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INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



Kazakhstan demonstrators, Trafalgar Square 8th January 2022

PAF CHINA DEBATE TURKEY HONG KONG

Canada Germany COP 26

EVENTS

11th-12th February – Scottish Liberal Democrats Spring Conference, The Town House, Hamilton.

11th-13th February – Young Liberals Winter Conference, Edinburgh.

21st February – LIBG Forum ‘Ukraine, Russia and a Destabilised Neighbourhood’. Speakers TBC.

11th-13th March - Liberal Democrats Spring Conference – Online

12th-13th March - ALDC Spring Conference – Live and concurrent with Liberal Democrats Online conference

17th-20th September - Liberal Democrats Autumn Conference at the Brighton Centre.

1st-12th November - UNFCCC Climate COP 27 Egypt (Sharm El Sheikh)

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Liberal International (British Group)

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Photographs: Stewart Rayment, Irina von Wiese, Malcolm Bruce.

Cover Photograph: Kazakhstan demonstrators in Trafalgar Square 8th January 2022



Malcolm Bruce supporting Richard Ratcliffe's campaign to secure Nazanin's release on 27th October 2021; he also intervened in the Lords. (Link below)
<https://parliamentlive.tv/.../6455e7f7-9f4e-4235-a51d...>

Message from Irina von Wiese, chair, LIBG

It is a great honour to be elected chair of the Liberal International British Group. Stepping into Adrian Hyyrylainen-Trett's shoes is not easy, and I owe him a huge 'thank you' for all his work as LIBG chair since July 2018. So much has happened since, and Adrian steered this group through a perfect storm: Brexit, Covid, populist forces fed by increasingly sophisticated disinformation, and a dismal government descending into chaos and corruption.



LIBG is affiliated to Liberal International - the global federation of liberal parties. Its aims are to keep liberal values - human rights, social justice, democracy and rule of law - alive in the face of adversity.

Working with like-minded parties across the globe, we want to keep Britain's pro-European, internationalist voice audible loud and clear across the globe. I am convinced that Britain still is the open, tolerant and welcoming society I encountered when I arrived in this country in 1996, and I will always fight to keep it that way.

My grandmother and father fled political persecution in Russia and Germany. As a lawyer and volunteer, I have sought to help refugees and migrants in the UK. In 2019 I was incredibly honoured to be elected to the European Parliament and serve as vice-chair of the Human Rights Subcommittee.

Post-Brexit, I continue to work on human rights issues advising businesses on environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues. Modern slavery and forced labour, inhumane working conditions and child labour still lurk in forgotten corners of our cities and at the bottom of many company supply chains. Only in cooperation with our sister parties around the world can we tackle these problems.

I was also privileged to serve on the board of the European Endowment for Democracy, an EU organisation promoting liberal democracy in the 'eastern neighbourhood', North Africa, the Middle East and beyond. Civil society engagement plays a huge role in this endeavour, and LIBG supports sister parties who channel these efforts.

Finally, it is vital that we keep defending diversity, inclusion and intersectionality in Europe and beyond. Adrian's achievements in this respect, notably in support of LGBT+ communities in Poland and Hungary, but also in bringing together people from different backgrounds here in the UK, need no further explanation. Sadly, the situation in many countries makes this work more urgent than ever, and LIBG will continue to raise awareness and tackle these issues.

You can follow our work via our website www.libg.co.uk and also on social media [@LibIntBg](https://twitter.com/LibIntBg) where we will be tweeting regularly on international issues, events, and meetings of informative discussion and debate.

Irina von Wiese

22nd December 2021

The Rise of China – A Debate

“This House Believes China is interested in co-existence rather than domination”.

True to European Liberal Forum’s ethos of encouraging open and informed discussions, the Oxford-union style debating format was an inspired choice for the controversial topic of China’s future world domination.

The event held on 30 September was hosted by the **Paddy Ashdown Forum**, a centrist think tank based in the UK and a member of ELF. **Chris Gleadle**, CEO of PAF welcomed participants to the hybrid event held both physically at the National Liberal Club in London as well as being live-streamed.

To set the scene, **Dr Antonios Nestoras**, Head of Policy and Research of **ELF** spoke of the history and tradition of European debates crucial in response to crisis. It was important for us to understand what China wants and needs in order to formulate EU’s own foreign policies and military objectives which, crucially, are not dependent on other actors.



Paul Reynolds, Merlene Toh Emerson, Rebecca Tinsley & Michael Mainelli

The first debater for the motion was **Laia Comerma of LYMEC**, joining the meeting virtually from Barcelona. She spoke eloquently drawing on her research experience as a PhD candidate in International Relations at the Univ Pompeu Fabra and as researcher at the Barcelona Institute of International Studies. In history, China was not a colonizer and has only recently shaken off the so-called century of humiliation. China, she posited, is the largest exporter in the world and her weapon is money and trade, and not war.

Speaking against, **Rebecca Tinsley**, former BBC reporter, author and activist in Africa strongly disputed the Motion. With convincing slides, she presented the case

for China’s world domination via the Belt and Road Initiative, its signature foreign policy. Opaque financial arrangements in complex infra-structural projects were described as white elephants and debt-traps which have allowed China to dominate and influence weaker developing nations. She recommended that Europe offers Africa an alternative to China with more sustainable development, livable cities and quality education.

Up next for the motion was **Prof Michael Mainelli**, founder of **Z/Yen** financial think tank in the City of London which promotes societal advancement through better finance and technology. Whilst he did not disagree with criticisms of China’s BRI, he suggested that China is not in fact as strong as the West feared. There were problems with an ageing population, structural inefficiencies and a looming shadow banking crisis. In fact, China despite its ancient history was now a young nation working out its role and contribution within multi-lateral institutions.

To wrap up the debate against the motion, we had **Dr Tomasz Kaminski**, assistant professor at the Dept of Asian Studies, Univ of Lodz in Poland, a leading light in the field of para-diplomacy, and who has developed the concept of gamification and game-based learning. He argued that China is already dominating the world in technology, producing over a million engineers a year. Within Europe, China is practicing the age-old divide and rule as a foreign policy and questioned the premise that it has no ambitions of empire.

The debate was co-moderated by **Merlene Toh Emerson** and **Paul Reynolds** who managed to engage

members of the audience through two polls taken before and after the debate. Whilst the physical audience were fairly evenly balanced in their votes, the virtual audience were more persuaded by the arguments against the motion. However, many more abstained; perhaps the jury is still out on this? **Dr Yeow Poon**, Chair of Chinese Liberal Democrats provided final closing remarks, expressing an aspiration for peaceful co-existence, a sentiment which many of us share.

Thanks to **ELF** for hosting this vibrant and interesting debate, the first of a series.

Merlene Toh Emerson



Dr Yeow Poon

The Paddy Ashdown Forum /European Liberal Forum debate, The Rise of China took place at the National Liberal Club on the 30th September 2021. Merlene's report is taken from the PAF website, as a more substantive argument 'For the motion' had not arrived when we went to press. Vince Cable also spoke from the floor. Rebecca Tinsley's contribution follows.

Paddy Ashdown Forum China Debate – With Debts Come Obligations Rebecca Tinsley

China's enormous Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) is buying the Chinese Communist Party both political and economic influence. It is using this influence to mute international criticism of its expansionist behaviour. With financial debt comes obligation, whether it is turning a blind eye to the persecution of the Uyghurs, the crushing of democracy in Hong Kong, expansion in the South China Sea, or sabre rattling toward Taiwan. The West risks geopolitical marginalization unless it acknowledges China's intentions and offers the developing world an appealing alternative to submitting to China.

China's growing influence in low-income countries reflects the myopia of high-income countries (conveniently labelled "the West"). As the West becomes more insular, (most recently evident in Covid 19 vaccine hoarding and aid cuts), China has exploited the vacuum left in the place of a more internationalist mindset.

The BRI is not based on aid but on debt and opaque contracts that often leave developing countries unsustainably burdened and committed to supplying raw materials at disadvantageous rates. Deals are signed with China by negligent and corrupt leaders who care little about the debt and environmental devastation they are bequeathing future generations. Many BRI projects are either white elephants or they mostly benefit China, and yet these vanity projects appeal to autocrats.

In addition, China's export of its values (abolishing term limits, suppressing public debate, security through surveillance) undoes the efforts of local civil society to support legitimate institutions in the developing world. Moreover, China's economic model does not necessarily work elsewhere, and academic studies find inadequate trickle down of skills or capacity to "beneficiary" countries involved in the BRI.

China needs the BRI to 1) secure access to raw materials to fuel its economic growth 2) access to markets on which to dump its surplus products such as steel and 3) countries to which it can send its surplus unskilled

labour to avoid social unrest at home. In other words, the BRI is calibrated to bolster the economic growth essential to maintaining Chinese Communist Party hegemony.



Rebecca Tinsley

mitigation. This is not an appeal for isolationism: China is a dominant economic force, flexing its military muscles, and the West must compete, not hide. Such peaceful co-existence is possible if the West re-engages with countries now turning to China for want of any alternative.

Rebecca Tinsley

China has called in its diplomatic debts when there is international criticism of its actions in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, the South China Sea and Taiwan. This is a taste of what is to come, with concern for human rights and sovereignty (or Muslim solidarity) muted by financial obligation.

What can we do? The West should offer low-income countries something that China cannot: help in creating smart, livable cities; strengthening institutions; making sure democracies survive and prosper, thus providing a positive example to their neighbours; and working in partnership with others to challenge Chinese bullying. All this is possible while continuing to compete economically with China and to cooperate on climate change

Liberals in Canada and Germany form new governments after election success

The global Liberal family was united in celebration in November as the Canadian and German Liberals entered into government on the back of successful elections in their respective countries.

On entering into a coalition government in which the FDP was rewarded with four government ministries, Leader Christian Lindner said: “We Free Democrats were elected to overcome the status quo. After years of perceived standstill, we want to open a decade of transformation for Germany. We are ready to go into the open and dare to do something new.”

The FDP, which hosted LI’s 200th executive committee meeting in Berlin is set to enter government in Germany after it achieved one of the best Bundestag election results in its history, for the first time defending and increasing a double-digit result.

The coalition agreement between the FDP, Greens, and SPD includes ambitious goals to modernise the German economy, liberalise immigration, and cut down greenhouse gas emissions. The government will also deliver for young people by lowering the voting age from 18 to 16.

FDP will hold four ministerial posts, with party leader Christian Lindner set to become the Minister of Finance, Volker Wissing the Minister of Transport and Digital Affairs, Marco Buschmann the Minister of Justice, and Bettina Stark-Watzinger becoming the Minister of Education and Research.

In Canada, the re-elected liberal government led by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Liberal Party of Canada) presented its direction and goals as the new parliament convened last week for its first session. Focusing on the urgent need to overcome the pandemic and tackle liberal causes affecting future Generations, Prime Minister Trudeau said: “We’re ready to beat this pandemic, take climate action, make life more affordable, advance meaningful reconciliation, and create good jobs.”

Risky Moves of the Turkish Regime.

A. Kurt.

Over the last couple of years "know it all" Turkish president Tayyip Erdoğan came up with an ingenious economic theory, basically saying "high interest rates are the main cause of inflation, so in order to lower the inflation, one must lower the interest rates". His insistence on this belief is the prime reason for Turkish Lira's free falling against all currencies. Last month alone the Lira lost more than fifty percent of its value against the US Dollar.

On the 19 20 December a series of drastic economic measures were taken by the Tayyip Erdoğan government. Just before those measures were taken, Turkish Lira vs US Dollar exchange rate went up to a historic level of 1 US dollar equals to 18 Turkish lira. On the same day, there was a very carefully orchestrated event.

Everything started with Erdoğan's speech in which he made an announcement of the so called 'new economy model'. The main point in his speech was a guarantee would be given to any citizen keeping their savings in Turkish lira accounts rather than any foreign currency. According to the most recent statistics sixty-five percent of all saving accounts in Turkey are in a foreign currency form. While he was making his speech the Turkish Lira started a rocket rise against all major currencies. Towards the late evening Turkish Lira had almost fifty percent valued against US Dollars.

Erdoğan's move was interpreted as a pointer towards an early general election. If he (Erdoğan) could keep the value of Turkish Lira against US dollar at a certain level more than a few months than he would successfully show the nation that his "new model" is working.

On the morning of 23 December some newspapers reported that in the central bank reserves were fell by 7.5 billion US dollars (that means state owned banks secretly sold central bank reserves by using back channels)¹.

Basically, Erdoğan ordered this move to be done while he was announcing new model and then immediately the Turkish Lira's value improved against the US dollar. The aim was to show how strong and powerful Tayyip Erdoğan is. He certainly managed to buy sometime; but for how long nobody knows. Many independent economists stated this might had been the last tool for a short time. That means before Turkish treasury completely collapses. Since the new economy model was put into action foreign currency savings have gone up 1.8 billion dollars. This information came from an independent banking institution.

There are several scenarios for possible developments in the coming weeks. The first is about the local government which is held by opposition; to be precise the mayors of Istanbul and Ankara will be targeted and they will be removed from office. Almost everyone expecting this move to happened before the eve of early election. Apprehending the leaders of opposition and stopping them to take part in the coming election is the second scenario.

All these lies and deceptions clearly show that Erdoğan is not going to accept to leave his post even when he losses the election. On the one hand he needs to get some sort of consent from the Turkish people, or at least from the part of the nation, because his political movement was built on ordinary folk's consent. When every single election poll shows that he would be losing the next election; he cannot take any risky moves. So, suppressing the opposition and preventing them to taking part in the election would seem to be a logical course of action. This belief is widely held amongst independent political commentators.

There are two sides to every story; optimistically whatever Erdoğan does, whatever tricks he plays are enough to make it indefinite.

Sadly, though everyday under his regime Turkey will keep losing. To retrieve the lost time, value and richness of the economy would be almost impossible or take a very long time. For example, the Turkish republic kept paying the debts of Ottoman empire until end of 1950's - the Ottoman empire collapsed at the end of First World War in 1918.

Whilst there is always speculation that someone must be benefiting from the slide in the Lira, the economic analyst Attila Yesilada missed the point saying 'this is not a policy that benefits any identifiable constituency, including his (Erdoğan's) family... or his cronies².' Some people (extremely rich ones who are particularly close to the government) had sold their US currency savings from 18•Lira, then bought them back (next morning) from 10 or 11 Lira so someone did benefit from it, but he may be stressing the point that this policy is not going help Erdoğan in the coming election as those gains were for the few, not the many who suffer from the inflation, nor the Turkish economy that will carry the debt.

A. Kurt.

¹ According the independent sources Turkish Central Bank Reserves in December 2020 one US Dollar = seven and a half Turkish Lira. In less than three months the Turkish Lira lost almost triple its value against the US dollar.

² Turkey business reels from lira's slide, by Laura Pitel & Ayla Jean Yackley. Financial Times 16th December 2021.

LI President Dr Hakima el Haité on COP26

On December 16, LI President Dr Hakima el Haité participated in a panel debate analysing and discussing the progress made in the field of climate action during 2021. This "year-end review" organised by the Global Ethical Finance Initiative (GEFI) focused especially on the outcome of COP26; what was delivered, and what were the shortcomings of the global climate summit held in Glasgow in November. And most importantly, what comes next?

The panel noted that COP26 was the first major climate summit since the Paris Agreement, which was concluded in 2016. The expectations were thereby high, not least as new scientific reports issued this year have made it clear how urgent addressing the climate crisis, by implementing the agreement, is.

"We missed an opportunity to be on the correct side of history. COP26 failed in delivering", President El Haité stated in her speech, noting that global CO2 emissions have continued to grow, and that the current commitments are not changing this trend as COP26 failed to significantly reduce the gap to staying below a 1.5°C degree warming. Richer nations have also failed to raise the \$100bn annual climate funding they had promised to vulnerable countries. This has direct impacts on the work to reduce emissions, as many developing country NDCs include more ambitious conditional commitments, which can only be implemented with access to enhanced financial resources and other support.

However, despite these clear shortcomings, the climate summit also brought significant progress in certain fields. President El Haité noted especially how the discussion on phasing out coal and fossil fuel subsidies was finally officially opened, as a mention of this for the first time was included in the final COP outcome. Ending fossil fuel subsidies would also liberate funding, which could be directed to climate action instead. Another important achievement was that the diplomatic pressure to take action now, rather than in a few years, increased as states agreed to update their NDCs to be in line with the Paris Agreement temperature target already by the end of next year.

In addition to these achievements, important commitments were made to end deforestation and cut methane emissions.

As a next step, President El Haité urged states to give stronger national and international political signals in the form of coherent climate policies and regulations. Citizens all over the world are ready to make a change, but states need to set the direction.

Civil Society on the Loss. The Significance of the Crackdown on the Pro-Democracy Press in Hong Kong.

Larry Ngan

When Hong Kong Citizen News closed down for good on 3rd January 2022, the editorial announcement released a statement, it reads as ‘In the middle of the eye of the hurricane, we are like a small boat in a stormy sea, facing a very difficult situation.’

It was a few stormy days among mass media in Hong Kong. The closure followed closely the raid on Stand News on 29th December 2021. The National Security Bureau in Hong Kong enforced the search warrants towards the office of Stand News, a pro-democracy News Outlet in Hong Kong, and arrested 6 former senior staff members, including Margaret Ng the former legislator, and Denise Ho, the pop singer. The authorities also froze its USD78.2 million worth of assets under the National Security Law. As the result, in order to protect the employees, Stand News chose to close down for good on 30th December, including its branch office in London.

Other pro-democracy news outlet followed the steps as well: Hong Kong In-media first decided to terminate its operation on 31st December 2021, then Hong Kong Citizens News decided to do the same on 3rd Jan 2022.

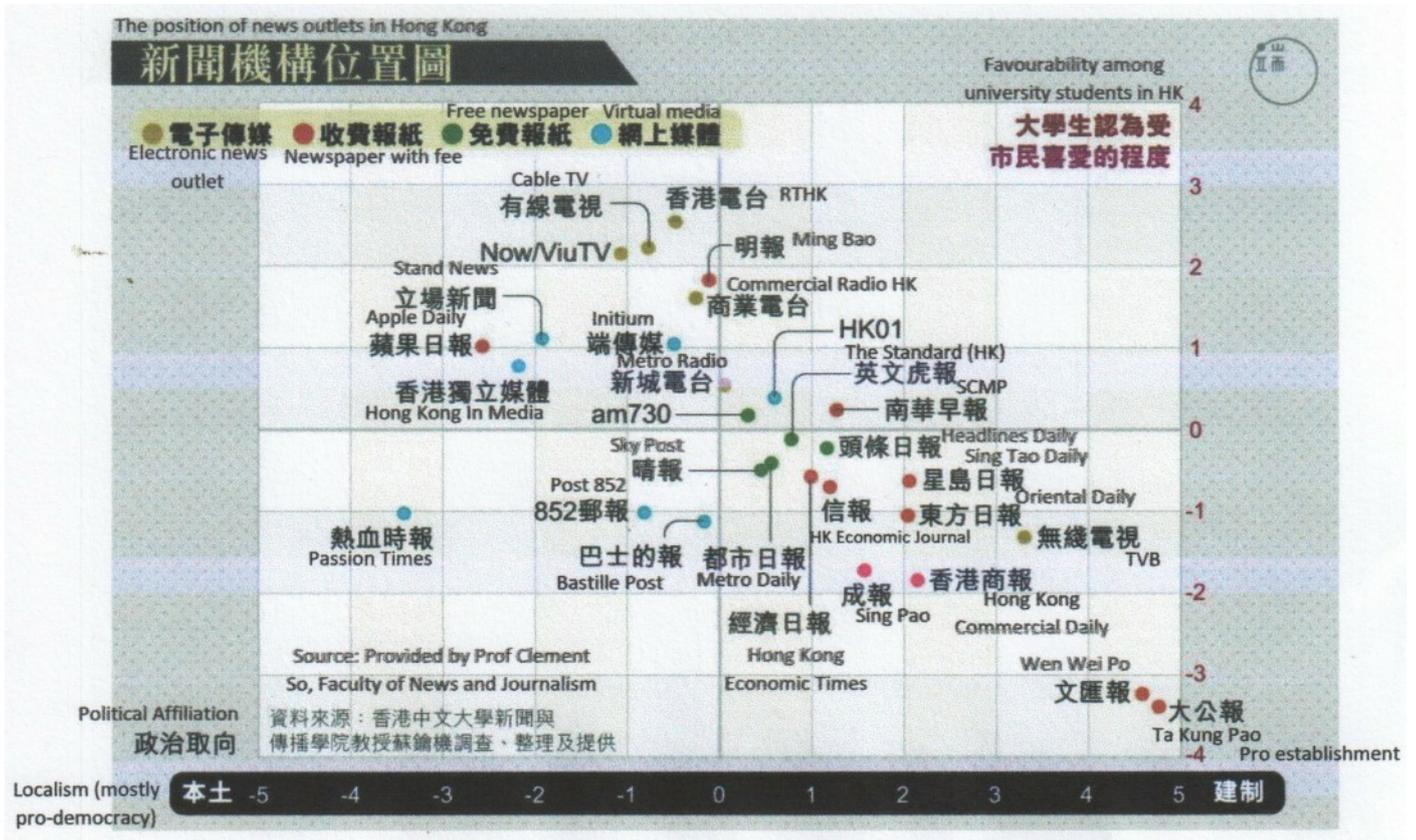
It was about 6 months since the Hong Kong authorities shut down Apple Daily, one of the biggest pro-democracy news outlets in Hong Kong. In fact, after its shut down, most pro-democracy news outlet either tuned down their political affiliations (Such as Stand News), went apolitical by shifting their focus on reporting celebrity and social news stories (such as Passion Times), or shifted to pro-establishment after they changed the senior staff members in charge (such as ViuTV/NowTV and RTHK, 3 of 4 licenced public airwave broadcasters in Hong Kong).

The forced closure of Stand News is symbolic to journalism and politics in Hong Kong because there are 2 notable features on Stand News in general:

1. According to the search warrants issued by the court in Hong Kong, it was issued under section 43 of the National Security Law. Additionally, the assets of Stand News were frozen under the National Security Law. However, the senior staff were arrested not under National Security Law, but the Sedition Ordinance 1938, which is never applied since 1967 (Eric Lai, ‘Hong Kong’s Sedition Law Is Back’, *The Diplomat*, published on 3rd Sept 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/09/hong-kongs-sedition-law-is-back/>).
2. After the closure of Apple Daily on 24th June 2021, Stand News actually took a number of actions to protect most of the parties associated. First, it terminated public donations, so the donors theoretically would not be held accountable in case the news outlet was being charged under the National Security Laws. Second, it terminated the contracts of all its employees on May 2021, and rehired them straight afterwards under the same terms of conditions. It was hoped to ensure their employees could receive labour compensations in case the outlet was forced to shut down. And third, it voluntarily withdrew most of their articles on their website and social media after the closure of Apple Daily back in June 2021, and asked the authors of the articles for re-approval before republishing them.

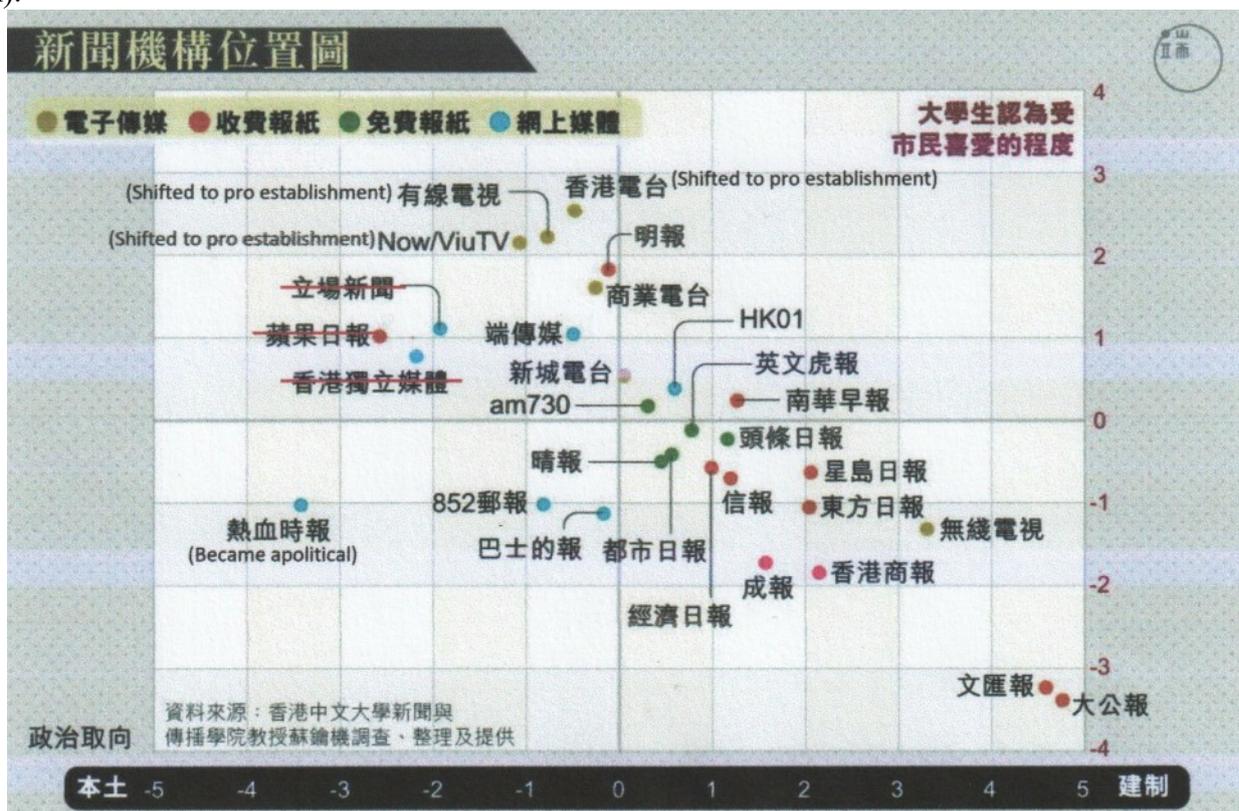
So here comes the question: *What are the motives behind these arrests and search?*

When I read the news on the recent closure of pro-democracy news outlets, it reminds me of the spectrum graph published by Y.K. Clement So, the Former Head of Faculty of News and Journalism, Chinese University of Hong Kong, on Initium on 05/10/2016. Since it was in Chinese, I have re-edited it with English subtitles:



Sources: Graph 2, 'The location of News Outlets', by the Editorial Department of Inition
 *Hong Kong Citizen News was created after this graph was published so it was not on the graph.

This graph showed the spectrum of news outlets in Hong Kong in terms of their political affiliations. If we compare this graph and the news outlets on the localism side of the political spectrum, we will be shocking to see most of the pro-democracy mass media disappeared within 1.5 years after the promulgation of the imposed National Security Laws. I have summarised it on the following graph: (Those closed are in strike through).



When the National Security Law was legislated back in October 2019, the consensus among political pundits was that it would be served as a weapon not only against those who participated in the 2019-2020 democracy protests in Hong Kong, it would also be used against any organisations, including news outlets, who are at odds or of personal opinion of the Beijing Authorities. Their observations is largely correct except it took place slower than expected. Though the extended demise can also well be reflected as a salami tactic which can be further investigated academically.

One notable feature of these news outlets (Except major outlets like Apple Daily, RTHK and NowTV/ViuTV) is that most of them are the products of the involvement of civil society activism in Hong Kong. Quite some of them were created by independent journalists (Like Hong Kong Citizen News), or largely dependent on social media to support its operations (Like Stand News, most of its articles were supplied by users of social media, and Hong Kong In-media, largely relied on citizen journalists to publish articles directly on its website).

This feature is very important to the growth of civil society in Hong Kong. Since 2010s citizen journalism became a trend in Asian countries such as Taiwan, Hong Kong and even China. The rapid economic growth, especially through land value, meant established interests concentrated on niche groups. By raising funds through crowdfunding and decentralised investigation, citizen journalism played a key role in reporting news which are usually not reported on major newspapers, or they would report news stories from different angles comparing with the established news outlets. Their role is particularly crucial in civil right movements such as the Taiwanese Sunflower Student Movement 2014, and the time of crises such as 2019 outbreak of COVID in China, and 2021 coup in Myanmar. Citizen journalists in Hong Kong in particular played a very important role in the 2019 protests not only because they reported the protests through these pro-democracy news outlets, they also organised their own press conferences during the protests, invited those participated in the protests to announce their agenda (5 demands no one less), and raised awareness of the excessive use of force by the Hong Kong Police.

Comparing with other countries in the world, most established news outlets in Hong Kong are pro-establishment. The barrier to entry to airwaves is high resulting to dominance such as TVB controlling television entertainment for decades. Since the handover, printed newspapers except Apple Daily has been sold into Chinese hands or received investments from business conglomerates. Opposition parties, particularly those created after 2010s, found it difficult to obtain press coverage. The rise of these civil journalism and these pro-localism outlets, therefore, injected new dynamics into ecology of the mass media in the city. Silencing these outlets is not the matter of whether there are fewer newspapers or news webpages as some might have argued. It is indeed the matter of barring the civil society to play a role in journalism and preventing opposition parties and activists a platform to express their views. Freedom of expression and civil liberty, once the values Hong Kong society embraced, indeed are in jeopardy.

Other than silencing the pro-democracy movement, are there other purposes of the closure of Stand News? Some may say this showdown from the Hong Kong authorities towards pro-democracy movement was motivated by arresting the figurehead of Stand News such as Denise Ho in order to reduce their significance in the Hong Kong political spectrum. Let's take a different approach to observe this event: If we went through the background among the 6 arrested senior staff members, we can find out the relation between their arrests and their political affiliations.

- Margaret Ng: Former Legislator in Legislative Council (Hong Kong Civic Party), former Stand News executive (Released on bail)
- Denise Ho: Pop singer, LGBT+ activist, former Stand News executive (Released on bail)
- Christine Fang: Social worker, former member of Hong Kong government Commission on Poverty, sister of Anson Chan, the former Chief Secretary of Hong Kong Government and pro-democracy legislator, former Stand News executive (Released on bail)
- Chow Tat-chi: retired academia, former editor in science and environmental science, former Stand News executive (Released on bail)
- Chung Pui-kuen: journalist, husband of former vice CEO of Apple Daily, former Stand News editor-in-chief (Still in jail)
- Patrick Lam: journalist, acting Stand News editor-in-chief (Still in jail)

As mentioned earlier, Stand News is long regarded as a major pro-democracy news outlet, particularly after the closure of Apple Daily. Having said that, if we just concluded the government intention was to silence the figureheads of Stand News, the Hong Kong authorities could refuse the most prominent figures like Denise Ho the pop singer, Christine Fang the sister of former Chief Secretary of Hong Kong, and Margaret Ng the former legislator to be released on bail. Some may argue it was due to the pressure from other countries, but under the current 'war wolf' diplomatic policy of the Chinese authority, the possibility of Beijing taking this into consideration would be very slim.

There is still one more question we need to answer: Is Geopolitics taking a role behind the scene? The closure of Apple Daily on 24th June 2021 was symbolic not only because it marked the beginning of the end of press freedom in Hong Kong, but also marked the end of the presence of American economic interest in Hong Kong since Apple Daily was long known for its relationship with the United States. How about the closed down of Stand News?

I have published an article a few months ago on the recent events in China ('The Chinese Conundrum Engagement or Conflict' the flawed views on the past present and future prospects of China from Vince Cable' published on *Interlib*, 8th Edition, published on October 2021). In the article I mentioned, one factor contributed to the crackdown of Hong Kong Protests 2019-2021 and the legislation of National Security Law was the conflict of interest between China and United States in the city and Xi's attempt to retake the control of the city of Jiang faction. Unfortunately, in this particular case, we don't have enough evidence to prove whether this event was directly related to the wider geopolitics, but the closure of pro-democracy news outlet would mean that the activists have less platforms to express their views. The Beijing authorities could see the pro-democracy press as the tool for anti-Xi factions or power, hence putting them down could be interpreted as another attempt for President Xi (or his faction) to consolidate his grip of control of the former British colony and the base of power of Jiang faction.

Therefore, I am inclined to conclude the draconian action taken by the Hong Kong Authorities aimed at:

- 1) Stand News is a long-recognised platform of pro-democracy parties and activists in Hong Kong. Its forced closure further weakened the stake of pro-democracy parties in HK political spectrum, which had already been weakened a lot following the farce 2021 election of the Legislative Council (With no pro-democracy parties were qualified to run in the election).
- 2) The Hong Kong Authorities is erasing the trace of freedom of speech in the city, and the main purpose of the arrest was to take away the role of civil society in the mass media.
- 3) Geopolitics may take a role but it is rather inconclusive at the moment.

Yet, there is still an unanswered question yet to be resolved: One key action taken by the authorities is the former chief editor of the Apple Daily (The wife of Chung Pui-kuen) was further charged for publishing seditious literature on Stand News. Why did it take 6 months for the Hong Kong Authorities to close down Stand News after they took action against Apple Daily and that the editor is already held without bail? One can explain the National Security Bureau has the factional resource debate, and some may speculate it is the timing issue (Taking action between Christmas and New Year could cause less reaction from the West). Without sufficient evidence, we are left to validly question the extended timeframe for the government to take further action on freedom of press clampdowns, in this case with Stand News. This can be crucial to understand the limitation of National Security Bureau or geo-politics that may have an effect on foreign relationships under new orders.

Larry Ngan

Larry Ngan is co-founder, Liberal Democrats Friends of Hong Kong.

reviews



Housmans Peace Diary
Housmans 2022 £8.95
isbn 9780852832844

Every year Housmans publish their world-renowned Peace Diary – now in its 69th edition. It includes a World Peace Directory listing more than 1400 national and international peace, environmental and human rights organisations from around the world. I find it particularly useful for social media campaigning – for example, on the 21st February 1952 identity cards were abolished in the UK following ‘an individual refusing to cooperate’. What they don’t say is that individual was Liberal activist Harry Willcock. There is a plaque in the National Liberal Club, and this is a live issue; look it up

If you forgot to get your diary and found the shelves run empty last month, Housmans may come to your rescue, as they had delays getting theirs back from the printers. To order it online go to shop@housmans.com, or drop into the shop at 5 Caledonian Rd, London N1 9DX (020 7837 4473)

Stewart Rayment

The Rise of China: Fresh Insights and Observations – a collection of essays.
The Paddy Ashdown Forum 2021 £12.99 isbn 9781399905244

China is the country with the second largest land area on earth (9,424,702.9 sq km, only exceeded by the Russian Federation), the largest population (more than 1.4 billion) and the third largest GDP after the US and EU (US\$14.7 trillion, five times the UK’s) according to World Bank data for 2020. It is big in many senses including as a player in the international relations game. As John Alderdice indicates in the foreword, British politicians need informed views with which to be prepared for future challenges concerning China; which is where this collection of essays comes in. Packed into just over 150 pages, in this volume 14 essays consider facets of present-day China.

Kerry Brown describes China’s governance structures, Yeow Poon and Laurence Vandewalle its past and present political culture and Vince Cable its economy. Merlene Toh Emerson discusses the Belt and Road Initiative, which is extending China’s influence and reach. How many British politicians know that the BRI includes a rail freight route from Chongqing across the Eurasian land mass to the inland port of Duisburg in Germany, at the confluence of the Rhine and Ruhr rivers, at the heart of Europe? The journey takes less than two weeks. China is not so remote or distant as one might think.

Emil Kirchner’s essay focusing on EU-China relations explains the tensions between economic interests and core liberal values. China’s behaviour in relation to Hong Kong, its territorial expansionism over Taiwan, its mixture of inducements and sabre-rattling towards neighbours and its allegedly genocidal human rights violations against the Uighur community have led to human rights provisions being inserted in the December 2020 EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, and, this year, to the EU, US and UK introducing sanctions against several individuals.

Philip Bennion’s essay on China and the West has a broad sweep; Michael Mainelli considers multi-lateral institutions; Humphrey Hawksley considers China’s policies towards its near neighbours; Juli Minoves

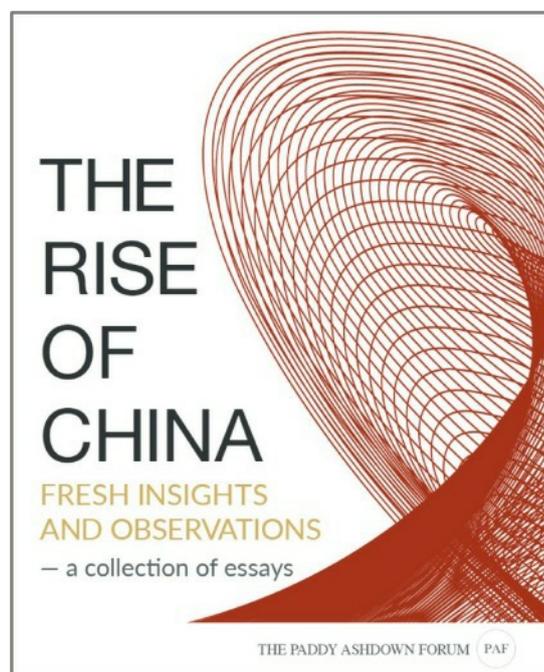
discusses Taiwan specifically while Andrew Leung revisits Hong Kong.

Tim Clement-Jones' essay on the tech war describes US, EU and UK foreign policy's recent evolution to a harder line, partly because of China's shift towards tighter autocracy and use of technology for repression and surveillance, but also because policymakers see China as vying for supremacy in surveillance, artificial intelligence, quantum computing and other emerging technologies. I would have liked more information about this aspect.

On a related theme, Paul Reynolds assesses the potential for military conflict. He considers that in the future the US will remain supreme militarily, and that China's focus is on homeland security rather than global reach. He sees China's political leadership under its current leader Xi Jinping, in contrast with that of the US, as deeply involved in unified economic and military decision making. He discerns a pattern

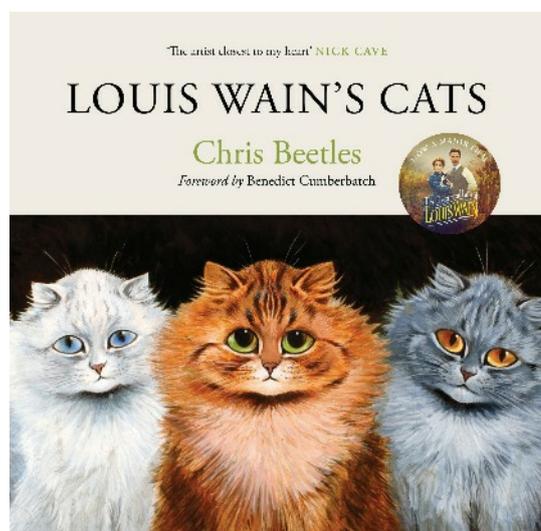
of economics-led stealthy expansion followed by expanding military reach and capability in, among other examples, the new military base, supposedly for anti-piracy purposes, in the strategically well-placed port of Obock, in Djibouti, on the Gulf of Aden. I would have liked more detail about these, and about the measures, including confidence-building, which he suggests should be adopted to avert armed conflict. Christopher Cheadle considers how the international community needs to balance competition with cooperation with China to tackle the existential threats to the climate, environment and biodiversity. I have learned much about the tensions between interests and values and why they must be managed. To borrow a phrase from Dr Phil Bennion's chapter title, China versus the West is a contest neither can win. I highly recommend this book.

Jo Hayes



Louis Wain's Cats, by Chris Beetles.
Chris Beetles Ltd & Canongate Books Ltd, 2021 £30.00/\$50.00
isbn 9781838854706

More than anyone else Chris Beetles has kept the flame of Louis Wain – the man who drew cats, alive. I cannot remember when I first attended one of the cat shows at his Ryder Street gallery. Now he has stepped into the limelight, portrayed by Benedict Cumberbatch in *The Electric Life of Louis Wain*, which I hope will be screened in a cinema near me, as they need our support. Chris has an exhibition at his gallery, including many works from private collections running until 29th January. It's a couple of lanes down from the Royal Academy, so you can catch it along with their Hélène Binet and Late Constable.



What does Wain's work tell us of a man whose primary, but not sole output revolved around andromorphic cats, often of a rascal nature? He struck a goldmine, particularly in the heyday of late Victorian & Edwardian illustration, - beyond that of childrens' books, for the content of *Louis Wain's Annual* was also adult. But when that vein ran thin, despaired as the provider for his family, sunk into obscurity and was declared insane. Discovered in a paupers' asylum, a public appeal and the intervention of Ramsey McDonald led to his transfer to more congenial surroundings until his death in 1939.

Rodney Dale, an earlier biographer of Wain speculates that 'raising the social status of the cat was due, in no small measure, to Louis Wain himself.'



"Mr Lloyd George: "I have got to the dregs of this bottle. I wonder whether it would mix with a little soda!"

Neither Dale nor Beetles commit to how Wain voted. Beetles writes that 'Louis Wain and his Cats were Political Animals and held strong views boldly spoken'. Off print, Beetles thinks Wain was probably a Tory, but there can be no certainty of that – he was a Loyalist on the Home Rule issue, and Free Trader at a time when Chamberlain was raising the issue of tariffs. His cartoons reflect his opinions, but like others, will also reflect the needs of the day. Many cartoonists have told me that they don't like any politicians. Beetles thinks the politics of Speakers' Corner probably best represent Wain. His cartoons aside, he was a frequent and full commentator on the state of the nation. Wain an anti-socialist, Beetles sees him as 'mildly critical' of Lloyd George's National Insurance Bill of 1911. Lloyd George's Budget Speech was delivered in Limehouse on the 30th July 1909. I've chosen a depiction of the Wizard from Dale's earlier biography, partly as a bonus, but also as one sees the features Lloyd George within the cat, skilfully portrayed.

You will, of course, first and foremost, buy this book for the cats and other examples of Wain's work, but it contains much more both in terms of commentary of his life and work, and primary sources to support that. The book shares the scholarship of Rodney Dale, and of David Wootton on Wain's ventures into ceramics. There is much to enjoy.

Stewart Rayment.

Three Days at Camp David: How a secret meeting in 1971 transformed the global economy,
by Jeffrey Garten.
Amberley 2021 £20.00
isbn 9781398112056

Some years ago, I read *Five Days in London*, the brilliant historical evocation by the American historian John Lukacs of the agonised decision by the coalition government of 1940 to carry on fighting no matter what.

This book has a similar idea at its heart, and a similar title – tracing the decision, over a long weekend in mid-August 1971, which marked what may have been an even more important moment in history: the decision by the Nixon administration to end the link between the dollar and the value of gold (\$35 a ounce).

There was a sense in which this had become necessary – the Vietnam War meant that the US government had seriously overspent, and the value of the dollar – on which the values of all the other currencies in the world were pegged to – had become difficult and expensive to defend.

These were the days when the Bretton Woods agreement – organised by Keynes and his American rival Harry Dexter White in 1944 – still managed the world. Nixon and his colleagues were nervous that the world would start clamouring for payment for their dollars in gold, aware that they were now worth considerably less than they were supposed to be – and their gold reserves would soon disappear from Fort Knox.

The shape of the world was redrawn after those three days at Camp David – and a great deal more fundamentally even than the decision over eight years later by the UK government to end exchange controls. In fact, it was a note from the British government, asking for 'cover' for some of its dollar reserves against their value changing. That preceded the crisis. The Americans had no idea what this meant – in fact, it meant a good deal less than they feared. Yet that was at least one reason why Nixon called his closest financial minds together that weekend to come up with a solution.

This fascinating book describes what happened, in a blow-by-blow account. There was Nixon's bullying nationalist, John Connally, the Treasury Secretary, determined to stop their allies taking them for granted.

There was Connolly's deputy, in charge of monetary affairs, Paul Volker, soon to be head of the Federal Reserve, tall, donnish and unconvinced by any of the options.

There was Arthur Burns, the current Federal Reserve chief, nervous about the implications of coming off the gold standard. And George Shulz, a free marketeer and a monetarist, then director of the Office of Management. There are also the names that would become all too prominent after Watergate the following year - Ehrlichman and Haldeman - known as "the Germans", the gatekeepers for Nixon.

Nixon was far from certain himself what to do. And his tactics for dealing with the sceptics, like Burns, were to listen, to make sure the opponents felt they had been heard, and praise them copiously in their hearing. Then to act.

He comes across surprisingly well in this account, though he was also about to allow for the break-in at the Democrats national headquarters - quite unnecessarily, because his economic plan from Camp David

had engineered a mini boom, which meant that he was to win every state except Massachusetts.

Though author Jeffrey Garten also makes clear, perhaps inevitably, since it was presented as a *fait accompli* to America's allies, that the new global economic architecture hardly lasted very well. Within months, the arrangements had unravelled. I suppose the real question is whether William Grieder was right that this is the precise date when American reputation began to decline – when "America's singular dominance of the world's economy ended".

You won't get a definitive answer by reading this book, but you will get the questions posed a good deal more clearly.

David Boyle

David Boyle is a former Lib Dem parliamentary candidate and editor of Lib Dem News. He is the author of *Tickbox* and *Nor Shall My Sword Sleep*.

What does Jeremy think? Jeremy Heywood and the making of Modern Britain, by Suzanne Heywood. William Collins 2021 £25.00

Further to the review in interLib 2021-08. To say the matter of David Kelly's death was "thoroughly examined" is a joke when even Lord Hutton subsequently wrote that he had not bothered to do this (see his quote in my book, in from memory *The Inner Temple Yearbook*). Moreover, Lord Hutton was the most pro-Establishment and safest judge to pick, the most likely to clear the government of everything. A calculated rather than random choice as this book implies.

The conversation about "conspiracy theories" does not ring true either and reads as if it were written in hindsight. The phrase itself barely existed in 2003.

I think this version of events looks like the Establishment retrospectively trying to create the sequence of events which it now wishes had existed.

Norman Baker

Norman Baker was Liberal Democrat MP for Lewes and is author of *The Strange Death of David Kelly*, Methuen, 2007.

