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EVENTS

21st July Paddy Ashdown Forum – What makes a good COP? (UN Climate Change Conference). Conversation with LI President Hakima El Haité & the UK Liberal Democrats Leader Ed Davey. NLC 6.30-8.00pm – *see page 7*

6th-8th August – Young Liberals Summer Conference, Manchester - *see page 12*

17th - 20th September – Liberal Democrats Autumn Conference.

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Photographs: Tudor Nicholls, Rebecca Tinsley, Andrew KP Leung.

Cover Photograph – Tudor Nicholls: Luke Jerram's huge glowing earth installation Gaia returned to the Painted Hall at the Old Royal Naval College in June, contrasting with Sir James Thornhill's epic masterpiece of Baroque art.

The Indian Residential School Scandal: Canada and the Vatican must face up to their inglorious past Rebecca Tinsley

Between 1870 and 1996, the Canadian government sanctioned the removal of 150,000 indigenous children from their families. First Nation, Metis and Inuit children were sent to 130 residential schools where they were beaten, experimented on, starved, sexually abused and stripped of their ethnic identity. Recently, hundreds of bodies have been found in unmarked and mass graves. First National leaders fear 6,000 children may have died in the residential schools' system.

Canada's Liberal prime minister, Justin Trudeau, is demanding an apology from the Vatican, since Catholic institutions ran 60% of the schools. No apology is forthcoming at the time of writing, although Pope Francis expressed sorrow. He will meet indigenous leaders in December when they visit Rome, but in the meantime, the legitimacy and credibility of the Catholic church in Canada is being questioned, and there is palpable public fury.

Hand over the records

There are growing calls for the schools' *codex historicus* (records of daily life), correspondence and photographs to be made public. However, the Archbishop of Toronto, Cardinal Thomas Collins, told the CBC that local dioceses have already apologised and made records available, a claim disputed by groups representing First Nation people. The Cardinal described as "unhelpful" Trudeau's hint that the government may take the church to court. The President of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop Richard Gagnon, declined to ask the Pope to issue an apology, and neither will the bishops ask Catholic entities in Canada to turn over the relevant records that would aid in identifying unmarked graves.

Maltreatment at the schools has been public knowledge in Canada for decades. In 1907, public health officials noted that TB was ravaging the malnourished children. The officials involved were side lined or sacked. Survivors of the school system were not believed when they described the systematic and deadly government-sanctioned attempts to "kill the Indian" in them, or that they had dug graves for their fellow classmates.

In 2005, following years of litigation, the Catholic church was ordered to pay \$25 m to compensate the survivors. It raised less than \$4 m, and in a secret hearing, a judge absolved the church of finding the rest. Yet, at the same time, \$28.5 m was raised for a new cathedral in Saskatoon. A shrine in Canmore, Alberta, has recently been built at a cost of \$16 m, and the diocese of Regina is currently raising \$17 m for cathedral renovation, so clearly money is not short for favoured projects. Meanwhile, the partially released records from the Vatican Bank reveal Vatican assets of \$6 billion in assets, land and art.

In 2008, the government established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, taking testimony from survivors and producing 94 "Calls to Action" including the need for action on child welfare, health, language and cultural matters, justice and reconciliation. However, the recent discovery of a mass grave of 215 children, some as young as three, at Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia brings fresh attention to the issue. It was followed by the discovery of 751 bodies in Saskatchewan, and another 182 in BC. Since then, thousands of pairs of children's shoes have been left on the steps of Catholic churches across Canada in make-shift shrines, and more than a dozen churches have been destroyed in arson attacks.

While the Anglican, Presbyterian and United churches have apologised for their roles in running some of the schools and paid full compensation, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops says the church in



Kamloops

Canada is decentralised and thus not liable. In a statement to the Globe and Mail newspaper, the Conference denied responsibility.

“The Catholic Church as a whole in Canada was not associated with the Residential Schools, nor was the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.” The statement said that 16 of the 70 Canadian dioceses and three dozen religious communities were associated with the schools, but that each was “corporately and legally responsible for its own actions.”

Damning Testimony

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has taken legal action to obtain records from the Catholic-runs schools but many have still not been shared. Former senator Murray Sinclair who chaired the Commission took testimony from survivors who told of children being buried in large numbers, and of friends who suddenly went missing from the institutions. In a video message, Sinclair said that since the discovery of the mass graves, he had been inundated by messages from survivors saying to him, “I told you this had

happened,” expressing anger that no one had believed them. There was also the painful realisation, Sinclair said, that friends whom they hoped had escaped were probably dead.

According to testimony given to the Commission, babies resulting when priests abused indigenous girls were confiscated and, in some cases, disposed of in furnaces. So much for the sanctity of every little sperm. Children were also the subject of experiments, being deliberately starved to study the effects of malnutrition. Survivors of St Anne’s school in Fort Albany, Ontario, have recalled whipping, beating, widespread sexual abuse and punishment by shocks in a home-made electric chair.

Sinclair predicted that more mass graves would be found. As his commission weighed the evidence, they asked the then government of Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper to allow a fuller enquiry forcing the churches to hand over the relevant documents. Their request was denied.

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, the director of the Indian Reservations School History and Dialogue Centre at the University of British Columbia, told the CBC she was shocked that a senior archbishop interviewed by the CBC’s “Ottawa Morning” programme professed ignorance of the abuse and the cover up. “They’ve been in courts for years, fighting the survivors,” she commented.

Ottawa-Cornwall Archbishop Marcel Damphousse told the CBC he needed to educate himself about what had happened in the schools. He said, “The whole church is suffering. Some of those students were Catholics.”

Responding to the archbishop’s words, Turpel-Lafond pointed out that survivors had been speaking about their experiences for decades, and there had been 30 major prosecutions. She said there was frustration that survivors had been unable to access the church’s records. She called for criminal investigations to arrive at the truth.

Financial consequences

Michael Coren, a commentator on religious affairs, told the CBC that the Catholic church was not solely to blame for the mistreatment of indigenous children. However, while other denominations had apologised for their record running the schools, the Vatican declined. Coren suggested that lawyers have warned that there will be enormous legal consequences if there is an admission of responsibility. Nevertheless, he counselled

the Vatican to acknowledge public anger in Canada and to apologise, notwithstanding the financial penalties.

Coren also accused the Catholic authorities of double standards, arguing that the church operates in a centralised manner and with one voice when it refuses to accept married men becoming ordained or same-sex marriage, rather than devolving policy-making. He also pointed out that the Vatican had previously apologised for its role in the colonial conquest of Latin America. Yet, on the issue of the Indian Residential Schools, the church abruptly ascribes each diocese autonomy.

The Canadian government has pledged to give former daytime students and their offspring \$10,000 compensation each in recognition of the harm suffered under the school system, following a 14-year legal battle. This comes in addition to a \$50m Day Scholar Revitalization Fund to contribute to the healing of psychological wounds, and to support the reclaiming of language and culture. It is estimated that it could cost \$1 billion to locate all the suspected mass graves.



Memorial

Backlash

In a poll, 2/3rds of Canadians said the church should bear responsibility, whereas 34% place the majority of blame on the Canadian government of the day. 80% of respondents said they were ashamed and believed the recent revelations were the tip of the iceberg.

On a personal note:

It was a Canadian prime minister, (a Liberal), Lester Pearson, who got Apartheid South Africa kicked out of the Commonwealth. Canada has provided leadership in peacekeeping missions around the globe, and its diplomats have been the architects of important measures such as the land mines treaty and the Responsibility to Protect doctrine.

While the USA had Richard Nixon, Watergate and the Vietnam War, Canada had Pierre Trudeau and flower power. While Donald Trump was branding Mexicans as rapists and drug pushers, Canada had Pierre Trudeau's son, Justin, personally greeting Syrian refugees as they got off planes, saying "Welcome home" and giving them warm coats. Yet, as my generation of Canadians enjoyed the post-war boom, peace, stability and unimaginable plenty, indigenous children were being removed from their families and shipped to schools far away. Their hair was cut, all personal belongings were removed, they were forbidden to speak their native tongue, and they had little or no contact with their families. They grew up without love or attention, surrounded by a system aimed at eliminating their culture and memories of home.

As a child, I recall seeing First Nation men slumped in an alcoholic haze on Toronto street corners, avoided by pedestrians as they pan handled. At the time, less tolerant people suggested "they" were work shy, while more sympathetic observers acknowledged that their land had been taken and their culture was at odds with the modern world. Now, the despair of those men makes sense. Their misery has been handed down to their children in the form of poor parenting and substance abuse. There is also an inherited aspect to post-traumatic stress, as studies of Holocaust survivors and Rwandan orphans show: overactive cortisol production and stress leads to obesity and hypertension. The scars, both physical and emotional, will be with Canada's First Nation people for a long time. Their children are placed in foster care at 14 times the rate of other children.

In recent years, Canadian diplomats, officials and politicians have often seemed smug and self-righteous about their human rights track record. I hope they will now observe a period of silence and reflection. And then act to reverse the harm caused.

Rebecca Tinsley

This article first appeared in Independent Catholic News

On *Thelma & Louise* at Thirty

Stephen Brogan

This film deserves glowing praise, even if it is tinged with melancholy. The casting, acting, script and direction all make *Thelma & Louise* a masterpiece. Having just watched the film again, it remains a brilliant, electrifying, morality tale. Two best friends, who are law-abiding, working class women, abandon their humdrum lives in Arkansas for a holiday weekend in a log cabin in the mountains, hoping for some excitement. But from the very beginning their plans go horribly wrong, turning them into outlaws on the run. Having left home on a busy Friday evening, they drive for a few hours before stopping at a bar. Thelma is immediately liberated by her new-found freedom and dances with a local cowboy called Harlan. She gets drunk, throws up in the car park, and then resists his sexual advances outside. Infuriated, he turns violent and attempts to rape her but is stopped just in the nick of time by the gun-wielding Louise. Harlan's ego is battered by this female interjection and so he mocks the women in an attempt to have the last word. This enrages Louise, who shoots him dead in cold blood and then has the last word herself by telling him: "You watch your mouth buddy!" Thelma and Louise then make off at breakneck speed for Mexico: they are hotly pursued by the police, and their tale unfolds to include armed robbery, casual sex, drunk driving, and finally, their joint suicide.



Yet the two heroines – for that is what they are – are not victims. Thelma starts out as a downtrodden housewife with an infantile, bullying husband, Louise, a quick-witted, sardonic waitress in a busy diner. But it is obvious from the outset that living these lives requires both women to have strength and endurance, while the planned weekend away without menfolk indicates that they can easily see beyond the confines of their existence. What makes the film so compelling is that the more that things go wrong for the women, the stronger and more free they become. The catalyst for this self-discovery is crime. It starts with the attempted rape and the homicide, after which Thelma learns the art of armed robbery while Louise takes charge of evading the police. Becoming more confident and self-assured is also reflected in the two women's appearance, body language, and behaviour: Thelma stops pretending to smoke cigarettes and starts to inhale for real, while Louise throws away her lipstick and scrapes back her hair. These small gestures tell us that the women mean business. The defining moment of this transformation is when Thelma explains to Louise

that they can't give themselves up to the police because returning home is no longer an option: "Something's crossed over in me and I can't go back."

What exactly is it that Thelma cannot return to? It's not just her petty, insufferable husband, it's what he represents. *Thelma & Louise* is the story of two women who, initially almost by accident, stand up to the suffocating patriarchy of the world in which they live. They aimed for a weekend break in the mountains, but as two females unaccompanied by men, one of them was immediately threatened with rape. And the menace was only seen off by Louise killing the perpetrator. This is brutal stuff, a ringing indictment of the harm that toxic masculinity can do both to women and to men.

The film raises several ethical problems, of which Louise's killing of Harlan is the most important because it sets the whole chain of events into action. As Louise herself reflected, she shot and killed the cowboy *after* he had stopped attacking Thelma. Why can't they hand themselves in to the police at that point and explain that Harlan was a rapist, asks Thelma, naively searching for mitigation. Louise's reply is still as relevant today as it was thirty years ago: "Just about a hundred goddamn people saw you dancing with him cheek-to-cheek, who's gonna believe that? We don't live in that kind of a world, Thelma!" The issue at stake here is how should a woman respond to man who is being violent towards her, given that both public opinion and the law are likely to favour the man's

version of events? Thus, from early on, the film asks us to think about what we would do in such a situation, and to work out whose side we are on. As the movie progresses, Thelma and Louise occasionally discuss the killing. From this we learn that Louise was herself raped in Texas, and must have moved to Arkansas to find a new life, knowing that she had no chance of prosecuting the perpetrator (or perpetrators). When she killed Harlan, she killed an archetype that represented her own rapist as well as all the sexist male customers in the busy diner where she worked. This is why immediately after killing him Louise says “You watch your mouth buddy!” This chilling scene asks us if revenge can ever be justified.

The film is full of negative portrayals of men, not just Harlan, and hostile reviewers make much of this. While the male characters include an immature husband, a rapist, a lorry driver who is a serial harasser of women, and some very hard-boiled policemen, this is hardly the stuff of fantasy. What needs pointing out is that three men feature in the film who do have warmth and compassion, even if they are ambiguous characters. Louise’s boyfriend Jimmy is the most important. It is true that he struggles to commit to her, and as a musician he spends too much time on the road; but as soon as Louise is in dire straits, it is him to whom she turns. He does not just agree to wire her money as she requested, so great is his concern for Louise that he takes a plane to deliver the funds in person, despite hating flying. He even proposes to her as he is terrified of losing her. Their farewell scene is heart-breaking in its simplicity. Then there is J.D., a

handsome young hitchhiker and chancer who gets a lift from the two heroines only to go on to rob them of the very money that Jimmy has just delivered. Nevertheless, in between he introduces Louise to the joys and warmth of intimacy and sex, and evidently some sort of equality. There’s also Detective Slocumb, a senior law enforcer engaged in the cat and mouse chase with the two women who even so quickly develops respect for them. At times he pleads with them to give themselves up, hoping to help them assuage some of the serious consequences of their actions.



As critics Raina Lipsitz and Janet Maslin have both discussed, the real ‘problem’ with *Thelma & Louise* goes deeper than its representations of men apparently leaving something to be desired. The actual issue is that the male characters are peripheral to the female protagonists. The men provide the supporting cast: this is a film about women, told from their point of view. This is a narrative device that is still a rare phenomenon. It is also one of the key ways in which the movie boldly and successfully subverts many of the tropes of modern films. Yes, the two central characters are fugitives on the run; but, unlike in endless westerns, they are female, not male. Early on, a bad guy gets shot and killed – but by a woman rather than by another man. We are used to seeing men driving cars and picking up attractive female hitchhikers, but in *Thelma & Louise* it’s the other way around. Just to emphasise the point, J.D. even sits in the back of the car. And while J.D. coaches Thelma in how to commit armed robbery, she then goes on to enact it on her own with great success. There is no male gangster directing the crime.

This leaves us with the problematic ending of the film. Finally encircled by a large band of armed policeman and a helicopter, Thelma and Louise decide to plunge to their deaths by driving off the edge of the Grand Canyon rather than facing life imprisonment or execution. Technically, it is unsatisfactory because the shot of the car going over the cliff edge freezes immediately, fades to white, and the credits roll. It is all over way too quickly, as critic Robert Ebert has explained. In terms of what the women’s deaths represent, feminists have objected that the reward for female empowerment is death. Patriarchy wins. A precedent for this sort of finalé is found in some of the Hollywood films from before the Hays Code, in which the main female character enjoys subjugating men before being killed off at the end (Bette Davis in *Of Human Bondage* from 1934 is a good example).

Although I have cheered on Thelma and Louise throughout the film every time that I have watched it, much as I don’t want them to die at the end, they have to. After all they have endured, they can’t just call it a day and allow themselves to be arrested. They have gone for broke. By contrast, Callie

Khouri, who wrote *Thelma & Louise*, maintains that the ending is a metaphor for the two protagonists flying away to freedom. This explains why the last view we have of them is of them flying through the air in the car -- the freeze frame of them driving over the edge. We do not actually see the car crashing into the canyon and incinerating. I'm afraid that Khouri's magical ending is very unconvincing because the film is a stunning piece of honesty and realism. At the end of the film, Thelma and Louise are encircled by dozens of armed, male law enforcers: patriarchy does indeed win. How could it be otherwise? Thelma and Louise are two women taking on the system on their own. Yet at the very end they elude the men and ride hand-in-hand to their deaths. As Raina Lipsitz observed, we can't have a happier ending until we have built a happier society. This is the terrible irony. *Thelma & Louise* remains a great feminist film that has not dated because we still recognise only too well the world in which it is set.

Stephen Brogan

Dr Stephen Brogan lectures in Early Modern History at Royal Holloway University.

THE PADDY ASHDOWN FORUM

Hybrid Event: Live from the NLC and on Zoom.
When: Wednesday 21st July, 2021 18:00•London

Topic: **What Makes A Good COP?**

Conversation with Liberal International President•Hakima El Haité and
Liberal Democrats Leader Sir Ed Davey

What makes a good United Nations Climate Change Conference?

The National Liberal Club Sustainability Forum•with the•Paddy Ashdown Forum, are pleased to present very experienced COP contributors, Hakima El Haité – President of Liberal International & Sir Ed Davey, Liberal Democrats Leader.

Hakima was elected Vice President for the Historic Paris Agreement, and was Environment Minister for Morocco, Chair COP22, is an advisor to COP26 in Glasgow. Hakima will be speaking on her experience on how to make history.

Ed Davey, Leader of the Liberal Democrats in the United Kingdom, a veteran of•5 COPs will be sharing his view on how Climate Change Conferences operate, and what his view is on how they can be improved.

Register via

<http://www.thepaddyashdownforum.org/what-makes-a-good-cop/>

ALDE Congress Online – or How to Juggle Four Screens and a Print-out

Phil Bennion

At the weekend we met with old friends and new from our European sister parties for ALDE Congress, albeit via a Zoom link, as the Congress was online for the first time. It was my privilege to lead a diverse Lib Dem delegation of around forty, which in addition to the official categories for diversity, included several UK nationals resident in the EU and a few EU citizens resident in the UK.

Ahead of the Congress we had met to propose amendments and again to discuss the amendments tabled by other delegations. These are negotiated in the “Working Groups”, which usually take place onsite at the beginning of Congress. Online they were held several days in advance of Congress and a high proportion of delegates were unavailable. Some were unaware that this was the real forum for debate. The procedure is not unlike the European Parliament Committee stage where the political groups negotiate compromise amendments. At the final plenary voting session there is no debate and delegations work to voting lists.

The Working Groups did not go to plan, as the scheduled sessions of two and a half hours each ran to six and five hours respectively. Even delegates who started the sessions were often not there by the end. I was sat with original text on one screen, amendments on another, proceedings on my iPad, delegation WhatsApp and the voting platform both on my iPhone plus a print-out of our voting line.

The four Resolutions that we were entirely opposed to all fell or were withdrawn. One was a detailed political programme resembling an election manifesto. Our colleagues from the Netherlands (D66) proposed to delete the entire motion on the grounds that it was not appropriate to replace our entire political programme via a Congress motion from one or two delegations. We would have taken a similar view if such had appeared at our Federal Conference. Another was a resolution that would have made ALDE a party of individual members, rather than of national political parties. This was contrary to EU funding rules and systems. A third called for a European Army and the fourth called for health to become largely an EU competence; causing us real difficulties over the NHS when we rejoin the EU. Don't worry! These all fell.

We also faced a couple of resolutions where we had fundamental problems, but they were not beyond saving with some radical amendment. One was on LGBT+ rights and religion. I delegated David Chalmers and Adrian Hyrylainen-Trett to deal with the issue. With skilful rewording they turned the text away from finger pointing at particular religions to one based on principle. The negotiations with the movers were also not straightforward. David and Adrian did a great job.

The other called for the entire economy to be subject to the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). I had drafted a compromise with Billy Kelleher MEP of Fianna Fail which was to use an expert panel to advise on which sectors should be added to ETS, but the movers stuck to their purist vision. I decided to play hard ball and advised our delegation to support the Swedes in removing the paragraph altogether. The deletion passed in the Working Group but had the effect of shaking the movers to accept the compromise, very late in the day, at the final vote. I was too slow typing “abstain” into the WhatsApp group but the deletion fell by one vote anyway and my compromise text sailed through.

Urgency resolutions were discussed, amended and passed during the Congress itself on Belarus, Ukraine/Crimea, antisemitism, land expropriation in South Africa and the Northern Ireland Protocol. Our delegates, including Joyce Onstad, Markus Gehring and Hannah Bettsworth made some telling interventions to improve the texts.

We were also able to tune into debates on the ALDE Facebook Page and submit questions to panellists. The main debate was on economic recovery post COVID under the title of Responsible and Smart Spending. There was a consensus on 1) investment in technology, infrastructure and skills; 2) investment in the green economy; 3) tourism recovery. This would need continued deficits in the short to medium term, but budgets

should be returning to balance by the middle of the decade. The panellists were all former MEP colleagues from France, Spain, Germany and Denmark and the latter, Morten Lokkegard, ended by urging the EU to get its act together with the US to approach China with a clear set of rules and to resist a retreat from free trade.

The other debate was on Rule of law in the EU, with particular reference to Hungary and Poland where their governments have been flouting European values, with attempts at state capture, suppression of free press and homophobic legislation. Commissioner Jourova assured us that the EU is taking action, even if the judicial process is slow. The debate also ranged on to COVID lockdowns and the question of an appropriate liberal response. Luxembourg PM Xavier Bettel said the measures should be short-lived and Alexander Lambsdorff that they should only be implemented after a proper democratic debate.

Earlier in the week we had interviewed both candidates for the election of Treasurer. Jasmina Mrso of Bosnia-Hercegovina gave an inspirational performance in a political context but David Burke, the Irish candidate, demonstrated the specific skills required for the post. David was elected but I expect Jasmina to try again another year. The Bureau election was uncontested, with the three incumbents all re-elected. The election for Bureau takes place in halves and our own Sal Brinton was not up this year.

Overall, we can be pleased that none of our red lines were crossed. Most of our delegates pitched in at some point to help improve the resolutions. The WhatsApp group was vital in allowing discussion within the delegation and particular thanks to Sal and former FIRC Chair Robert Woodthorpe Browne for their numerous explanatory comments. I must also thank Mark Valladares, a veteran of the Financial Advisory Committee and Returning Officer for his technical clarifications to the delegation. The online format certainly allowed for the participation of delegates who would otherwise be unable to travel, but the vital opportunity of working the room to persuade other delegations was absent. This is a serious flaw, but we got away with it this time. My thanks go to a delegation who were totally engaged and showed real team spirit and particularly to Vice Chair Ruth Coleman-Taylor for her wise interventions.

And finally, I must thank our International Officer, Isabelle Pucher, whose hard work against the clock managing our internal communications and ensuring that the delegation had the detailed information needed to convert our views into accurate votes, made my job as delegation leader so much easier.

Phil Bennion.

Phil Bennion is the Chair of the Liberal Democrats' Federal International Relations Committee and former MEP for the West Midlands.



Why Mixed Messages Could Turn Boris Johnson's Glasgow Climate Summit Dream into a Nightmare

Felix Dodds and Chris Spence

How are preparations for the Glasgow Climate Summit in November proceeding? Currently, we are more than halfway through three weeks of virtual preparatory negotiations taking place in June. These online talks are challenging in their own right, just as many had feared (see: *'Should the 2021 Climate Summit in Glasgow still take place?'* ¹).

As we enter the final few months before Glasgow, however, there is room both for optimism and deep concern. Curiously, both of these emotions centre squarely on the critical role of the host government.

The success or failure of a climate summit of this magnitude depends greatly on the role of the host government—or “Presidency”. In the past, we have seen both unfortunate missteps from the Presidency, such as Copenhagen in 2009, as well as untrammelled successes, like Paris in 2015.

There are several common elements that make up a good or even a great Presidency. First, the ability to build trust among member states is critical. While this sounds simple in theory, in practice it is immensely difficult, even without the added complication of a global pandemic creating both practical difficulties and showing once again the deep rifts between wealthy countries, which have hoovered up the bulk of vaccines, and developing nations. Another feature of a strong Presidency is its careful planning, both substantively and logistically. Can the UK deliver?

Always look on the bright side

Let's start with reasons to be optimistic. First, the UK Presidency has made one very positive and intelligent move. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's recent pledge to cut emissions by 78 % by 2035 (compared with 1990 levels) is impressive in its ambition. It set a very high bar for other nations and could, potentially, give the UK a strong moral foundation for asking more of others.

Another positive for the UK is the enduring quality of its civil service. While the UK's politicians seem to have discovered a penchant for tripping on every possible banana skin in recent years, the reputation of the country's public servants remains high. The performance of the National Health Service (NHS) during the pandemic is just one example. More relevant to the Glasgow Summit, however, is the calibre of its diplomatic corps and wider foreign service, which remains exemplary.

How to lose friends and irritate people

Set against these positives, though, are several worrying facts.

First, the UK is assuming the Presidency in the immediate aftermath of Brexit, a process that has left both Britain and its EU neighbours both bruised and at a low point in their relationship. Its exit from the EU could hardly be described as one that has built strong and positive relations with the remaining 27 countries. These are countries the UK will need onside to make Glasgow a success.

Secondly, the UK's recent decision to cut development aid from 0.7% to 0.5 % Gross National Income (GNI) feels like extraordinarily bad timing.

Development Aid

In October 1970, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution supporting the commitment to the 0.7% GNI for development aid from developed countries. While developed countries had agreed in theory, however, few were willing to put their money where their mouths were.

The UK was one of these few. In 2013, the Liberal Democrat MP Michael Moore introduced the Private Members Bill to the UK parliament that would enshrine the 0.7% GNI development aid target into law. In theory, this would protect it from being a bargaining tool in any future government budget discussions. The law was passed in March 2015 under the Conservative/Liberal coalition government. All major political parties at the last election in 2019 committed to standing by this development target.

Surprisingly, this changed in November 2020 with the Conservative UK Finance Minister's Spending Review. The review indicated that in 2021 the government would reduce its allocation of development aid to 0.5 %

(GNI)². This has resulted in a huge cut: US\$5.7 billion in aid will no longer be available. While the consequences are yet to be felt, it can hardly fail to be momentous. To put it into context, this cut is more than the combined Official Development Assistance (ODA) of Austria, Finland, Ireland, New Zealand, Iceland, Greece, Portugal, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic.

Up until the UK's startling decision to cut its ODA, it has held the moral high ground on this issue. In fact, it was one of only six countries to have reached the United Nations goal of 0.7 %--and the only G7 country to do so. This gave the UK a great boost for the upcoming Climate Summit, where finance will be a critical issue.

Tory misgivings

Now Johnson's government has surrendered this advantage, many experts are wondering how it will affect the host government's efforts to win over the international community that will descend on Glasgow in November? Such cuts will have profound, on-the-ground impacts in many developing countries—hardly a smart way to “win friends and influence people.”

Some of Johnson's own Tory colleagues have serious misgivings. While a possible parliamentary rebellion seems unlikely, a coalition of Conservative MPs led by former International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell, and including two former Conservative Prime Ministers, is opposed to the cut, viewing it as a self-inflicted wound. The Conservatives have a majority of 80 in the House of Commons, which means if Conservative 41 MPs supported the reinstatement of the 0.7% then the government could face a humiliating climbdown³.

Logistical confusion

(Drawn from a briefing produced by our colleague Yunus Arikan from ICLEI who follows the UNFCCC negotiations as the focal point of Local government and municipal authorities (LGMA), one of the 9 stakeholder's climate constituencies.)

Another potential pitfall in the lead-up to Glasgow lies in the meeting's arrangements and logistics. By early June, publicly available information for participants in Glasgow was in short supply.

For instance, there was no information yet on the capacity of the Glasgow Blue Zone (the conference location where negotiations will take place) with no breakdown for governments and observers of layout and costs of pavilion and office spaces.

Special Glasgow Summit visas are currently available only for Blue Zone delegations and visa applications have to be submitted to the UK embassies starting from August. At this time, however, no information is available to facilitate visa applications for Green Zone events (where businesses and civil society will operate). Clearly, the clock is ticking on all of this.

Current UK COVID-19 measures ask for a minimum two weeks of quarantine upon arrival for most international participants. Does this mean visa applications have to be adjusted accordingly as well? Will the policy be altered ahead of the Summit for government officials and other participants? This is not yet clear.

The Glasgow Summit is scheduled to have a Heads of State session on 1-2 November and a High-Level Ministerial Session the following week. No specific arrangement has yet been announced for access of observers during either of these segments, which again makes planning difficult for many non-negotiator participants.

here is the revision

The UN Climate Change Secretariat is expected to announce calls for special events (known as “side events”) on the UNFCCC-accreditation restricted Blue Zone 29 June. The results will be announced on 30 September which will leave less than a month's time for speakers and organizers to secure their vaccines-visas-travels-accommodation for Glasgow - which will be a challenge in itself for any COP or major intergovernmental conference in normal times. It is also not clear what specific COVID-19 measures will apply for side events and meeting rooms, which influences the number of speakers and participants.

There is also no information yet on whether the UK Presidency and/or the UN Climate Secretariat will offer special vaccinations for participants, or whether observers will enjoy such benefits. Even if they do, the basis of selection will need to be clarified and it is also not clear which countries will accept such offers. Clearly, many logistical matters need to be clarified in a short space of time.

Details, details

The Glasgow Summit will mark an important moment for Boris Johnson's Government. After the perceived foreign policy missteps over Brexit, Glasgow represents Johnson's best opportunity to show that his vision of a new, global Britain can become a reality. The Prime Minister has apparently set great store by showcasing what his country could become in a post-Brexit future. If managed correctly, it could be a crowning success of his leadership.

Yet if he is to burnish such a crown and make it gleam once more, he will need to ensure the logistical details are taken care of, and promptly. Furthermore, he will need to provide more details for how the UK will meet its ambitious 2035 emissions targets, since opponents are already asking how such momentous pledges can be achieved. Bringing the full weight of his country's diplomatic skills in the lead-up to Glasgow will also be needed. This is no time for half-measures. It should be a complete team effort.

Johnson should consider changing tack on his government's ODA cuts. If this reduction was repositioned as a one-off, single-year adjustment, an announcement to reinstate some or all of the 0.7 % commitment could be timed in a way that would give Glasgow—and Johnson's own reputation—a major boost.

Finally, it looks very likely that Convention on Biological Diversity Summit in China may go ahead with only Ambassadors from country embassies in China and no delegates or stakeholders from outside China. The Biodiversity Summit starts three weeks before the Glasgow Climate Summit – it makes you think - is this an indicator of what is going to happen?

Felix Dodds and Chris Spence.

•***Felix Dodds*** is a sustainable development advocate and writer. His new book *Tomorrow's People and New Technologies: Changing the Way we Live Our Lives* will be out in September. He is co-author of *Only One Earth* with Maurice Strong and Michael Strauss and *Negotiating the Sustainable Development Goals* with Ambassador David Donoghue and Jimena Leiva Roesch.

Chris Spence• is an environmental consultant, writer and author of the book, *Global Warming: Personal Solutions for a Healthy Planet*. He is a veteran of many climate summits and other United Nations negotiations over the past three decades.

First published [Why Mixed Messages Could Turn Boris Johnson's Glasgow Climate Summit Dream into a Nightmare](#) | Inter Press Service (ipsnews.net) 11th June 2021

¹ [Should the 2021 COP26 Climate Summit in Glasgow Still Take Place?](#) | Inter Press Service (ipsnews.net)
By [Felix Dodds](#), [Michael Strauss](#), and [Chris Spence](#). April 2021

² <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9224/>

³ Despite the Speaker, Lindsay Hoyle recommending a vote, Boris Johnson refused.

https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/boris-johnson-aid-cut-vote_uk_60bf58cae4b003865d529765

Young Liberals' Summer Conference.

The Young Liberal Conference at The Pendulum Hotel, Manchester 6th-8th August has motions on Belarus and Myanmar on its agenda. There are also motions on Free Trade, Climate Change and a call for an English National Anthem.

You can get more details at their website at https://www.youngliberals.uk/summer_conf_2021

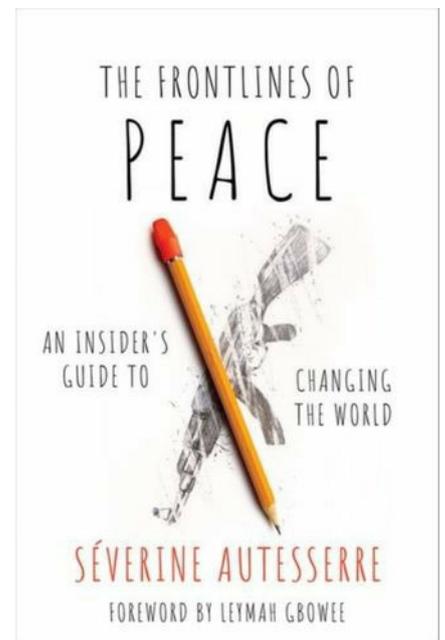
reviews

The Frontlines of Peace, by Séverine Autesserre
Oxford University Press 2021 £14.00
isbn 9780197530351

Wars cost the world \$10 trillion a year, or 13% of global GDP. Donor nations and foundations spend \$22 billion annually trying to bring peace to conflict zones. This book is about the peace building industry in the form of UN peacekeeping missions and NGOs. The author has decades of experience in Congo, East Timor, the Holy Land and Colombia. She concludes that the donor nations (largely the West) impose our one-size-fits-all recipes without regard for the opinions or experiences of local people. The most dangerous time is the transition between dictatorship and democracy (Sudan, South Sudan, the former Yugoslavia, Iraq), and holding premature elections often precipitates war. She rightly slams the white 4WD syndrome (young “experts” living in expat bubbles, telling locals what to do), and the arrogance of UN bureaucrats spending vast budgets on conferences for military and political elite leaders, rather than trying much less expensive peace building at a local level. She points out that creating activities for bored young men like soccer, and organising small loans to start businesses is more useful than rebuilding state institutions that remain in the hands of the corrupt, murderous or selfish demagogues. In a study of 21 peace deals at elite level, not a single one endured, whereas she cites hundreds of peace zones based on supporting civil society at community level. The lessons she has learned (humility, patience, listening) are equally applicable in tackling drug gang violence in the developed world. The credibility of the messenger is what matters. This excellent book is a little repetitive but useful for anyone wondering how we can stop the suffering of millions of people.

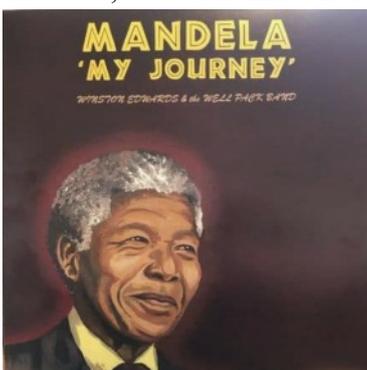
Rebecca Tinsley

https://severineautesserre.com/sa_book/the-frontlines-of-peace/



Mandela ‘My Journey’ by Winston Edwards and The Well Pack Band,
Stop Point Records SP1002, 2021

Winston Edwards and The Well Pack Band go back along way. In 1980 Edwards produced their *The Workers speak to their Slave Masters with Strike* (re-released last year); surprisingly mellow instrumental Reggae, given the title, and *Hard Steel Dub* (2016). They were also behind *At 10 Downing Street Dub Conference* (1980), where Edwards and Blackbeard (Dennis Bovell) took their grooves into outer space. That association, led to some speculation that Well Pack may have comprised members from Matumbi at the time, but were known to be the backing band for touring artistes in the UK in those days.



Central to the Deptford/New Cross Reggae scene, Edwards was the producer of the seminal *King Tubby meets The Upsetter at the Grassroots of Dub* (1975). He worked with I-Roy, Augustus Pablo and his Fay Records house band Natty Locks. As with the People’s Band – *Democracy is Broken*, where his musicians vented their angst at Brexit, Edwards works with Joe Ariwa in the mixing of this album. He reflects on one of everyone’s’ heroes, Nelson Mandela. Typical of Edwards work on that album, he revisits and interprets favourites from his catalogue, which will be a joy to spot.

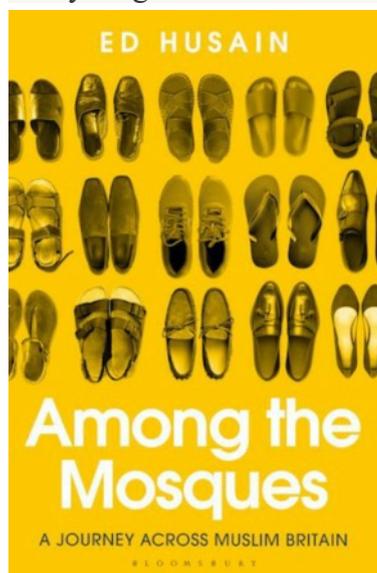
Saeed Rahman

Among the Mosques: A Journey Across Muslim Britain, by Ed Husain.
Bloomsbury, 2021 £14.00 isbn 9781526618658

By 2050, there will be 13 million British Muslims. Ed Husain visited towns with growing Muslim populations to gauge how well people are integrating and what the future will look like. Instead, he found mostly self-contained monocultural groups embracing an intolerant and narrow Islam. "A parallel Muslim-only environment has emerged for those who want it," he comments. "The obedience, control and hierarchy of the villages of Pakistan appears to be thriving in the cities of England, too."

Husain reflects that Islam is more at ease with itself in Middle Eastern cities he knows well through his extensive theological study and travel. Books advocating violent jihad and a return to the attitudes of 7th century Arabia are available in Islamic shops around the UK, while they are being removed from Saudi bookshelves.

The author is alarmed by how few mosques allow women to pray, even from segregated galleries. As he browses Muslim shops, he finds popular tomes denying the Earth orbits the Sun; approving of domestic violence so long as women's faces are unmarked; demonising music or connecting with the opposite sex remotely on social media, refusing to condemn slavery, and encouraging little girls to cover up and marry "the younger the better". He also finds imams conducting Islamic marriages that leave women with few



rights under secular law. ("Women are the strongest factor in destroying men's noble character" according to popular Tableeghi Jamaat scholars who recommend women wear tight headscarves even in bed).

He witnesses a well-financed battle between competing literalist sects (Deobandi, Barelwi, Salafi) anticipating the return of the caliphate. In their "sectarian silos" Husain despairs of finding any interest in modern Britain or British current events. "What is the future when people make all their interactions about identity?" he wonders.

Politicians play "a dangerous game of communalism to get votes" from clerics and their mass blocks. They ignore forced marriages, high rates of domestic violence, and the well above average rates of disability arising from marrying first cousins.

Husain knows his Koran intimately, and gets a frosty reception when he asks imams and "scholars" to show him the sura where the Prophet assigned women, Jews, Christians, Black people or gays their lowly place. Their

ignorance is matched by their determination not to allow discussion. "Why are you asking such difficult questions?" he is told by an imam. "We cannot criticise our religion".

Husain's well-informed, intellectual Islam is a far cry from the increasingly hostile attitudes expressed by young Muslims coming from war zones, "seeking revenge and justice for the wrongs done to their countries," he comments.

He wants the government to stop according respectability to intolerant self-appointed Muslim representatives, and to insist schools have modern curricula. But ultimately, the struggle for the soul of Islam - between the literalist Islamists and those who see Islam as an evolving faith - is a battle that Muslims, not non-believers, must fight. Yet, it is an unfair fight because so much money is backing those who yearn for the return of the caliph and who despise innovation. Modern Muslims are silent, he remarks, while an organised minority control the mosques, bookshops, schools and charities, and they are vocal online, intimidating and judging their more liberal co-religionists.

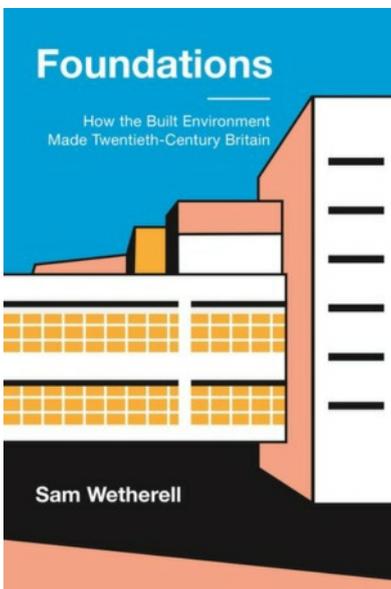
This is a depressing but essential book.

Rebecca Tinsley

Foundations, how the built environment made twentieth century Britain, by Sam Wetherell.
Princeton 2020 £28.00 isbn 9780691193755

A Britain short of houses is in danger of making the mistakes of the past. Local authorities are pressured by government to build more houses, or release more land for that, are blamed when that doesn't happen, though too often it is the developers sitting on sites waiting for what they see as a more opportune moment. My personal inclination would be to build council houses, which was the way the post-war generation chose to solve their housing problem (most of these were not the high-rise with which Wetherell introduces his chapter, and given the Parker Morris Standards – not mentioned, possibly some of the best built houses in the country).

Sam Wetherell presents his case through six studies which have typified development from the last half of the twentieth century, though they have precursors – the industrial estate, the shopping precinct, the council estate, the private housing estate, the shopping mall and the business park. His particular focus is on Milton Keynes, from which he hails, and that gives a personal element to his conclusions, which may make his book more useful to the decision-making politician rather than the planner. Round pegs in square holes is not quite the right idiom for these developments, at least not as intended, but is perhaps more apt as to how some of them turned out. There are two orthodoxies dominating this – the social democratic consensus



following the Second World War, running out of steam in the 1970s and replaced by a neoliberal consensus, which has itself run out of steam, but decision makers don't seem to have caught up with that yet. I should add the caveat that my definition of neoliberalism, with which I don't associate, is economic liberalism, devoid of its social context, driven by conservative politics. So, Thatcher for example, was an economic liberal but a Conservative politician.

If I look briefly at shopping precincts and malls, supposed answers, I suppose, to the High Street. I suppose it is a mall which squats on a previously much-loved cricket pitch where I now live, and even before the pandemic, it was often commented that the number of empty units in both mall and High Street suggest that it may have been as well to leave the High Street to develop organically. But could this meet the apparent needs of retailers for larger modern units at the expense of primarily Victorian and pre-war infrastructure, often listed? Wetherell casts shopping precincts as

small and localised. I had to deal with the regeneration of a number of these as a councillor – twenty years old or less. Stroudley Walk had failed from the outset. It's rationale, by LCC and GLC planners, was to replace Devons Road, a thoroughfare. Unfortunately, remote decision makers got rid of the street market, but the shopping precinct didn't appear until around ten years later, by which time frustrated consumers had found their way elsewhere. A mall by contrast is invariably privately owned and has sadly, led to a measure of uniformity, globally indeed; not surprisingly it has become a favourite location of the zombie movie.

In recent elections I have found myself opposing a number of housing proposals – either because they propose building in villages without the infrastructure to absorb them or for environmental reasons (they will flood). Labour, who in my experience will build on any patch of open space, throw back at us 'where would we build?' and this is a good question. I may not be alone in advocating the possible creation of new villages but I'm well aware of the hornet's nest that would stir up. To those of you who have to make such decisions I commend this book, not necessarily to agree with it, but because it contains the pieces of the jigsaw that you would be putting together and so is a view of some of the pros and cons to be looked at. There are 13 Liberal Democrats on Milton Keynes Borough Council, to 24 Tories, 19 Labour and 1 Independent; the council is run by a Progressive Alliance of Labour and Liberal Democrats. They have communities which are amongst the most affluent and poorest in the country. I don't envy their task, but it is something we have to rise to; I wish them well with it.

Stewart Rayment.