send yet another signal to the world that the Chinese Communist Party is intent on throttling decency and freedom in Hong Kong.

Lord Alton of Liverpool wrote to Foreign Secretary Raab asking what the arrests of three prominent mainstream pro-democracy leaders mean for the prospects of One country, two systems and the protection of freedoms promised to Hong Kong under the Joint Declaration.

The US government issued a statement calling on the Hong Kong authorities not to use law enforcement selectively for political purpose and to handle the cases fairly and transparently in a manner that preserves the rule of law and the Hong Kong people’s universal rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression.



Three days after the arrests, violent protests broke out in Mongkok. Protesters set fire to road blocks and threw petrol bombs. Police used tear gas and pepper spray on the crowds. More than 100 people were arrested. More protests and clashes are expected although the Coronavirus epidemic is still raging.

I thank our friends in the UK and in the international community for speaking out for Hong Kong. I understand they do not support violence and I hope the protests can remain peaceful and non-violent. At this critical moment, I hope the British people will urge the Prime Minister and Parliament to give the

right of abode and citizenship to BN(O) passport holders as a sign of support. As former Prime Minister John Major once said, “Hong Kong people will never walk alone.”

***Emily Lau***

*Emily Lau was a Member of the Hong Kong Legislative Council from 1991 to 2016 and Chairperson of the Hong Kong Democratic Party from 2012 to 2016*

# Respect for culture? Or respect for women?

**The UN shouldn't congratulate itself on women's rights until male leaders become role models**

## Rebecca Tinsley

In March, the United Nations will indulge in an orgy of self-congratulation, celebrating twenty-five years since its Beijing conference on women's rights. Is the fanfare premature?

In her maiden speech to the British Parliament, Eleanor Rathbone raised the low status of women in Africa. She told MPs that poor families sold their powerless, illiterate girls to older husbands who treated them like slaves. Harmful practices like female genital mutilation killed many girls, and those who survived it endured infections throughout life, and excruciating difficulty giving birth. All this, she said, was tolerated because of traditions and customs.

Eleanor Rathbone made that speech ninety years ago. Many of the same problems persist now. For instance, FGM still affects more than 80% of women in Egypt, Eritrea, Sierra Leone, Mali, Djibouti, Somalia, Guinea and Sudan. Yet, globally, there have been undoubted advances in other areas that concerned Rathbone: fewer women die in childbirth<sup>1</sup>, more babies survive infancy<sup>2</sup>, and a greater proportion<sup>3</sup> of girls attend school. Women's rights have been enshrined in law<sup>4</sup>, if not in practice.

However, the statistics look less impressive if "developing" countries like China are stripped out. East Asia's astonishing economic growth distorts an otherwise worrying picture. The Brookings Institute confirms that poverty is now concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa.

Each day, 37,000 girls are forced into marriage<sup>5</sup>, sold to pay their parents' debts or to appease a powerful family, a situation familiar to readers of Jane Austen. Even in countries where presidents boast that school is free (ignoring the prohibitive cost of uniforms, books and transport), girls are kept home for domestic and farming chores, caring for younger siblings, the ill and the elderly. Yet, parents may have other reasons: predatory teachers, a lack of lavatories (meaning girls are vulnerable to attack when going behind a bush), or teachers who are unskilled or absent.

In many places, custom dictates that women do much of the work, handing over their earnings to their husbands. Hence, many microloan providers only do business with women<sup>6</sup>; they fear men might use cash unproductively<sup>7</sup> (gambling, alcohol, prostitution). Women may be trapped in violent relationships because, by tradition, their children belong to the father's family. Hence the spread of HIV, when mothers must choose between losing their children or becoming infected by male partners.

Many women also believe their men should be able to "discipline" them. Network for Africa, the NGO I founded, works in remote northern Uganda. An alarming percentage of women we surveyed thought their husbands had the right to beat them. A survey in Rwanda found that 54% of women thought mothers should tolerate violence to keep their family together.<sup>8</sup>

In comparatively prosperous South Africa, the police service reports that a woman is killed every three hours.<sup>9</sup> The UN describes this as "hate crimes against women perpetrated by men simply because of the gender roles assigned to women." The UN concedes the situation for woman and girls is even worse in India and Pakistan. Girls continue to be raised thinking they are inferior. Even if laws protect women, some men have little incentive to enlighten illiterate or semi-literate women. This is especially true in rural areas. The UK was not immune to regrettable customs: before the 1882 Married Women's Property Act, British wives' inheritance and earnings went to their husbands. Not until the 1920s could women sue for divorce for

adultery or serve on a jury. Into the 1970s, some married women needed their husbands' permission to open a bank account or rent a television.

Thankfully, we made progress, in no small part due to the Women's Liberation Movement, (which convened its first conference 50 years ago on February 27<sup>th</sup>, at Ruskin College, Oxford). But dangerous attitudes persist around the globe, meaning rulers put few resources into women's health. In Niger<sup>10</sup>, women have a one-in-seven lifetime chance of dying in childbirth. In South Sudan<sup>11</sup> a girl aged 15 is more likely to die giving birth than finish school. The World Bank says childbirth<sup>12</sup> is the leading killer of girls aged between 15 and 19; for everyone who dies, 20 are left disabled or injured. Meanwhile, the UN says two thirds<sup>13</sup> of all maternal and new-born deaths could be prevented by a trained midwife. Over-population can cancel out economic progress: 200 million have no access to family planning <sup>14</sup>.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, tradition means that women wash dead bodies, exposing them to Ebola <sup>15</sup>. In some villages in Uganda, a panel of elders beats women who do not produce a baby each year. Superstition also feeds the stigma faced by people with mental health issues or epilepsy – as Network for Africa sees each day.

Many presidents embrace the mantle of “father of the nation” while refusing to confront male voters with the truth: their countries will remain poor so long as men rely on their exhausted wives to do “women's work” (agriculture, all domestic duties). There is a direct link between educated, prosperous, peaceful societies, and those in which women have an equal place. There is also a link between cultures in which men shoulder their share of work (East Asia, North America, Europe, the Antipodes) and prosperity.

Should the UN be celebrating when it cannot even agree to condemn violence against women or to make contraception more easily available, (not helped by the Trump administration siding with the despots <sup>16</sup>)? Donor nations should challenge father-of-the-nation-style leaders to tackle the unhelpful myths that hold back prosperity. Often, our fear of being labelled racist or neo-colonialist silences us. We must affirm that human rights are a universal value, not a relative one.

Thankfully, there are some leaders who understand that educating girls has an enormous economic return. There are also enlightened men who are local role models. For this reason, Network for Africa trains community leaders to challenge dangerous traditions and myths <sup>17</sup>. Their social positions make them trusted bearers of new ideas.

President Kagame of Rwanda is vocal supporting a network of coaches <sup>18</sup> teaching men about positive masculinity, showing men that their families will prosper if they nurture their children, playing and talking with them, rather than leaving it up to their overworked women.

Britain is a generous donor nation and a high-profile member of the UN. Its representatives should therefore challenge leaders in underdeveloped countries to man-up. Otherwise, we shouldn't expect any deeply-rooted, lasting progress to result from development aid.

### **Rebecca Tinsley**

*Rebecca Tinsley founded Network for Africa, a charity delivering psychotherapy training to survivors of genocide and conflict. . <https://network4africa.org>*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2010/apr/12/maternal-mortality-rates-millennium-development-goals>

<sup>2</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.IMRT.IN>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/mdg-momentum#MDG2>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/gender-equality/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/video-of-child-bride-in-lebanon-shines-spotlight-on-37000-child-marriages-every-day-a6875326.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.microloanfoundation.org.uk/lending-women-works/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.good.is/articles/men-and-microfinance-why-they-re-overlooked-and-why-we-should-care>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.msn.com/en-za/lifestyle/parenting/rwandas-plan-to-reduce-poverty-by-harnessing-fathers-love/ar-AAIumYu>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/3-hours-woman-murdered-south-africa-190905103533183.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.usaidassist.org/resources/niger-quality-improvement-maternal-newborn-health-services>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2016/jul/25/unicef/unicef-more-girls-south-sudan-die-childbirth-gradu/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/02/teenage-pregnancy-anatomy-number-one-killer-girls/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2014/06/469852>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.pharmanewsonline.com/over-200-million-women-who-want-contraception-cant-get-it-un/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-ebola-congo-idUSKCN1PB1XZ>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/25/us-stance-un-backward-step-womens-rights>

<sup>17</sup> <https://network4africa.org/mental-health/progress-so-far/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.msn.com/en-za/lifestyle/parenting/rwandas-plan-to-reduce-poverty-by-harnessing-fathers-love/ar-AAIumYu>



## 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 Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy 2020

## Phil Bennion

I represented Liberal International at the Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Feb along with Austrian MP Steffi Krisper, Swiss MP Joelle Fiss (both LI Human Rights Committee members) and staff members Mikaela Hellman, our Human Rights Officer and Jason Frazer who does the social media.

The event was opened by Hillel Neuer, director of UN Watch, who brought attention to a letter signed by 50 UN member state ambassadors congratulating China on its contribution to human rights in Xinjiang by addressing terrorism and giving generous education and training in the learning centres to the Uighur people. This letter was not ironic. He went on to criticise the UN for electing some of the worst human rights abusers to the UN Human Rights Council, such as Venezuela, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Cuba and Russia.

In the first panel we heard from Peter Bhatti, brother of assassinated Pakistani politician, who had campaigned against the blasphemy laws. Hope was expressed that the release of Asia Bibi might be the start of reform in Pakistan. Lyubov Sobol, a close colleague of Navalny spoke about Russia where the elections are rigged largely by keeping opposition candidates off the ballot paper. She also pointed out that in the regions, most power is held by the governors appointed by the President, rather than the regional assemblies. Official media channels also excluded opposition spokespersons from their programmes. Kaveh Sharooz spoke about courts in Iran which he calls death commissions. His uncle was arrested and given a 2 minute trial and hanged immediately afterwards. The judges are appointed by the so-called moderate president Rouhani. He also talked about the recent protests in which 1500 were killed, being shot by snipers from helicopters. The internet was shut down for a week to slow down the news.



We then heard an intervention from Pete Pattison, a photo journalist on Qatar's World Cup slaves. Most of the bonded workers are from Nepal, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The Kafala system of bonded Labour is still partially in place despite the Qatari government claiming to have abolished it. The migrant labourers pay money to secure their jobs, but the pay is too low to pay the interest, so they become bonded labourers in terrible conditions. I was made aware of this when previously an MEP through the Bangladeshi diaspora. Many have died of heat stroke and falling from heights.

The second panel was on Fighting Authoritarianism. The first speaker was Yavuz Aydin, a Turkish judge, who went to bed one night a judge and awoke to find that he was a terrorist. He was highly critical of the Erdogan regime for its over reaction to the possible coup attempt. We also heard from Cuban human rights lawyer Larissa Diversant who now has to advise her clients remotely from the US, as her offices were raided by the government and criminal proceedings were started against her, simply for representing people. Rebecca Kabuo, a young activist from DRC was the third panellist who had been imprisoned by the regime for organising through civil society, campaigning for better medical services, food provision and treatment of prisoners. I was the moderator for this panel.

The International Women's Rights Award was presented by Steffi Krisper to Shaparak Shajarizadeh who had started with a simple protest of removing her hijab, but went on, after being imprisoned to take up women's rights more generally in Iran.

A young activist from Malawi Memory Banda of "Let Girls Lead" spoke about her work in ending child marriage in her country. Her own sister had been married off and found herself pregnant at a very young age. Memory decided to be awkward and avoid the fate. She says more girls are now protesting their rights and demanding education. She has made progress with her campaign and succeeded in getting a change to the constitution in 2017.

The afternoon session was devoted to supporting political prisoners and was moderated by Irwin Cotler of LIHRC and Raoul Wallenberg Centre. Dennis Chau spoke for his father, an ethnic Vietnamese but Australian national who was imprisoned by the Vietnamese authorities after returning to his country of birth. We also heard from Jewhir Ilham, who spoke for her father, my own nominee and Sakharov Prize winner Ilham Tohti. Dr Elham Manea spoke up for Saudi blogger and human rights activist Raif Badawi. Hong Kong pop singer Denise Ho addressed us by video link on the situation in Hong Kong as well as some comments on LGBT rights.

A campaign was launched to get Venezuela off the Human Rights Council. It is possible to get them voted off so we should try. I heard the end of this session from Diego Arria, former Venezuela ambassador to the UN, but missed most of the session due to recording videos for Liberal International.

The 2020 Courage award was presented by Brandon Silver of the Wallenberg Centre to Biram Dah Abeid for his campaign to end slavery in Mauritania. The slavery still exists but he has been elected to parliament on the back of his campaign. He describes the slavery as a racist legacy. The predominant population is Arab/Berber but the black African minority are mainly descended from slaves and as many as 500,000 are still not free.

The Geneva Summit is held annually in February, immediately before the first session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. It is free to attend but does require online registration. The focus of the event is the plight of political prisoners worldwide and the campaigns to free them.

### ***Phil Bennion***

*Phil Bennion was twice an MEP for the West Midlands and a former chair of LIBG.*



# 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**

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## Liberal Democrats Spring Conference 2020

**York: 13-15 March 2020**

### The International Bits

There is a World beyond Brexit and the Liberal Democrats are waking up to it. The Hong Kong emergency motion that failed to make in onto the agenda last Autumn is finally there. Read Emily Lau's article in this issue and those of Larry Ngan and Nicholas Chan in earlier issues as briefings for the debate. Get up there and support the motion and the people of Hong Kong. There are many instances of what seems a small gesture of support to us being an encouragement to our beleaguered sisters and brothers at the coalface - not alone, not forgotten.

Equally, there is an important motion on Child Refugees on Sunday, testimony to the tireless work of LD4SoS and likely to have particular currency in the wake of Turkey's disastrous foreign policy - can we hope that this is the last throw of a despot?

There are more fringe meetings on Europe than you'll have hot meals in the course of the conference; this is not surprising, and Brexit is not yet done. LIBG does not hold events at the Liberal Democrats Spring Conference - it is expensive, something, I'll repeat, that the Conference Committee needs to take account of if there is to be a lively fringe. Your reports of conference events are ever welcome.

## **Saturday 14 March**

### **Conference Saturday morning - Auditorium, York Barbican**

09.30-10.10 F4 Policy motion: Hong Kong

### **Fringe Saturday lunchtime 13.00–14.00**

#### **LIBDEMS AGAINST TRIDENT**

**BAN THE BOMB!** Do you care about the future of our World? Nuclear Weapons pose a wipe-out threat to our planet as well as climate change does. Chair: Baroness Sue Miller and guest speakers from the Party plus CND's General Secretary. Novotel, Meeting Room 5

#### **Liberal Democrat European Group**

Liberal Democrat European Group AGM Members are invited to review recent activities and discuss how the party can campaign for the closest possible UK-EU relationship. Join LDEG on door £10. Hilton, Bootham Room

### **Conference Saturday afternoon - Auditorium, York Barbican**

16.00-17.05 F10 Topical issue: Europe

### **Fringe Saturday mid evening 19.45–21.00**

#### **Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary (LD4SOS)**

"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 from Asylum Matters, Dr. Ruvi Ziegler from LD4SOS and Christine Jardine MP will speak and then answer questions. Novotel, Riverside Room

### **Fringe Saturday late evening 22.00–late**

**Glee Club** Glee Club is back this Spring! Come along and enjoy as we reel out the Liberator Song Book classics with guest appearances. Entry is free on the door. Novotel, Fishergate Suite Note: this event starts at 22.00 and ends at 01.00

## **Sunday 15 March**

### **Conference Sunday morning - Auditorium, York Barbican**

09.20-10.30 F15 Emergency motions or topical issues

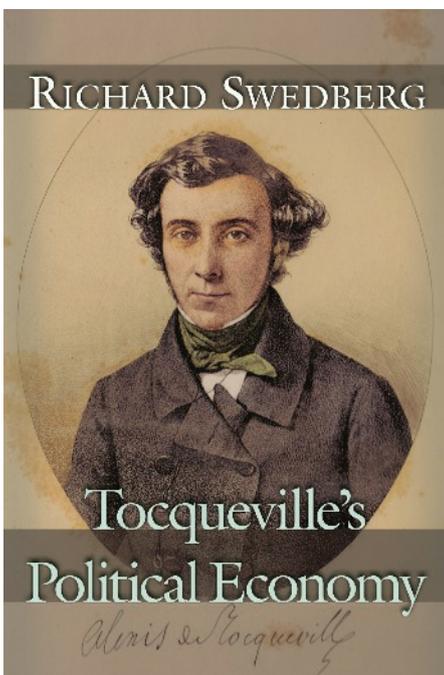
10.30-11.05 F16 Policy motion: Welcoming Child Refugees



# reviews

**Tocqueville's Political Economy, by Richard Swedberg.**  
Princeton 2018 pbk. isbn 9780691176011

We tend to see past political thinkers through the limited prism of what we want to see: Adam Smith has particularly suffered from this, not least from the Institute that impishly bears his name. How many of us actually read Alexis de Tocqueville? Dip into *Democracy in America* most likely. His *Ancien Regime & the Revolution* is a contrast or compliment to Burke. His *Tour of England & Ireland*, overshadowed by Marx & Engels in the presence of a limited academia, is a goldmine of information on the islands at the time (1830s). Tocqueville did not write a work on political economy per se, rather he is a neglected father of sociology. Political economy is scattered throughout his works and has to be sought out. That much of it



was published posthumously makes it interesting, but loses any polemical impact.

However, he considered economics an important part of the political process. His own studies began with Jean Baptiste Say, who promoted and developed the work of Adam Smith in France. Tocqueville reread Say to give himself an initial structure for *Democracy in America*, though would wander away from it as the work progressed. Swedberg makes little mention of Malthus, whom Michael Drolet argues influenced Tocqueville in this respect. Given his friendship with John Stuart Mill it seems improbable to me that there wouldn't be some conversation with the major British economists of the day, whether Tocqueville read them first hand or not.

Like J.S. Mill, Tocqueville served briefly in elected politics, in the Constituent Assembly of the 1848 Revolution. The schism in progressive politics in many respects dates from that time. It was at that time that he crystallised his objections to Socialism – in brief, that it only looks at humanity's material side, that it is against private

property and that it is short on liberty – a general distrust of freedom coupled with an over-reliance on the state.

He is scathing about the failings of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy in Ireland. Writing just before the Famine, we find an over-crowded peasant economy. Landlords absent or indifferent, if not hostile. This was not totally the case, if you read the novels of Maria Edgeworth, but the ills ran deep. He saw that it wasn't sustainable.

Swedberg's is a subversive book in that it may make me want to read or reread Tocqueville again; he is one of the more attractive figures in the Liberal canon – would that there was time in the day to day travails of contemporary politics. However, if you are studying the man or his period this is an excellent primer to take you further.

*Stewart Rayment*



# ALTPITCH

ARTS & TECHNOLOGY FESTIVAL

18-29 March 2020  
Hastings

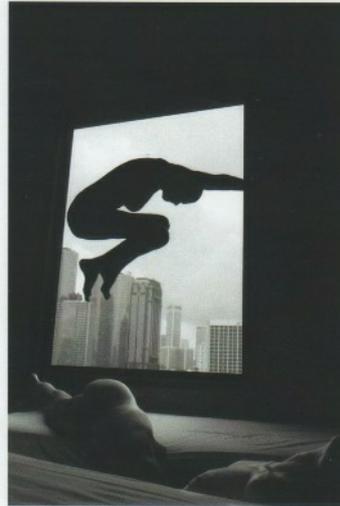
[www.altpitch.org](http://www.altpitch.org)

*The AltPitch Arts and Technology Festival is exploring the human aspect of technology, the relationship between digital world and humanity, and responsibility that comes with it. A week of exciting performances and supporting events will provoke thoughts and debates, will bring together creativity and innovation, will question our daily use of technology and will leave the audience to search for answers.*

[www.altpitch.org](http://www.altpitch.org)



# FINDING FORM



YANA RITS & BERNARD McGUIGAN

22 FEBRUARY - 22 MARCH 2020



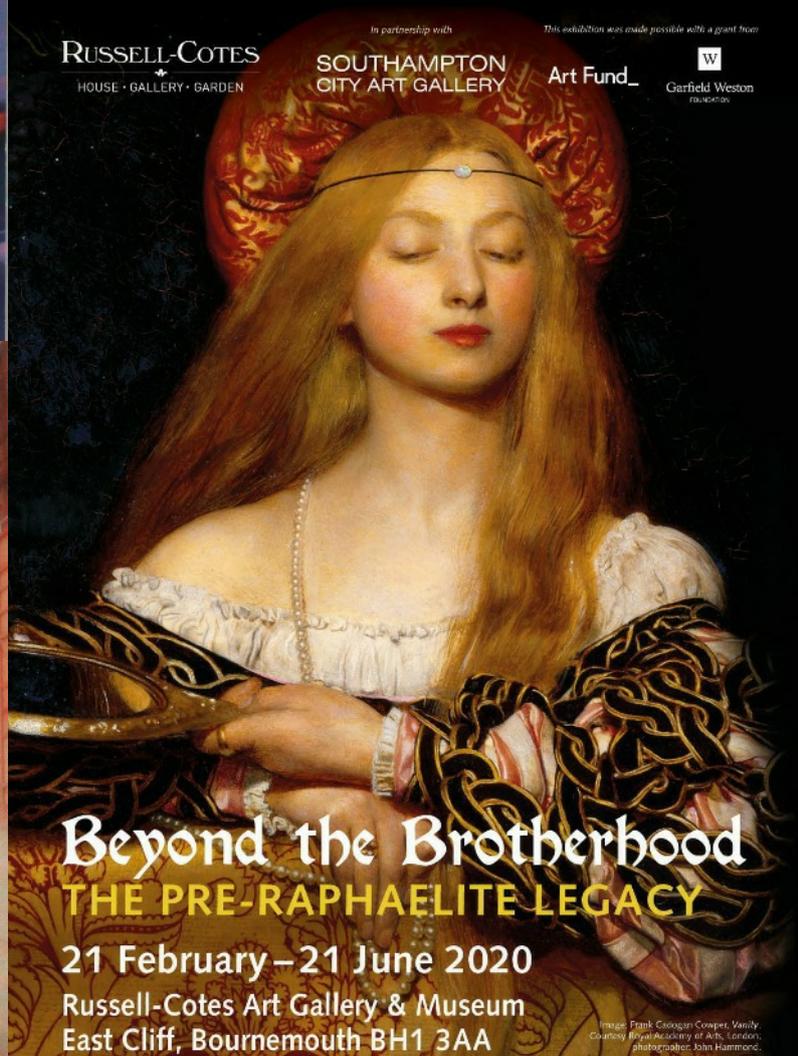
107 HIGH STREET RYE TN31 7JE. [WWW.RYEARTGALLERY.CO.UK](http://WWW.RYEARTGALLERY.CO.UK)

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Art Fund

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foundation



## Beyond the Brotherhood THE PRE-RAPHAELITE LEGACY

21 February - 21 June 2020

Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum  
East Cliff, Bournemouth BH1 3AA

Image: Frank Carossa Cooper, Family  
Courtesy Royal Academy of Arts, London,  
photographer, John Hammond.