



2023 no. 5 £7.50 (free to members)

INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



EVENTS

23rd-26th September Liberal Democrats Federal Autumn Conference, Bournemouth.

24th September LIBG Fringe Meeting: The Future of China-UK relations. Marriott - Shaftesbury Suite 6.15-7.15pm

21st October Liberal Democrat Town & Parish Councillors Conference, free event, online, provisionally 10am-1pm.

21st- 22nd October Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru/Welsh Liberal Democrats Autumn Conference, Ramada Plaza Hotel, Wrexham.

28th-30th October Scottish Liberal Democrats Autumn Conference, The Town House, Hamilton.

For bookings & other information please contact the Treasurer below.

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

Liberal International (British Group)
Treasurer: Wendy Kyrle-Pope, 1 Brook Gardens, Barnes, London SW13 0LY

email wvkpope@gmail.com

interLib back issues can be found at
www.libg.co.uk

interLib is published by the Liberal International (British Group). Views expressed therein are those of the authors and are not necessarily the views of LI(BG), LI or any of its constituent parties.

Comments and articles can be sent to Lockhart & Hastings, Intellectual Properties Consultants, 29 St Helen's Crescent, Hastings TN34 2EN, email lockhart.hastings@outlook.com

CONTENTS

LIBG/PAF Forum – Russia's 'other' European neighbours. pages 3-12

Russia's 'other' European neighbours, report by Dr. Carol Weaver pages 3-6

The South Caucasus & Nagorno-Karabakh, by Laurence Broers pages 7-9

Brief on Georgia, by Sergo Chikhladze pages 10-12

Sudan's Collapse, where bodies are used as speed bumps, by Rebecca Tinsley pages 13-14

International Abstracts page 15

Reviews page 16

Photographs – Stewart Rayment, Laurence Broers, Rebecca Tinsley, The Horniman Museum.

Cover Photograph – This Guardian Lion's blindfold isn't making a political statement (though we could think of many); it awaits the opening of the Peninsular Hotel in Grosvenor Place, London.



LIBG at Bournemouth

LIBG are sharing a stall (no. 24) with LDEG, the Liberal Democrat European Group, in the Solent Hall on the ground floor of the BIC conference centre. Volunteers will be needed to staff our stall.

Copy Deadline for the conference issue 31.8.2023

Russia's 'other' European neighbours

Dr. Carol Weaver

Russia and Ukraine have been much in focus for over a year now, but less international attention has been given to Russia's other European neighbours: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Moldova. So, on 27 June, Liberal International (British Group), in conjunction with the Paddy Ashdown Forum, held an in-depth meeting on these countries which are situated in a very volatile region. Indeed, further conflict here, especially in the South Caucasus could drag other countries further in, including those in the 'West', Turkey, Iran and Syria.

Our expert speakers included Petras Auštrevičius MEP, Laurence Broers, Cristina Gherasimov, Sergo Chikhladze and Edward Lucas. The meeting was chaired by Irina von Wiese, co-chaired by Carol Weaver and co-hosted by Chris Gleadle.

A link to the recording is at the end of this article.

Russia's actual and desired influence over its neighbours

Our first speaker was Edward Lucas, journalist, European security expert and LibDem PPC for Cities of London and Westminster. He began by considering what Russia actually is, demonstrating his in-depth knowledge of its history. He reminds us that when thinking about borders, Russia's current borders are not exactly set in stone. It is the *Russian Federation* and nowadays Chechnya is almost *de facto* independent, so this could also happen to other regions during this time of chaos. Indeed, when we discuss Russia in the West, we are usually thinking politically about the Kremlin rather than the country as a whole.

In the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union it was clear that Russia was still imperialist. Today it is still easier to see this from the neighbours' point of view rather than from further away. Russia has not necessarily wanted to bring neighbours into the Federation but has wanted to dominate them economically, politically, culturally and with regard to security. Warnings from the neighbours were not heeded in the 1990s.

It was also clear when Putin came to power and began to stabilise the country that he thought of neighbouring 'Russian-speakers' as needing to be led by the Kremlin. The West to some extent went along with this idea that Russia had some rights over its neighbours. Edward and others gave many warnings but we tended to have an orientalist attitude and were prepared to go along with it all, in order to have trade deals and an end to the Cold War.

We are beginning to understand more now but the neighbours have paid a high price.

Azerbaijan, Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh

Laurence Broers followed. He is Associate Fellow at the Russia and Eurasia Programme at Chatham House and Caucasus programme director at peacebuilding organization Conciliation Resources.

Russia has cultivated friendly relations with both Azerbaijan and Armenia and has tried not to side with either over Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) both after the first war in the 1990s and the second war in 2020 which was devastating and bloody with over 7,000 deaths in 44 days. Russia has also tried to defer any final peaceful outcome in order to stay involved in a frozen conflict type of situation.

Azerbaijan has always thought the wars were unfinished business but now there is a return of Russian boots as peacekeepers in the northern parts of NK, inhabited for centuries by Armenians. (The trilateral peace

agreement also established a corridor between NK and Armenia policed by the Russians.) But the war in Ukraine has meant that more experienced soldiers have been replaced with juniors and Russia's weakness has led to a security vacuum. Because of this, the EU is now in a new kind of role with a mission to Armenia and an involvement in peace talks.

In December 2022 President Aliyev of Azerbaijan began blockading the Lachin corridor between NK and Armenia needed for supplies and travel to hospital for example. It is still blockaded and there is a new Azerbaijani checkpoint which could be about the dismantling of the Russian brokered cease-fire agreement.

The pre-2020 OSCE Minsk process for peace talks no longer being viable, other talks resumed in May with a flurry. Normalisation of relations looks possible because the weaker President Pashinyan of Armenia is willing to go against popular opinion and recognize the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan despite the cries for self-determination from NK and other Armenians. There is speculation that this year there will be an agreement although Azerbaijan has the upper hand and Pashinyan needs guarantees for NK which are not forthcoming.

So there are fears that there could be a forced exodus of the NK Armenians in a kind of ethnic cleansing causing a whole new cluster of conflict issues. Russia could also be a spoiler of peace. In summary, Laurence fears more violence is on the way, even if on certain objective terms this is a moment of opportunity. It is hard to disagree.

Please see separate article for fuller briefing on this complex situation.

Moldova

Cristina Gherasimov is the Senior Foreign Policy Adviser to the President of Moldova, Maia Sandu.

2022 was a difficult year due to the war and the large numbers of refugees from Ukraine. There were tens of thousands every day and each Ukrainian was supported with either safe transit or shelter in Moldova. There were also huge security concerns. It was never clear what role the Transnistrian region would play in Russia's plans, and if Ukraine could not withstand Russia, Moldova could be next. The economy was also weak in part due to Covid, in part due to dependency on Russia for energy and also inflation.

But now Moldova is much stronger, no longer dependent on Russian gas and the high inflation is coming down. Democracy is greatly improved as confirmed by international indices and organisations like Transparency International. Moldova has moved up the scale dramatically and is looking forward to an EU accession path now it's on track with reforms. The vote of confidence from the EU is not just a symbolic gesture. Moldova is doing well regarding the law and reducing the influence of oligarchs, many of whom have fled. There is still some corruption to get rid of, one step at a time. Rule of law reforms are the most difficult, not just for Moldova.

There is still a need to strengthen security and the economy. Moldova has a policy of neutrality and it cannot stop its air space being used. However, neutrality is not making Moldova safe and it wants to strengthen the army now. Regarding the economy, it is hard to attract investors due to security concerns.

Moldova hopes to begin to initiate EU accession negotiations by the end of the year.

Georgia

Sergo Chikhladze is the political and international secretary of the ALDE affiliated party known as 'Strategy Builder'. He is also chief of staff of the 'Reforms Group' faction in the Parliament of Georgia.

He says that there is currently a physical war in Ukraine but also a hybrid war in Georgia. The ruling party, Georgian Dream distributes anti-Western, anti-NATO and anti-Ukraine propaganda and disinformation

campaigns so helping this Russian hybrid war against Georgia. Georgian Dream is also preventing the EU accession process by not fulfilling the recommendations needed and by maintaining oligarchy. The rule of law, media freedom and the state of democracy in Georgia are becoming more and more alarming.

What we see now is Georgian political and economic dependency on Russia increasing dramatically yet the majority of the population is pro-EU and pro-NATO. Almost 90% of the Georgian population shares the EU aspirations and 80% of the Georgian population shares the NATO aspirations

After the war began in February 2022, many Russians came over the border into Georgia and Russian citizens and Russian companies opened a large number of bank accounts. Direct flights to and from Russia and a visa-free regime were welcomed and approved by the government.

There have been many steps by Georgian Dream which have shifted Foreign Policy towards Russia. China and Iran are also becoming more involved in the Caucasus region.

The solution to the hybrid war includes consolidating the fragmented opposition and working towards free and fair elections in 2024, whilst asking the West for help with sanctioning individuals and setting preconditions for financial assistance.

The EU's involvement in the shared neighbourhood

The final speaker was Lithuanian MEP Petras Auštrevičius, a member of the EU's Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The European Neighbourhood Programme (ENP) was as a result of the large wave of enlargement in 2004. It was a way of being closer to the new members' neighbours who were not eligible or wanting to join the EU at the time. Russia was less aggressive then. Now Moldova and Ukraine have a membership perspective. Georgia and Armenia have aspirations but currently are too dependent on Russia. Belarus is so far really a non-starter and Azerbaijan wants to stay neutral. The countries need to increase their sovereignty. If they lose it and Russia continues with its expansion policy, things could be much worse.

In the six eastern partners of the ENP, the economies can't survive if there is no serious fight against corruption. Also, democracy and human rights need to be strengthened. Nevertheless, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia have all made progress. In particular, Moldova is showing great results and is reviewing its national security. This is very brave.

Belarus

Petras Auštrevičius continued by speaking about Belarus which he says is a black hole. The opposition is abroad now in Vilnius and other cities. It is moving forward and wants to be seen as having future EU membership. Belarus also has an opposition military fighting in Ukraine. This is a threat for Lukashenko, so it is hard to see a peaceful transition in the future. There are difficulties around Prigozhin, leader of Wagner. Has he been given tasks by the Kremlin? We need to follow events closely.

Ideally, after a Ukrainian victory, Belarus must be at the negotiating table on the side of the West. We can't allow Russia to speak for both countries. We can't allow Belarus to be a vassal state. Europe especially must not see Belarus as a backwater. We need to see it as a separate country from Russia.

Close

At the end there was a short but interesting Q and A session with much interest in Belarus as well as the EU candidacy of Moldova and Ukraine.

Irina von Wiese concluded with her thanks and feelings that we had been given great insight into the changes happening in the region since the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Ukrainians and other neighbours are paying for this war but perhaps there is a ray of hope for the future.

For further briefings please contact Carol Weaver

To see the whole event please click on the link below.

<https://www.thepaddyashdownforum.org/russias-other-european-neighbours/>

Dr Carol Weaver is the author of 'The Politics of the Black Sea Region: EU neighbourhood, conflict zone, or future security community' 2013, a member of the LibDem International Security policy working group, and a member of the LIBG executive.



The Russian Empire in Europe at the height of Tsarist Imperialism c.1904

The South Caucasus & Nagorno-Karabakh Laurence Broers

Russia's role in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict was traditionally exceptional when compared to other conflicts in the region, because Russia's main interest was to defer any definitive outcome, rather than to force the issue as it did in Georgia and Ukraine. Russia cultivated friendly relations with both Armenia and Azerbaijan, and its policy was always predicated on the avoidance of choice between them.

The second Karabakh war in 2020 initially played out as a tactical win for Russia. Although the Kremlin was probably surprised by the scale of Turkish support and the resulting Azerbaijani victory, it was able to impose a *Pax Russica* that actually made the situation in and around Karabakh look much more like the other conflicts: Russia introduced peacekeepers into Karabakh, sank the OSCE's multilateral mediation effort, and took over control of Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiations. A popular joke at the time was that Russia had won the second Karabakh war.

This was however illusory. Even before Russia invaded Ukraine, its hegemony over the Armenian-Azerbaijani peace process was repeatedly challenged, mainly through Azerbaijan's repeated escalations. From Azerbaijan's perspective, the 2020 second Karabakh war was a dangerously incomplete victory with a serious risk of sliding back into a frozen conflict situation.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine accelerated these trends. The course of the war weakened Russia's material presence as more experienced servicemen in peacekeeping contingents in the South Caucasus were reassigned to Ukraine and more inexperienced conscripts replaced them. More importantly, its reputation as a security patron precipitously declined. A large-scale Azerbaijani attack on Armenia was met with a fact-finding mission from the CSTO (the Collective Security Treaty Organisation), prompting the much more public questioning of the purpose of Armenia's membership in this organization than ever before.

Russian distraction and weakness both exposed the shallowness of its security guarantees in the South Caucasus and has left a dangerous security vacuum in the region. What this has meant in the short term is an opportunity for Euro-Atlantic powers to re-assert themselves in the region after their failures to influence the course or ending of the second Karabakh war in 2020.

Most significantly, we have seen the EU's evolution into direct mediation and security monitoring roles in the Armenian-Azerbaijani context. EU mediation began before Russia's invasion but accelerated since then in a series of meetings between Charles Michel, Ilham Aliyev and Nikol Pashinyan. After the September 2022 violence, the EU proceeded with the deployment of civilian monitoring missions in Armenia, resulting in the unprecedented situation where the EU has a monitoring mission in a country formally allied with Russia.

Negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan essentially broke down for several months after September 2022, also as a result of the civilian blockade of the Armenian population in Karabakh enacted from December. However, talks resumed in May of this year with quite an intensive flurry of diplomacy in a joint effort by the EU and especially the US, in a Euro-Atlantic tandem.

As of this point in time, it appears that there is now a critical mass of issues at the inter-state level on which eventual agreement looks possible, such as border delimitation, resolving humanitarian issues, and the much-discussed connectivity¹ agenda. It is also noteworthy in Nikol Pashinyan, Armenia has a leader for the first time in two decades prepared to go against popular opinion and renounce the country's role as the

patron-state of Karabakh Armenian secessionism. He has repeatedly indicated Armenia's readiness to recognize Azerbaijan's territorial integrity – including Nagorny Karabakh.

This also aligns with the reality on the ground that Azerbaijan has closed the circle of its compromised territorial integrity by establishing an unscheduled checkpoint² on the Lachin Corridor, the only route connecting Karabakh to the outside world. The checkpoint is another step in Azerbaijan's piecemeal dismantling of the Russian-brokered 9 November 2020 ceasefire – making it more likely that Azerbaijan may request the Russian peacekeepers' departure when their first term ends in 2025.

So we see a situation where the stronger party, Azerbaijan, is pushing for a negotiated outcome on its terms, while the weaker party Armenia is signaling that on most parameters it is willing to negotiate. This suggests that some kind of agreement within the foreseeable future is possible, which is the first time in more than 20 years that this has been the case.

But this is not necessarily grounds for optimism. At this stage there appear to be two principal threats or risks. The first concerns the Karabakh Armenians, the population on whose fate the whole conflict has turned. Pashinyan's readiness to recognise Azerbaijan's territorial integrity is predicated on Baku's offering of guarantees for the Karabakh Armenian population. But Baku has not only refused to do this, it has securitised that population in various ways from every day ceasefire violations, to civilian blockade to the regular interruption of gas and other resources.



*Stepanakert, the de facto capital of Karabakh
photo Adam Jones Creative Commons*

The other key threat, to bring us back to where we started is Russia's potential to become a spoiler of an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace. Russia's principal leverage over both states over the years has derived from the conflict. Even under the best of circumstances it would be a huge adjustment for Russia to adapt to peace between the two states, with its implication that Russian security linkages are no longer needed or wanted. Under today's conditions, and with a competitive mediation dynamic ongoing with the EU and US, it is challenging to think through how Russia will accommodate a settlement at least partly negotiated by the same Western powers which it is confronting in the war in Ukraine. The only framework which potentially can establish some areas of common interest by default is the connectivity agenda, but this is a long-term trajectory.

Laurence Broers

Laurence Broers is Associate Fellow at the Russia and Eurasia Programme at Chatham House and Caucasus programme director at peacebuilding organization Conciliation Resources.

¹ https://carnegieendowment.org/files/de_Waal_South_Caucasus_Connectivity.pdf Thomas de Waal, November 2021

² <https://eurasianet.org/azerbaijan-sets-up-checkpoint-on-road-connecting-armenia-and-karabakh> Joshua Kucera, April 24, 2023

Armenia-Azerbaijan-Nagorny Karabakh recent publications by Laurence Broers

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/06/fate-vulnerable-minority-looms-over-armenia-azerbaijan-peace>

Books

Armenia and Azerbaijan: Anatomy of a Rivalry, Edinburgh University Press,

2019: <https://edinburghuniversitypress.com/book-armenia-and-azerbaijan-hb.html>

Routledge Handbook of the Caucasus, co-edited with Galina M. Yemelianova,

2020: <https://www.routledge.com/Routledge-Handbook-of-the-Caucasus-1st-Edition/Yemelianova-Broers/p/book/9781138483187>

Armenia's Velvet Revolution. Authoritarian Decline and Civil Resistance in a Multipolar World, co-edited with Anna Ohanyan, I.B. Tauris, 2020: <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/armenias-velvet-revolution-9781788317177/>

Articles

Civic Dominion: Nation-building in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan Over 25 Years of Independence, co-authored with Ceyhun Mahmudlu, *Nationalities Papers*, 20 June 2022

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/nationalities-papers/article/abs/civic-dominion-nationbuilding-in-postsoviet-azerbaijan-over-25-years-of-independence/E35B662CBD32547BF393EEF25DADBD7B>

Requiem for the Unipolar Moment in Nagorny Karabakh. *Current History* (2021) 120 (828): 255-261.

<https://online.ucpress.edu/currenthistory/article/120/828/255/118570/Requiem-for-the-Unipolar-Moment-in-Nagorny>

Cartographies of Consensus and Grievance: Visualising the Territory of Azerbaijan, *Europe-Asia Studies*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2020.1813689>

Book chapters

“Humanitarianism meets a de facto state: Interventions by international peacebuilding consortiums in Nagorny Karabakh, 2003-2016.” In Jo Laycock and Francesca Piana, eds., *Aid to Armenia. Relief, humanitarianism and interventions from the 1890s to the present*, Manchester University Press, 2020, <https://manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/9781526142207/>

South Caucasus Transport Routes



Ing – Ingushetia, KC - Karachay-Cherkessia, KB - Kabardino-Balkaria, A – Adygea. These are republics of the Russian Federation.

Brief on Georgia

Sergo Chikhladze

Situation analysis

- Rule of law, Media Freedom and the state of democracy in Georgia are getting more and more alarming
 - Regress in Judiciary, instead of investigation, GD (Georgian Dream, the ruling party) is protecting corrupt judges who are sanctioned by the US.
 - Regress in electoral reform
 - Ongoing politically motivated prosecution against critical media and its owners (TV Formula, TV Pirveli, TV Mtavari); Political prosecution against Nika Gvaramia (pardoned by the President last week), Mikheil Saakashvili, Lazare Grigoriadis (young activist from 7-9 March protests)
 - Physical violence against opposition MPs inside the Parliament, physical violence against opposition leaders and students in streets and Universities from the violent groups run by GD
 - Orchestrated attacks on Universities (ILIAUNI, the University of Georgia cases)
- GD continues to sabotage the process of EU and NATO integration through
 - Deliberately not fulfilling 12 recommendations set by the EU Commission
 - Deliberately ignoring all recommendations coming from the EU Commission, IMF, Venice Commission, also, EU parliament resolutions
 - Maintaining the oligarchic rule of Bidzina Ivanishvili
- GD continues Anti-Western, anti-NATO and anti-Ukraine propaganda and disinformation campaigns helping thus to Russian hybrid war against Georgia
 - The statements by Prime Minister of Georgia, Chairperson of GD, Secretary General of GD, Mayor of Tbilisi other leaders of GD against EU and US institutions, attacks on US and EU ambassadors, US senators, President Zelensky and Ukrainian officials, etc. Also, government-backed Russian-styled propaganda against LGBTQI people
 - GD's propaganda machine acts as a machine of Russian hybrid war and spreads fears, doubts and uncertainty among the population
- GD continues proactively deepening economic and political ties with Russia and increasing Georgia's dependency on Russia.

Increased dependency on Russia

- In 2022, a total of \$4.1 billion was transferred to Georgia from abroad (according to World Bank data). From this amount, \$2.06 billion was transferred from Russia
- In 2022, Russian citizens opened more than 60,000 accounts in Georgian banks, and the amount of money placed in their current accounts and deposits increased almost 4 times compared to 2021 and reached 2.8 billion GEL
- Direct flights to and from Russia, the visa-free regime announced by Putin welcomed and approved by the GD government
- In 2022, after Russia started a full-scale war in Ukraine, up to 15,000 Russian companies were registered in Georgia, which is 16 times more than in 2021. A total of 22,400 Russian companies are registered in Georgia, and 66% of them were registered after the start of the war in Ukraine
- According to the official statistics of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, only in 2022, 1,459,546 citizens of Russia crossed the state border of Georgia (five times more than in 2021)
- After the war, in 2022, imports from Russia increased by 79% and amounted to 1.8 billion US dollars.
- After the war, the import of oil products (fuel) from Russia increased the most - by 482 million US dollars (5 times more than it was in 2021). The share of Russian fuel in imports was 51% in 2022
- In 2022, the share of Russian wheat and wheat flour in the total import of wheat and wheat flour of Georgia was 97%

Why in a country with a majority of pro-EU and pro-NATO population GD remains in power?

- **Use of administrative resources, captured state institutions** (election administrations, judiciary, law enforcement), **election manipulation, blackmailing, intimidation of voters and vote buying** affect the results of the elections
- Along with the abovementioned, **ambiguity and keeping a double face** helped GD to retain their pro-European voters (almost 2/3 of their voters are pro-Europeans as studies show). If the message coming from the Western partners is clear that GD's actions don't lead the country to the EU or to NATO that will help the Georgian population to make the right choice and decision. Messages and recommendations coming from US and EU matter a lot for Georgian citizens. **A good example of how clear messages worked** was the situation with regard to the so-called "Russian Law" (Law on foreign agents). Where all major players – EU, US, democratic pro-Western opposition, civil society and media were on the same page and messages from all of them were clear, without any ambiguity. That's why **the protest of 7-9 March did work** and GD gave up this law.
- Besides, even before 2022, oligarch Ivanishvili's and GD's propaganda were spreading fears, doubts and uncertainty among the population but same time were able to keep a pro-Western façade. After Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine Ivanishvili and GD had to take a side with limited space of manoeuvres and were obliged to openly fulfill the Russian tasks for which they were designed since 2012.

Threats

- Politically and economically, Georgia is more closely tied to Russia
- 2024 elections are not conducted in a fair and democratic environment; oligarchic autocracy strengthened in Georgia
- The backsliding of democratic reforms continues and the full-scale "Belorussization" of Georgia
- Democratic opposition has to fight against huge oligarchic financial resources, captured institutions, state budget resources also totally controlled by the oligarchic regime, plus Russian hybrid war and huge propaganda machine and disinformation which copies the Kremlin narrative
- The process of EU and NATO integration is in jeopardy and is delayed
- The increased influence of Russia, China and Iran in the Caucasus region
- Momentum for Georgia's westernization is lost for decades
- While Ukraine wins and the cease-fire is achieved, Georgia could be left beyond new security guarantees

Opportunities

- Almost 90% of the Georgian population shares the EU aspirations and 80% of the Georgian population shares the NATO aspirations
- According to the latest polls, in total, pro-Western democratic opposition parties, though fragmented, are in the majority compared to GD
- Georgia is the key country in all Trans-Caspian pipeline project
- Georgia is also an important key to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict
- After fair elections in 2024, Georgia's new coalition pro-Western government will start rapid democratic reforms and regain the status of champion of reforms in the region
- Georgia remains the most reliable partner of the US in the region

What is the solution?

- **Unification and the regrouping of pro-Western democratic opposition parties in Georgia.** The creation of a new powerful coalition (1 or 2, but not more than 3 centers of gravity on the opposition field) will contribute to the mobilization of resources, both human and financial, and will strengthen the opposition wing in Georgia. It will increase the credibility and reliability among the population and among Georgia's Western partners and allies as well. Consolidation of opposition is also important for the demonstration of strength, which will motivate public servants to overcome fear and make relevant decisions.
- **Clarity of actions and statements from the EU and US the partners** which do not leave the space for GD to manipulate and sell themselves as if it is a pro-Western force, while in reality, it is pro-Russian.

Clarity can help the population to make the right choice and conclusions. Ambiguous messages from the partners along with GD's propaganda and Russian hybrid war create a favourable atmosphere for confusion and misinterpretation.

- **Long-term observation mission for the preparation for the 2024 elections.** For conducting free and fair elections, long-term missions will be a critically important stage for the country's democratic development. Conducting a legitimate election process requires many months of preparation and observation as elections can be rigged long before Election Day itself (use of administrative resources, intimidation of voters, restriction of free media, attacks on civil society and international organizations, manipulation of voters lists etc.).
- **Continue sanctioning the individuals** who jeopardize the EU and NATO integration of Georgia through corruption, violation of human rights, spreading Russian disinformation, attacking US and EU institutions and supporting the oligarchic rule of Ivanishvili in Georgia.
- **Setting preconditions for financial assistance** coming from IMF, US and EU governments and other donor organizations. A good example of it was the Ukrainian case when the IMF set certain preconditions linked to the adoption of the law on the Anticorruption Court. Along with sanctions that can be used as leverage on GD to implement certain reforms before the 2024 elections and to speed up the EU/NATO integration process.
- **Providing technical and financial support** to civil society, critical media and democratic opposition in Georgia, including the **establishment of USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI)** which will work with local partners to target democratic backsliding, violation of human rights, political prosecution, media restrictions, voters' intimidation, persecution and violence against all critical thinkers etc. All criteria for OTI engagement are in place: an important threat to U.S. foreign policy interests, the comparative advantage to support positive political momentum during the crucial period, and a decisive shift in the political landscape that creates an opening to support viable local political will. OTI's programs will serve as catalysts for positive political change.

Set of priority reforms/actions implemented by the new coalition pro-Western government in 2024

- Judiciary reform
- Electoral reforms
- Anti-corruption reforms
- Increasing the Country's security and defense capability
- Speed up the process of EU and NATO integration

Sergo Chikhladze

Sergo Chikhladze is the political and international secretary of the ALDE affiliated party known as 'Strategy Builder' (Strategy Aghmashenebeli), He is also chief of staff of the 'Reforms Group' faction in the Parliament of Georgia.

Sudan's Collapse – where bodies are used as speed bumps

Rebecca Tinsley

We do not hear much about the violence in Sudan these days. Yet, the people of Khartoum are under siege, struggling to find food, water and medicine. They spend their days praying they are not robbed by militia roaming the streets and breaking into homes, or being bombed by the Sudanese Armed Forces who claim to be fighting for the sake of their war-torn nation.

At the same time, a different conflict is unfolding in Darfur in the remote west of Sudan. There, a systematic Janjaweed campaign of ethnic cleansing is sweeping across an area the size of France, with an untold number of civilian casualties.

Sudan is becoming a failed state, but it seems much of the world lost interest once the emergency evacuations ceased. While there is a twenty-four-hour focus on Ukraine, the suffering of Khartoum and Darfur are neglected.

A recent meeting in the British Parliament heard that ceasefire agreements made by the men with guns, the Rapid Support Forces/Janjaweed (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), are broken within minutes of being signed. Sudanese speakers asked why diplomats believe that the men who overthrew Sudan's civilian transitional government in 2021 could be trusted to obey a ceasefire today or to eventually hand over power to the civilians they are currently killing.

It is reported that the citizens of Khartoum have shown bravery and resourcefulness in creating a social survival network, supporting civilians, even as the bombs fall and mercenaries destroy hospitals. The same local Resistance Committees have been facing the guns of the Sudanese security forces ever since the citizens' revolution in December 2018. Speakers at the Parliamentary meeting in London urged the international community to deliver humanitarian aid to these groups, rather than the army in Port Sudan, which reputedly steals the aid and sells it on the black market.

The Parliamentary meeting heard that the RSF and the SAF have massive commercial interests registered in the UAE and Saudi Arabia. The militias might think twice about flattening Khartoum if their financial assets were frozen by the governments of Saudi and the UAE. Andrew Mitchell, the British Minister for Africa, told survivors of the conflict that the UK was considering all options to exert leverage on the SAF and the RSF.

Dr Ahmed Abas of the British Sudan Doctors' Union told British Parliamentarians that France has 5,100 soldiers headquartered in Chad. He suggested the French could create a safe corridor from Adre in Chad to El Geneina, a mere 28 kms away. This would enable the delivery of humanitarian aid to West Darfur which has been under siege for 61 days.

Speaking at the London meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Sudan, Saif Nemir asked why France doesn't improve its reputation in Africa by helping the embattled one million citizens trapped in El Geneina. Local people know from experience that the RSF would probably run away if faced by a professional foreign force.

Nemir told of his parents' 12-hour journey through ten checkpoints, manned by aggressive and racially abusive young Janjaweed soldiers, to reach the Chad border. His parents had been trapped in El Geneina for 59 days with no power or internet, and without deliveries of food, water, or medicine.

Parliamentarians heard from Dr Abas that the aid operation in eastern Chad is chaotic and overwhelmed, with people living in makeshift tents constructed from scarves. The rainy season is approaching and will make delivery of aid even more challenging. There is the threat of cholera in the ever-growing refugee camp which has received 150,000 Darfuris in a short period.

Dr Abas reported that in El Geneina, there is no power, water, food, or medicine. Hospitals have been destroyed and 5,000 civilians have probably been killed. Meanwhile, it is understood that El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, is surrounded by RSF/Janjaweed. Dr Abas said the RSF systematic targets non-Arab civil society and its institutions and NGOs.

Maab Saifeldin who escaped from Darfur during the earlier genocide told the Parliamentary meeting that boys aged 10 are targeted for death; girls aged 12-17 are targeted for rape to “change the DNA of Darfur”, and bodies litter the streets and highways. Dead Darfuris are being used as speed bumps in El Geneina. As co-founder of the UK Sudanese Legal Network, Saifeldin asked why young people in Darfur cannot dream of the same peaceful future she now enjoys in Britain.

The UK’s Africa Minister, Andrew Mitchell, told the meeting that Britain continues to work with all partners including the African Union, IGAD, the Troika and the Quad, trying to secure a negotiated cease-fire. However, it would be disastrous to go back to the former strategy used by the international community, hoping the men with guns will suddenly start behaving like democrats. The only path to a sustainable peace is with the military entities excluded from politics, the economy and Sudan’s fragile institutions. That means moderate civil society must be central to a new constitutional settlement. Anything else condemns Sudan to years more violence and misery.

Rebecca Tinsley

Rebecca Tinsley is the founder of www.WagingPeace.info

A version of this article appeared in Pan African Visions



International Abstracts

Journal of Liberal History Issue 118: Spring 2023



Oku'Oba (Oba's Emissary) one of the Bronzes returned to Benin City by the Horniman Museum. Oba is the title of the kings of Benin (not the Republic). Ewuare II currently holds the post.

This is an international issue. It opens with an account of Frederick Horniman (1835-1906) by York Membury. Last year, the Horniman Museum returned 72 objects to Nigeria. These notably included 12 Benin bronze plaques, which were looted by the British Army when they sacked Benin City in 1897 – another colonial encounter of spurious cause (greed mostly). The bronzes were presented to the museum, which has a strong anthropological collection, some years later. Horniman was Liberal MP for Penryn & Falmouth, but may be better known as a tea merchant (the brand is still popular in the Hispanic world). The Horniman family generally held progressive views, but the museum posts the following:

<https://www.horniman.ac.uk/story/frederick-hornimans-colonial-legacy/>

Peter Hain reminisces about the Stop the Seventy Tour campaign, in which the Young Liberals were in the forefront. The campaign against Apartheid seemed to gain traction from then on. Duncan Brack analyses Free Trade and the Liberal Party; there is also a small note about Richard Cobden, by Anthony Howe. Neils Eichhorn looks at Gladstone and North American politics, more particularly, the Crimean war.

There are reports of the meetings Was the coalition a mistake? Why did we fail to stop Brexit? And Forgotten Liberal Heroes: Sir Edward Grey & Richard Haldane. Also reviews of recent books on the appalling Christabel Pankhurst, Hampshire, Philip Goldenberg's autobiography and *Europe & the Decline of Social Democracy in Britain*.

Liberator 418

Will the Law finally stick to Teflon Don? Martha Elliott writes on Donald Trump's legal troubles, but warns there could be Republican candidates who are even worse. In *Double Standards haunt the Balkans*, Ragmi Mustaf says that minorities in Serbia are rarely heard from but have grievances like those in Kosovo. Stephen Farry MP writes on the progress of the Alliance Party in Northern Ireland, otherwise if it is largely domestic fare; Voter ID, problems with Labour and an appeal for private sector rent tribunals. Lord Bonkers offers his grounds for a Test Match. <https://liberatormagazine.org.uk/2023/07/19/liberator-418/>

Vogue (British edition) July 2023

Artful Diplomacy features US Ambassador Jane Hartley; there is also an interview with Miriam Margolyes – Radical Cheek

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)

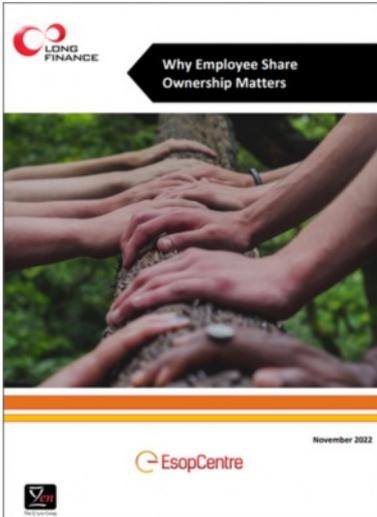
FT Chinese reporter Yue He Parkinson interviews Sir Danny Alexander, Vice-President of AIIB - Financial Times Chinese - *Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) Focus*. FT Chinese on 11 July 2023 as per link: <https://www.ftchinese.com/story/001100212> [Translated and reproduced with kind permission of FT Chinese.]English Translation

How the Ginger Rodent carries on the fight; tremble Labour lackeys.

<https://chinese.lib.dm/en/article/2023/1442627/ft-chinese-reporter-yue-he-parkinson-interviews-sir-danny-alexander-vice-president-of-aiib>

reviews

Why Employee Share Ownership Matters, by Michael Mainelli & Simon Mills Long Finance & ESOP Centre 2022



The old Liberal party had a proud legacy on industrial policy; this seemed to be abandoned with Merger. But much of the 1928 Yellow Book, Britain's Industrial Future, these days attributed mainly to Lloyd George & Keynes, would come to pass. Those elements that had yet to be achieved in industrial democracy remained as major planks in party policy and certainly attracted many members. At their Autumn Conference, the Liberal Democrats will be debating *Bring Back the Industrial Strategy*. Paradoxically the motion fails to mention industrial democracy, co-operatives, nor even trades unions. Some mistake surely? The word 'worker' doesn't appear once. Are they so blinded by the failed neoliberal experiment?

Why Employee Share Ownership Matters is a short succinct argument for its cause, reflecting on the present state of play. You may be familiar with Prof. Mainelli from Paddy Ashdown Forum meetings; the authors argue that

Employees Share Ownership (ESO) can be a tool in social mobility and meets UN Sustainable Development Goals for reducing inequalities.

The publication is also available to download from <https://www.zyen.com/publications/professional-articles/why-employee-share-ownership-matters/>

And a recording of the launch presentation and Q&A session can be viewed at <https://fsclub.zyen.com/events/esopcentre-events/why-employee-share-ownership-matters/>

Z/Yen incidentally, host regular webinars on aspects of economic and business policy so it is well worth keeping an eye on their offerings.

ESO is only one tool in smooth industrial relations and the structural policies of the old party may well be beneficial in what appears to be an era of increasing strikes; but it is a start and one that shouldn't frighten the rabbits.

Saeed Rahman

Momenticon, by Andrew Caldecott, illustrated by Nicola Howell Hawley. Jo Fletcher Books 2022

Caldecott's new world, leaving Rotherweird behind, is a dystopian post-apocalypse. Whether this calamity was the collective efforts of most of us, or was given a helping hand by conflicting elites has yet to be resolved. Either way, we have poisoned the air and the survivors are in a variety of shelters based around Renaissance masterpieces. The corporates are clearly the bad-dies, but the aesthetes aren't any better as each entwines with the other to their ends. Only a handful of people seem to have found another way, going back to a simpler life, in a remote corner of the globe – consider Nevil Shute's *On the Beach* and nuclear apocalypse. The geography is thus plausible, the technology – flying ships as in *Treasure Planet*, the momenticons, but my big question would be technology aside, and we are presumably only a few years after Armageddon, would this population be able sustain a recovery for humankind? There will be two sequels for us to find out. Enjoy.

Stewart Rayment

