



2024 no. 1 £7.50 (free to members)

# INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



**Isaiah Berlin Lecture**  
**Nagorno-Karabakh**  
**Sudan Gaza Nepal**

# EVENTS

4<sup>th</sup> July General Election, United Kingdom

14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> September Liberal Democrats  
Autumn Conference, Brighton

29<sup>th</sup> November-1<sup>st</sup> December 64<sup>th</sup> Congress of  
Liberal International. See page

*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](mailto:wvkpope@gmail.com)

**interLib back issues can be found at**  
[www.libg.co.uk](http://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](mailto:lockhart.hastings@outlook.com)

# CONTENTS

What does the Russo-Ukrainian War tell us  
about Modern Warfare? By Sir Lawrence  
Freedman. Isaiah Berlin Lecture 2023 pages 3-7

What next for the South Caucasus and the  
international order now the Nagorno-Karabakh  
Republic no longer exists? By Dr. Carol  
Weaver pages 8-10

When does a Muslim Life Matter?  
By Rebecca Tinsley pages 10-13

We want to see multi-party democracy in  
Cambodia page 13

HAMAS' escalation is a consequence of  
valuing normalization over peace,  
by Mohammed Nossier pages 14-15

A BNO's view of Bournemouth and  
Beyond, by Matthias W. page 15

Some Cats in Kathmandu, by Wyn  
Thomas. pages 16-19

Democratic Developments in Nepal. page 19

Taiwan Vice President urges united  
response to authoritarian actors at  
CALD 30th anniversary Assembly. page 20

Lib Dem Friends of Ukraine at  
Bournemouth. pages 20-21

LD4SOS continues to champion asylum  
rights. page 22

Apology page 23

International Abstracts pages 23-24

64<sup>th</sup> LI Congress, Santiago de Chile page 25

Reviews pages 26-28

Photographs – Liberal International, Stewart  
Rayment, Wyn Thomas

Cover Photograph – Kathmandu, by Wyn  
Thomas

# What does the Russo-Ukrainian War tell us about Modern Warfare? By Sir Lawrence Freedman.

## The Liberal International Isaiah Berlin Lecture 2023

*The ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine has raised serious questions and thoughts about the nature of modern warfare.*

*For our Isaiah Berlin Lecture 2023 at the National Liberal Club in London, UK, Sir Lawrence Freedman explored these issues in depth, engaging in a lively discussion with participants from academia, media, and political networks, facilitated by LI's President of Honour, John Alderdice.*

*Sir Freedman's lecture provided a timely and insightful intervention into the war in Ukraine, offering a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of its causes, consequences, and implications for the future of warfare. He argued that the war has exposed the limitations of conventional military power, while also highlighting its significance for the world.*

*In addition, Sir Freedman discussed the ethical dimensions of the war, raising concerns about the use of indiscriminate force and the targeting of civilians.*

### What does the Russo-Ukrainian War tell us about Modern Warfare?

It's a delight to be here and see so many old friends in the audience as well. I actually met Isaiah Berlin when I was at Oxford. All I can remember is he talked very fast indeed. What he said I'm sure I wish I'd remembered but I didn't. My other sort of, whenever I hear his name I think of a moment in my career, you mentioned I was at Chatham House. I had a Russian, "Soviet", who sort of had befriended me, and I wasn't quite sure what to do about this because every Christmas he would invite me round for lunch at which he would give me a bottle of something, and I thought this was a bit awkward, especially as the next dinner was planned just after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. So, I thought I'll have to buy him a present too, and I bought him Berlin's book on Russian liberals, which seemed to be appropriate. Not long after that the chap from MI5 came to see me and said you do realise, I don't remember his name, that he's a member of the KGB. I said but he's not very bright and he said but you're not very important.

So that was my dealings with the world of spies. Now onto a more sombre subject which is the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine. I'm wary about talking about lessons from the war. Wars are not set up as educational experiences, they're all very different, and the factors of chance that come into the way that wars develop which mean that you can draw lessons without always being aware of the circumstances in which they took place. So, I think it's useful to think about what this war is telling us about how wars are fought these days. And there are some aspects which are obvious, that hit you, that would be relevant in all wars in the future, of which the role of drones seems to me the most obvious. But also, this war isn't over by any means, it's got some way to go, unfortunately. So anyway what I want to say now is preliminary, we will have to wait until we've got a better sense of what happened, and we've also got to be aware that it goes through stages and what one thinks are the lessons, what one thinks stand out at particular stages, don't necessarily stick out in the future.

Let me start by giving an example of that, which is after the Russian annexation of Crimea and the development of the conflict in the Donbas in 2014, and a lot of what was going on around that, including cyber-attacks, the various information campaigns the Russians were winning, well not winning, were running. The idea of hybrid war took place, and if you look at much of the literature on warfare from 2014 onwards this idea of hybrid war is very much to the fore. The origin of this, the origin of the term, in fact, goes back to the Israeli campaign in Lebanon in 2006, or the Hezbollah campaign against Israel more like it, when it was seen the different forms of warfare could coexist at the same time. This was not a surprise, it often happened, but what did happen with Russia and Ukraine is Garrett Gerasimov, the general who's still in charge of the Russian Armed Forces, had given a speech in which he seemed to be talking about what we understand as hybrid war.

A good friend of mine, Mark Galeotti, decided to turn this into a doctrine, something which he bitterly regretted afterwards because he decided this wasn't actually what had happened. But for a while everybody talked about hybrid war as, essentially the idea of hybrid war, which was being waged against us, it wasn't very hybrid for the Ukrainians, was about undermining society, things that in the past would have been called sabotage or subversion, or propaganda, but this time facilitated through the internet, through modern media, social media, and so on. So that hybrid war became a thing, the European Union sort of adopted it, so when in Belarus, when the Belarusians were trying to bring migrants into Belarus in order to push them into Poland, this was described as hybrid warfare. The better way of talking about it, but if you read lots of books prior to the full-scale invasion, this was seen as the future of war, because it was seen as a way by which you could operate in this sort of grey area between peace and war, without risking the escalation to full-scale war. Well, people don't talk about hybrid warfare much anymore, because the warfare that we're seeing in Ukraine has not got many hybrid elements, it's a pretty full-on war.



I indeed the elements that we thought that were hybrid, cyber, and information campaigns, have not been that important. Cyber, the Russians tried cyber attacks right at the start of the war, they were very intensive, probably the most intensive ever attempted, but they didn't work because or there were remedies found, and this was because a number of companies, Microsoft, Starling one has to say, came in and rescued the situation. So though we were expecting disruption of network communications in Ukraine right at the start, they didn't happen, indeed the Russians found themselves using Ukrainian communications because they didn't bring their own with them, and of course, this is why they suffered some awkward losses of commanders early on, because it was easier to pinpoint where they were. Equally with the information campaigns, great activity on social media and elsewhere, but if you look at the effects, pretty marginal, the most important effects of these campaigns are in Russia. I mean they convince themselves, but they have had limited effect in convincing people in the West. They're more effective in, I hate the term but we'll use it for simplicity, the Global South, because these campaigns can work when they're playing on pre-existing doubts and divisions, but they don't create the divisions in themselves.

So the elements that we were sort of expecting to be really important, turned out not to be important, and instead, we had a war that turned out to be pretty basic in its methodology, elemental even, with the temptation to refer back to the Great War when you look at the trench warfare and the artillery barrages. In fact, the war in Ukraine from 2014 was always an artillery war. In the Donbas, it was always an artillery war, and most modern wars are artillery wars, with Isis or wherever. The part of the mythology of modern warfare is it's all about manoeuvre and as we've discovered in Ukraine, manoeuvre is very difficult, but artillery, that keeps on going.

Now to frame there for the way that I find it interesting to talk about the war, I think it's useful to look at two traditions, one that we now associate with the West and the other that we associate with Russia, they may overlap to a degree. The one we associate with the West, which is just being followed by Ukraine, is a rather classical approach to warfare. Warfare should be seen as a battle, as a contest between regular armies. It should not involve civilians. It should not be directed against civilians, but if you can win a decisive battle, by defeating your opponents, then that should settle the matter so that the key contest is between armies and navies, Air Forces.

The alternative approach, which we can associate with Russia, is what I'd call a total war approach. Now going back to the interwar years and the Second World War and onto the nuclear age, this was seen as the age of total war, because the idea that you could separate off the armed forces from the rest of society seemed to be obsolete. This was largely because of air power, it was possible to attack civilians and cities, and there all sorts of reasons developed as to why this could be a good idea. First, because the munitions

factories had workers, didn't that make them a legitimate target? Secondly, because the morale of the population seemed to be an appropriate target. Soldiers were disciplined, and knew how to take fire, but how could you expect civilians to take fire in the same way? So leading up to the Second World War, you have an assumption of panic and emotion shaping the way that a war develops, because of attacks on civilians. Look at the way, look at H.G Wells' books or something like that.

Now after the Second World War, total war was raised to the next level with nuclear weapons, but of course that had the effect of making the Great Power War look foolish and far too dangerous, so we have what is erroneously called The Long Peace. Erroneous because there's been plenty of wars during this period, but not erroneous when you look at the Great Power War. There hasn't been World War III, which is what people were expecting almost from the end of World War II. We haven't had the next in the series. So nuclear weapons seemed to play a role in dampening down the urges to war, making the major powers cautious and circumspect. And this is still working, the reason why we're not fighting side by side with the Ukrainians and while the Americans are still being very cautious in what some of the things they hand over, is because we don't want a nuclear war. Equally, the reason why Russia has attacked its neighbours who are not members of NATO but not those who are members of NATO is because they don't want a nuclear war either. So nuclear war still plays an important role in this context, containing it in some ways, although they're not being used. And I think that's why they haven't been used because I think nuclear weapons serve Putin's purposes quite well at the moment, because once he does use them then all bets are off, and it's not clear what actually he could gain within this particular conflict by using them, because there's plenty of means of escalation as he's demonstrated already.

So the urge to total war seemed to be limited by the fact that it went to an extreme, that it just went too far. It was one thing to have the Blitz and Hamburg and Dresden and Tokyo and so on, but after that, it was too far, too much. Math has been an influential factor in international affairs ever since. Furthermore, when those who were looking back at the Second World War considered the impact of the great Air Raids of the period, they cast out on whether they had any strategic value at all, because even if you batter the populations, if they, turn out as it did, that they can absorb the pain, that they can cope, that they become resilient, and if even if they feel miserable and demoralised if they can't do very much about it because the political means of changing their government's policy aren't there for them, which is certainly the case in Nazi Germany, then in fact what you've done is kill a lot of people, and destroy a lot of buildings, without having achieved very much. Now there was a qualification to this, which is you can attack military-related infrastructure, energy systems, transport systems, and so on, and if you have great accuracy then you can do that as the Americans did for example in the Desert Storm and say this is still about affecting the battlefield. But there's a line there, and the Russians have shown in the wars that they fought, and to Putin in Chechnya and Syria, they're not very careful with civilian life. The progeny in Chechnya was bombed to smithereens some time ago. So that has been the two distinct ways of fighting.

Obviously, the Ukrainians have got no interest in fighting on their territory in that way and until recently they didn't really seem to have very many means of challenging Russian territory. What's interesting, in recent months, is the increasing use of drones in particular, but also missiles now, to attack targets either within Russia or within occupied Crimea and particularly recently Sevastopol where the naval ships have been attacked. I'll come back to that in a moment. So, because Ukraine is seeking to liberate its territory and its territory has been battered enough already, it wishes to see, to stay with the Western model, and of course that's the model with which we're comfortable because it's force on force, it's encouraging armies to win battles and, in the hope, as you liberate territory, that's going to make the difference. But it's difficult, and this is where people are, I think at this stage of the war, realising some things about contemporary warfare that are worth keeping in mind.

Now the first thing to note and why it's difficult to draw too many lessons from this, is the limited air power available to Ukraine. Now without it, they've done pretty well dealing with Russian air power, but an American campaign, a NATO campaign, in these circumstances would be dominated in the first instance by airpower, it's not in this case. Secondly, in these circumstances what one sees is the strength of defence. This has been true right from the start, not only in the defence that the Ukrainians were able to mount on the first days of the war. By and large, only where defences are thin or weak, has territory been taken. This was true of where the Russians made progress in the first days of the war, in the South, it's in the East, where the Ukrainians made progress a year ago in Kharkiv, where they had a successful offensive and liberated quite a bit of territory. But if you look at all the Russian offensives, which since the early days of the war have achieved very little, by and large, ruined cities, and more recently Bakhmut, which they may lose again.

These are hard grinding, gruelling, attritional battles, which they fought in the way which their Soviet predecessors would have fought, using infantry in a sense to help locate the enemy. So there's a concept of

dispensable infantry, which is pretty grim for that to you, to be followed by artillery barrages. It's not a very clever approach, and the West has recoiled from that because in the way that the West has talked about the war over the last 20 years or so, well longer than that, we stress manoeuvre, that's how we do it. Not attritional methods, which is just trading far apart, we wish to do it by manoeuvre. And that's why there was a degree of interest and excitement earlier in the year as Ukraine started to be given the means of manoeuvre with tanks, infantry, fighting vehicles, and so on. Well, what it turns out is manoeuvre is difficult, which is not a surprise. Against minefields, tanks can soon run into trouble. When you have a totally transparent battlefield as we almost are having now, the enemy can see you coming, and when they can see you coming, if they've got any systems of any accuracy, they can take you out.

Now the Russians have suffered from this probably more than the Ukrainians, but it's a feature of the war and it has shaped tactics so that all the tanks and infantry fighting vehicles, or some of them, were lost in the first days of this counter-offensive. A lot of them are still there ready to go, because it hasn't been sensible yet to put them into battle. The Ukrainians are making progress through dismounted infantry, so that's mail-making progress, but it's difficult and slow, and therefore the hopeful battlefield victory is some distance away. It's not that progress can't be made, it's not that territory can't be liberated, but it's slow. By this means that these things can change very quickly as they did with Kharkiv last year, because an army that suddenly realises that it's about to be breached can break very quickly, which is what happened, but until that point, it's very difficult.

So what that of the total war side of things, in a year ago, just over a year, just under a year ago, when after the Kharkiv offensive, which was the moment when a sensible strategic actor would have decided to cut their losses, Putin doubled down. He did a number of things, he went to full mobilisation so they could plug in the gaps with more troops, and he went to, he upped his political objectives. Normally in these circumstances, the sensible thing to do is to scale down your objectives, as he had done in March after the failure to take Kiev. It seemed to suggest he was only interested in Donbas then, but because now he was under pressure from the ultra-nationalists, who were very cross with him for losing the best chance they had to take Ukraine, he moved to the fake referendums and annexation of the four provinces Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, in addition to Crimea, which he had already taken, to become part of the Russian Federation, and every time somebody says let's have a diplomatic solution, this now is in the way. They've got to change their constitution to have a peace settlement now, because and every time you will see when they talk about diplomacy Ukrainians rush, and the West is asked to accept the new realities, which obviously they can't do and won't do.

And then the other thing he did was to appoint General Surovikin to be the overall commander, and Surovikin's strategy, which he laid out very clearly, initially was to shore up Ukrainian, the Russian defensive lines, using the new recruits, and to mount a campaign against Ukrainians critical infrastructure using drones and missiles and so on. His background is Aerospace so that's what they began to do, and this was the most efficiently organised part of the whole Russian war effort. It went on for months and the Ukrainians coped, but it wasn't always easy, last December it got very close to just losing the electricity group, but they kept it going with a lot of help. It wouldn't surprise me if this starts again, but they have resilience now that they didn't before, they know what to do.

But that wasn't just an add-on to the Russian strategy it was a critical part. Now Surovikin is not only demoted, he's in disgrace because he and Prigozhin were allies. He remained in contact with the Wagner group so after the mutiny in which he gave what looked like a hostage video, pleading with Prigozhin to stop. He wasn't seen for a while now, latest he's been seen in civvies, actually he's been seen in Algeria, so goodness knows what he's doing there. But anyway, he, the most capable general, is out of it and it's worth noting something else about fighting with these sorts of regimes is that when you look at the top, the top people are chosen for their loyalty as much as their competence. Shoigu and Gerasimov, who've been there forever with Putin, are failures. Whatever happens, this is a calamitous way to fight a war, but they're loyal and they won't cause him trouble, whereas you could imagine if someone like Surovikin appeared as the great war hero and won the war, he would be seen as a threat to Putin.

So the total war aspects have become very important, but they haven't worked, again, and other aspects of total war, aspects like the treatment of Ukrainians in occupied areas, have just made the Ukraine again, another argument against negotiation is why do we hand over territory to people who commit atrocities on that territory. So all of that has created unity in Ukraine, despite just how difficult the situation is, which they don't really have a choice, whatever they do, whatever we do, they'll keep going.

A couple of final points on the politics of the war, because the politics of war is as important as what's going on with the weaponry. The first day of the war I think decided much of what happened afterward, and it could have gone differently, it really is important to note that the Ukrainian defence of the Hostomel airport just outside Kyiv was not a simple matter and was not foreordained. They were, got good intelligence, they had units that weren't, were almost spontaneously mobilizing themselves to get there to deal with the threat. I know it was a very brave operation but as soon as Russian paratroopers couldn't land in that airport, much of the immediate threat to Kyiv was eased, but also Zelensky stayed.

The importance of Zelensky's first not being killed or captured, which was a key part of the Russian plan, they relied too much on their on FSB to have sorted out Ukrainian resistance before the troops arrived and in that, they failed. The fact that Zelensky was not caught or killed, the fact that he could go on television and still talk to his people, the fact that he said he was staying, and in that other part of that famous message "I don't need a ride I need ammunition" he established what he needed and what he wanted from us and from others and that led I think to the final point. What Ukraine is doing is remarkable, but they're doing it with a lot of support, and it couldn't just, they would fight.

Many of us, when we were looking at the prospective war before it started, assumed Putin was crazy to start a war like this, not because we thought they would have trouble in battle, but because you can't occupy a country of that size, of that population, with a record of ready to take on invaders and oppressors. So they would have fought under any circumstance, we didn't necessarily expect the war to go, take the form it has taken. But it's the fact that it has taken this form has meant that external support has been absolutely crucial, and what we've seen as a result is that the loss of Russian forces has turned them into much more of a sort of 20th-century army, fighting in 20th-century ways, while Ukraine is slowly turning into the 21st-century army, with more modern equipment, all of it is still late 20th-century equipment but it's more modern than quite a lot of the stuff the Russians are using.

So how does it end? I don't know, because it's not evenly balanced, there are lots of different things going on, but it's difficult, and I, my view is it's wise to assume quick victories, knockout blows, I don't think that even if the Ukrainians take more territory, and I think they probably will over the coming weeks, we have to get ourselves in a mentality that this will go on. Why is that a sensible Russian leader would have cut their losses, a sensible Russian leader would be proposing a ceasefire now, because then they would have some territory to show for it. If they could do it they'd certainly put Zelensky in a difficult position, but that's not what Putin wants, he wants more Ukrainian territory and he's waiting for the next American election. He's made that very clear in all of his stranger speeches, but he talked about political instability in the U.S. how Trump is being persecuted, and so on. His hope is that by the end of next year, the U.S. will have a new administration, and maybe it will, that's not under our control, but in the meantime, I think we have to keep, we have to be aware that it's not actually that difficult for Europe and North America to keep Ukraine going. It's a challenge for Ukraine with manpower and so on but in terms of our budget it's perfectly doable and it's important that we do.

The other thing that Ukraine can do is, which is why I think the attacks on Sevastopol last week, which if you've noticed were missiles, possibly UK Storm Shadows, knocking out ships including a submarine, in this really important port, is this really important port was at the heart of this of the whole issue in 2014. There are a number of reasons why Putin wanted Crimea, I mean most Russians never felt Ukraine should have had it in the first place, it was a whim of Khrushchev in 1954 that it got handed over when he was trying to cultivate the Ukrainian Communist Party, it fitted in with their narrative about Russian language speakers being unhappy with the change of government in Kyiv, but as a Sevastopol this base on the edge of the of the peninsula, which was actually covered by a separate treaty but never minds, that was one of the reasons why they wanted to annex Crimea, to keep Crimea safe for Russia. And here it is showing it's not safe for Russia, that it's vulnerable. I think things like this undermine and eat away at Russian confidence about where the war is going, but I don't know how this ends, because it depends on decisions being made in the Kremlin, we have to wait and see what happens.

[@LawDavF](https://twitter.com/LawDavF)'s lecture on 'What does the Russo-Ukraine War Tell Us about Modern Warfare' yesterday provided a timely & insightful intervention into the war in Ukraine, offering a comprehensive & nuanced analysis of its causes, consequences, & implications for the future of warfare. [pic.twitter.com/HY4tTVr11f](https://pic.twitter.com/HY4tTVr11f)

# What next for the South Caucasus and the international order now the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic no longer exists? (from October 2023)

## Dr Carol Weaver

A recent statement from the United Nations *Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs* says: “Azerbaijan’s definitive victory over local security forces in *Nagorno-Karabakh* shifted the power balance in the volatile South Caucasus, leaving residents uncertain of their future and international actors jostling to shape the emerging regional order.”

This statement is not strong enough. Due to blockades, starvation, military attacks and enforced negotiations the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (N-K), known as Artsakh by Armenians, no longer exists. Almost all the surviving population has fled to Armenia in terror. Most of the world had expressed concern but done nothing, including Russia which had ‘peacekeepers’ there.

So what next? Were there other geopolitical reasons for the attack and ‘ethnic cleansing’ by the Azerbaijani forces in the last few weeks? NATO member Turkey is Azerbaijan’s main backer, and it is no secret that it wants trade access through Christian Armenia and the wider Karabakh region to the other ‘Turkic’ nations in Central Asia, right up to the borders of China. A transport route over Armenian land might be agreed between all parties but there seems to be a desire for a ‘corridor’ with Armenia having no rights over it. The main country opposing this, other than Armenia, is Iran as it would probably be situated along its borders.

Russia might see this ‘Zangezur’ corridor as a way to keep its forces in the region after it leaves N-K, as long as it is the designated ‘peacekeeper’. The Russians want influence over all the governments and to try to prevent Armenia and Georgia from becoming closer to the EU which currently has a civilian border mission in Armenia where Azerbaijan has been making incursions.

China might endorse a ‘Middle Corridor’ new silk route from the far east to Europe, bypassing both Russia and the US Navy.

### **RIP Nagorno-Karabakh**

From before the Roman Empire, Armenians lived in the region from Damascus to the Mediterranean, to the Black Sea and across the Caucasus to the Caspian Sea. They became some of the earliest Christians. Armenia was one of the world’s oldest civilisations with Mount Ararat and Lake Van at its heart (both are now in modern day Turkey). But then came the Romans, the Persians, the Mongols and others. Then later came the Ottoman Empire and later still the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union.

During the time of the Soviet Union, Nagorno-Karabakh was an autonomous oblast within the republic of Azerbaijan. Its large majority was ethnic Armenian, with Azerbaijanis in the Shusha region where Armenians had earlier been expelled. When the USSR broke up, autonomous regions including N-K and Abkhazia asked for independence but were denied it. New wars broke out at a similar time to the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s. Armenia won the war with Azerbaijan and retained control not just of Nagorno-Karabakh (disputed territory) but also the larger surrounding territory of Karabakh between N-K and the republic of Armenia (occupied territories).

Over the decades many massacres took place in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh including at Sumgait and Khojaly. Most Azerbaijanis fled from N-K in the 90s and became known as IDPs (internally displaced persons) living nearby to N-K though young people often travelled to work in Baku and overseas.

A process known as the OSCE Minsk Process, with co-chairs from Russia, the US and France, came close to a peace agreement between the two states but there was always some point of disagreement to prevent a solution. President Aliyev of Azerbaijan consolidated his power and corrupt autocracy by bringing the people together in hatred of Armenians and determination to retrieve the whole of its now internationally recognised territory. Prime Ministers of Armenia including those who fought in the 1990s war became complacent over the occupied territories which gave easy access to N-K. Russian peacekeepers were posted there giving Russia power over both Azerbaijan and Armenia.



The bloody war in 2020 backed by Turkey recovered the occupied territories and captured the southern areas of N-K where most of the Azerbaijani IDPs had lived. It ended with the Minsk format collapsing and a new trilateral agreement that included free access between N-K and Armenia via the Lachin corridor. The Russian peacekeepers were to be deployed along the line of contact and the corridor until at least 2025.

At the end of 2022 Azerbaijan broke the terms of the agreement and blocked the corridor allowing only the Russians and the international Red Cross access. The world sat by as the population went without enough food, electricity, gas or medical treatment. Then on 19 September 2023, Azerbaijan launched a military offensive into N-K causing many deaths and injuries including those of children, with some reports of extreme brutality. Over 100,000 people have now fled into Armenia via the newly opened Lachin corridor, leaving their homes and belongings behind. N-K officials were left with little choice but to dissolve Nagorno-Karabakh as from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024.

### **What now?**

Now we need to ask what the inheritors of all those empires want with the much-reduced-in-size-through-the-ages Armenia. What does Azerbaijan want? What does Russia want? What does Turkey want? Perhaps we already know what the West wants from oil-rich Azerbaijan.

#### **Republic**

Azerbaijan wants Armenian soldiers gone. They are now. Azerbaijan wants the N-K Republic gone. It is now. Azerbaijan wants the Russian military out. They will be soon, but Putin will still want power over the country including selling it Russian gas and oil so it can sell its own elsewhere. Russia also wants power over the Armenian government which is moving towards the West. It has troops and a base in Armenia due to it being a member of the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization). This may end if PM Pashinyan remains so Russia would like regime-change in Armenia where it is encouraging the Armenian citizens who are demanding their PM stand down due to lack of action over N-K.

Azerbaijan also has its eye on Armenian lands. The 2020 agreement states that Armenia will allow transport between Azerbaijan's western region of Nakhchivan and its main territories but, according to Radio Free Europe, Aliyev has said, 'The Zangezur Corridor is a historical necessity' and 'It will happen whether Armenia wants it or not' which implies a threat if it does not get a guaranteed corridor without Armenian control.

Turkey and Armenia should soon have an open border due to the N-K problem 'being resolved' but Turkey also wants a guaranteed uninterrupted corridor through Armenia to create access eastwards to Central Asia and beyond. This could cut off Armenia from its own southern border and trade with Iran.

Iran does not want to be cut off from Armenia and Europe, and there are other serious tensions between Azerbaijan and Iran, including that Iran is deeply unhappy about its enemy Israel supplying weapons to Baku. This is regarded as a security threat and there are fears that Israel could use Azerbaijan as a base to attack Iran.

India is another actor which does not particularly want a Turkic corridor up to Pakistan's borders, so it seems that both India and Iran want to support Armenia whilst Armenia looks to the West, which seems half-hearted at best and suffering from 'Ukraine fatigue'.

Whilst those of us that understand the region have been predicting what would happen for a long time, the West has found it convenient to believe the lies told by Aliyev and hope for peace. According to expert Tom de Waal, Baku pivoted towards Moscow whilst giving reassurances to Western partners, including U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and the president of the European Council, Charles Michel, that he would not use force, before he went ahead and did so anyway.

Carey Cavanaugh, a former ambassador to the now dead Minsk process, says there could have been a very different diplomatic outcome. There was no need for Azerbaijan to resort to violence again, especially when they gave assurances they would not. Aliyev grabbed an opportunity whilst no one was doing anything to stop him. Sanctions were not taken because outside parties thought there would be a solution. Aliyev felt there would be few repercussions for his actions. Minsk was a failure of modern mediation.

The leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia were expected to meet with the EU, France and Germany on October 5<sup>th</sup> in Spain at a European Political Community event. Azerbaijan demanded that the Turkish president also be included but Erdoğan did not attend due to 'having a cold'. Aliyev then also declined,

leaving Pashinyan to attend alone and explore a closer relationship with the EU. On the same day the European Parliament issued a resolution condemning the actions of Azerbaijan.

We need to ask now if the recent South Caucasus and Israel / Gaza wars and disputes might lead to even greater conflicts in the region.

**Dr. Carol Weaver**

*Dr. Weaver's article was written on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and does not report on events since that date. The UN reference below has a number of links to more recent articles. Laurence Broers wrote on the South Caucasus earlier in interLib 2023-05, which predates these events.*

## References

Carey Cavanaugh interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIP7DM74jCs>

Tom de Waal interview: <https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/90657>

Radio Free Europe:

<https://www.rferl.org/a/azerbaijan-armenia-negotiations-zangezur-corridor/32613002.html>

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA):

<https://reliefweb.int/report/armenia/responding-humanitarian-catastrophe-nagorno-karabakh>

VOA: <https://www.voanews.com/a/iran-says-it-opposes-geopolitical-changes-in-caucasus/7293664.html>



# When Does a Muslim Life Matter?

## Rebecca Tinsley

It is rare that the leaders of the global East, West, North and South act in harmony. Yet, the Israel-Hamas conflict has produced a rare phenomenon: a display of shared hypocrisy.

For instance, presidents, princes, and prime ministers of Muslim-majority nations have been silent about the persecution of millions of Muslim Uighurs in China, the Muslim Rohingya in Myanmar, 200 million Muslims marginalized by the Hindu nationalist Indian government, and the slaughter of thousands of Muslim civilians in Yemen. Yet these same leaders now find their voices in condemning Israel on a regular basis and particularly loudly since October 7<sup>th</sup> when the latest horror erupted in the Holy Land.

Students and professors at Western universities who gave little thought to the persecuted minorities mentioned above, or the estimated 500,000 civilian deaths in the Tigray region of Ethiopia in 2022, are now demonstrating about the appalling and pointless suffering in Gaza.

The African elite which was silent throughout the Rwandan genocide and remains unmoved by the recent surge in violence in the Sahel, the destitution of its own citizens, millions of people dead in the Congo, or climate change. Yet, it is suddenly animated in standing up for the Palestinians.

Meanwhile, Western leaders who claim to defend vaguely articulated “international humanitarian law” (the Geneva conventions, presumably) and human rights norms have tied themselves in pretzel-like knots, embracing Israel after Hamas’s slaughter of 1,700 Israeli civilians, and then squirming in discomfort as Israel responds with disproportionate force in Gaza. (Those with long memories will recall that, for the West, a Bosnian Muslim life was not worth the same as a Christian Ukrainian one, and neither wretched, pulverized nationality deserves the attention given to the tragic disappearance of a little girl called Madeleine McCann in Portugal).

During the Syrian civil war, three million Muslim refugees fled to Turkey, where they remain, their lives in limbo, while 660,000 are still in miserable conditions in Jordan. Saudi Arabia has a million large, luxurious tents in storage for use during the annual haj. Yet, the vast, empty, wealthy Kingdom eventually and reluctantly accepted only 500,000 Syrian refugees. Saudi’s current expressions of anger at the fate of the Palestinians is purely performative, in common with so many other Muslim leaders. Over the years, corrupt, incompetent and brutal Arab and Muslim leaders have leveraged the plight of the Palestinians to distract their own disgruntled citizens and subjects when they become restless.

Some lives matter less than others.

This selective outrage is hard to bear if you happen to be in a persecuted minority fighting for survival away from media attention. It is also bewildering if you are a citizen of Sudan, where a nation of 45 million people is on the point of collapse, thanks to two battling groups of warlords with guns, intent on control of the country’s resources.

The moment the last white person was evacuated from Khartoum in April 2023, when war began, almost all international coverage of the conflict ceased. Since then, the ethnic cleansing and murder of Black African Sudanese in Darfur by Arab Sudanese has been worse than it was during the Darfur Genocide (2003-5). Mass graves, systematic rape, the destruction of food and water sources, bodies used as speed bumps, the looting of hospitals and the emptying of entire towns goes unreported. French troops are stationed in Chad, 26 kms from El Geneina, a city of half a million Darfuris where it is thought 10,000 Black Africans have been killed, yet there was no suggestion the French might bring humanitarian aid, let alone scare off the marauding Arab paramilitaries (who would run away at the first sight of a professional army).

Khartoum, a city of six million people, is being destroyed as the Sudanese Army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF, the rebranded Janjaweed who committed genocide in Darfur) slug it out. Both are ethnically Arab and Muslim, although these terms are almost meaningless because of centuries of intermarriage with Sudan’s Black African groups. Identity and prejudice are in the eye of the beholder.

Both military entities have much in common: they want to prevent civilians ruling Sudan, they both wish to avoid responsibility at the ICC where some of their members are indicted for genocide in Darfur in the 2000s, and they both control massive financial networks based on corruption and ripping off the nation's resources. Both also register their commercial assets in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, as yet untouched by Western sanctions.

In a typical Khartoum street of 50 homes, only four are left habitable. The Army bombs indiscriminately, while the RSF fights neighbourhood by neighbourhood, seizing hostages, stealing their possessions, killing and raping. At least seven million Sudanese have fled so far, and those with money have made the hazardous journey to neighbouring countries. Those civilians who have stayed in Khartoum have established a remarkable nexus of resistance committees, performing basic surgery in people's living rooms, and distributing aid to those in need.

Who has geopolitical importance?

The argument goes that Sudan doesn't matter, whereas the Middle East is geopolitically strategic. Hence the scramble by Biden, the EU, and self-important politicians like Sunak and Starmer to embrace Israel (although no one in the Middle East cares what Britain thinks). At the same time, there is a chorus of denunciation of "the Zionist entity" by Arab rulers who were quietly mending fences with Netanyahu in an effort to isolate Iran. The Middle East is strategically important because of oil, the menace of Iran, the vulnerability of the Suez Canal through which massive amounts of the world's trade sails, and the possibility that oil-rich Gulf Arabs might start buying all their weapons from Russia, China and Turkey, and stop purchasing them from the US, UK and France (and cease laundering their money in the West, of course).

Yet, Sudan also has geopolitical importance: it allowed the Russians to build a military base at Port Sudan, from which Putin could blockade the Suez Canal, if he chose to. Imagine in scenario in which China was menacing or even invading Taiwan. The US and other Western powers might blockade China in retaliation. Putin could then call the West's bluff, supporting his friend President Xi by closing the Suez Canal. Sudanese refugees could jeopardize politics in Egypt and in Europe, where many will try to flee.

The Sudanese Armed Forces are aligned to Iran, their fellow Islamists. For years, Sudan has been an academy of terrorism, exporting jihadists, surely perceived as a threat by the West. Their enemy, the Rapid Support Forces work closely with the Wagner Group, helping Russia bypass sanctions by shipping them billions of dollars' worth of gold each year. Yet, the ongoing conflict in Sudan rates almost no sustained attention from the international community. The UK (the former colonial power) recently decided not to reappoint its special envoy to the country, although the Africa Minister, Andrew Mitchell, is a veteran of the campaign to highlight the horrors of the Darfur genocide, and is the lone voice of concern in the government.

Why isn't the Muslim world concerned about Sudan?

The indifference of the world's Muslim leaders to the suffering of Sudan's largely Muslim population is not new. If we are playing the numbers game, Sudan wins hands down against Palestine. In Darfur, 500,000 were killed between 2003-2007. When the Islamist regime tried to Arabize and Islamize the Black Africans in the southern part of Sudan, the UN estimates two million died (they eventually became South Sudan, a disaster story in its own right).

When I speak at college or civic groups in the West about Sudan, there is always someone in the audience who is furious that I am not talking about "all the dead Palestinian children" instead of raped and mutilated Sudanese women. The long-term suffering of the Palestinians and Hamas's attack on Israeli civilians on October 7<sup>th</sup> are appalling, but in no way do the numbers compare to the wholesale slaughter in Sudan that has gone on since the military coup in 1989 that brought Islamists to power. And yet, the fate of those Sudanese feature in the sidebar of newspapers, and hardly at all on TV news reports.

In 2004, an Arab League Commission of Inquiry into the Darfur genocide condemned attacks on civilians as "massive violations of human rights." However, the statement was quickly removed from the League's website.

Commentators blamed "solidarity" and fear of giving credence to Zionists, much as some Western academics refrained from criticising Khartoum for fear of appearing anti-Muslim or anti-Arab. According to Sudanese democracy activist Magdy el-Baghdadi, "Darfuris are simply the wrong kind of Muslims because they are black and African."

For the academic, Moses Eebe Ochunu, “Arabs still generally regard the Darfur genocide as a public relations disaster rather than as a barbaric racist war against black people.” Egyptian analyst Gehad Auda contends, “Arabs always condemn Israel because it rejects UN resolutions and its army collaborates with settlers who want to take land away from their rightful owners. Yet that is exactly what is going on in Sudan right now.”

Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan supported fellow Islamist leader, Sudan’s then president Field Marshall Bashir, saying, “No Muslim could perpetrate a genocide. It is not possible for a Muslim to commit genocide.”

However, Black African intellectuals challenge the widely held notion that because of Arab exceptionalism, racism does not exist in Arab society. Toyin Falola cites, “The language of denial and obfuscation that has become the defining feature of Arab responses to charges of racism against blacks.” Arab claims that they are always victims “fails to explain why Arab media regularly refer to President Barack Obama as “N\*\*\*\*\*r Obama.” Osama bin Laden admitted, “When an Arab looks at a black African, he sees a slave.”

What can be done?

The Sudan war will continue while both sides receive military support from abroad. Cutting off its supplies could be achieved by forcing the Egyptians to stop arming the Sudanese Armed Forces, and preventing the UAE from shipping arms to the Rapid Support Forces via Chad. It would also help to freeze the overseas assets of both military groups, and to indict their leaders for war crimes. But all of this requires the political will of the international community, and that is unlikely to manifest itself anytime soon.

In the meantime, Waging Peace, the NGO I founded in 2004, is helping Sudanese refugees who arrive in the UK. Any donation is greatly appreciated. Please visit [www.WagingPeace.info](http://www.WagingPeace.info) to help us. Thank you.

**Rebecca Tinsley.**

Rebecca Tinsley is Director of Waging Peace,

## **“We want to see a multi-party democracy in Cambodia”**

Liberal International welcomed former Cambodian freedom fighter and leader of the Khmer Movement for Democracy (KMD) Mu Sochua to its headquarters in London this week.

Former parliamentarian and political prisoner, Mu Sochua, introduced the KMD and the work the movement is pursuing for the future development of democracy in Cambodia during meetings with LI Vice President, Dr Phillip Bennion and ALDE Vice President, Baroness Brinton together with LI Secretary General, William Townsend and Human Rights Programme Officer, Mariam Ghibradze.

### **“It’s really important that the rest of the world hears and understands what’s happening [in Cambodia]” – Baroness Brinton**

Setting out the KMD’s initiatives to empower and mobilise Cambodian citizens to participate in the democratic movement and rescue Cambodia from the tyranny of the Hun dynasty that has controlled the country for more than three decades, Mu Sochua explained that over three million Cambodians now live in exile or are living abroad.

With so many marginalised by the anti-democratic system put in place by former Prime Minister Hun Sen and now presided over by his son, Prime Minister Hun Manet, LI pledged to continue to work bilaterally and call for action and highlight the case of Cambodia on an international level at the United Nations and to inform national policies by connecting leading human rights figures with prominent organisations including Chatham House and Amnesty.

The liberals also discussed the ways in which LI and its partners in Europe can support the fight for democracy in Cambodia and raise the profile of opposition figures including recently elected Senator and CALD Chair, Mardi Seng, and imprisoned political rights activist Theary Seng.

16.4.2024

# **HAMAS' escalation is a consequence of valuing normalization over peace.**

## **Mohammed Nossier**

Peace is a complex mission to achieve! Placing a cherry on top of a fragile foundation might make the plate look more appetizing, but it doesn't make it nutritious. This is the result of a Middle East peace process that has prioritized the fantasy of normalization between a few Arab nations and Israel at the expense of a substantive peace between Israel and Palestine. The Abraham Accord, which Western nations hold in high regard, might have increased the popularity of the American president and the Israeli prime minister at the time but did nothing to address the primary crisis.

The debate over whether HAMAS is a resistance group or a terrorist organization is completely irrelevant. The meaningful issue is: will the present crisis produce fewer or more Palestinians who are willing to offer their lives for their country – whether or not they're called martyrs or terrorists? I trust that the number will increase after HAMAS' attack on October 7<sup>th</sup>, followed by the intense and disproportional assault of the Israeli army on Gaza. Killing innocent civilians is a crime that has no justification, whether committed by HAMAS or Israel.

The October 7<sup>th</sup> escalation is a consequence of believing that the peace process is a dead end and that violence is the only method that could return Palestinian land. Defining the attackers as terrorists is only useful to sustain the war. Pursuing peace needs to address the conflict's motivation. Getting rid of HAMAS will result in either the emergence of new organizations or individuals that will carry out the same mission. Both scenarios are worse than the existence of HAMAS, whose present leaders can be negotiated with.

Western countries frequently turn a blind eye to Israel's practices, which prompts the Israeli government to exercise the least amount of restraint. Israel is a democratic country with the freedom to use brutal force against the Palestinians and to expand its settlements on Palestinian land. Meanwhile, frustrated Palestinian citizens living in miserable condition resort to violence that is perceived by the West as terrorism.

Western nations tend to blame the Palestinians for their lack of democracy and the polarization between Fatah and HAMAS for not realizing peace. However, there is no single democratic Arab nation either, so we shouldn't burden an occupied nation with expectations we don't hold others to. While neither HAMAS or Fatah have provided Palestinians their rights, HAMAS has the advantage of being labeled as a resistance organization, and Fatah is known to be a corrupt government.

Israel's security is based on two axes: technology and agreements with a few Arab nations that negotiated by their rulers and are not reflective of public opinion. Both have proven to be very fragile.

Israel's security could be better and permanently fulfilled by a true peace agreement in which the Palestinian state and citizens will be responsible for ensuring Israel's security and, in return, Israel will be obliged to offer Palestinian citizens a dignified living condition in their own state.

Top-down negotiations between official representatives from Israel and Palestine have come no closer to a true peace agreement. Instead, a bottom-up approach featuring the participation of Israeli and Palestinian scholars, a large number of whom are living in Western countries, should be persuaded to articulate a draft peace plan.

Civilians of both nations and regional influential nations should advocate for and adopt this draft until a final version is realized and can be voted on by the citizens of both nations.

Then, the two governments can negotiate based on this final draft. Meanwhile, let's marginalize the "usual suspects" of diplomats and politicians who have been involved in mediating between the two nations and failed to bring results, regardless of their honorability or intelligence. They could be replaced by people who have successfully managed to solve another similar conflict, such as in North Ireland and South Africa.

We should abandon the counterproductive negative phrases that are produced by extremists from either side, such as when Israelis call Palestinians animals that should be killed, or when Palestinians say Israelis should be thrown into the sea.

Additionally, the substantial funds that the United States provides Israel for security purposes should be reallocated to support this mission; Israel won't need it if a functional peace agreement is reached.

What really matters is that Arab and Israeli citizens accept one another, which is not the case presently, regardless of the fantasy of normalization between a number of Arab governments and Israel. Bypassing Arab citizens, who are also dissatisfied with the lack of freedom, poverty, and justice in their countries, will always encourage them to consider violence; peace requires courage and fundamentals that shouldn't be missed.

***Mohammed Nossier.***

*Mohammed Nossier is an Egyptian liberal politician who advocates for advancing political participation and economic freedom.*

## **A BNO's view of Bournemouth and Beyond.**

### **Matthias W**

Amid the latest arrest of a British firm's senior executives in China, what I've learned from my first conference from a new BNO immigrant's point of view.

The last day of our LibDem conference on Tue 26<sup>th</sup> Sep at the beautiful coastal town Bournemouth, it also marked the 1000<sup>th</sup> day in prison of the Hong Kong industrial-turned-fast fashioned-turned-media tycoon Jimmy Lai. I still recalled the disappointment that the China-UK relation wasn't selected as the emergency motion on that exact day as that would be the perfect timing to submit my very first speaker card.

Jimmy Lai was almost the only billionaire in Hong Kong who dared to support the pro-democratic protest openly in 2019, who was also the owner/founder of the most influential newspaper 'Apple Daily' with the biggest circulation in Hong Kong at the time, whose editorial stance is of course, pro-democracy and such 'original sin' of him won't be forgiven by CCP. He was a genius entrepreneur with a string of successful businesses. For example, before the word 'fast fashion' invented in the Western World, his fast fashion label 'Giordano' established in the 80s was so successful that even the founder of Uniqlo, Tadashi Yanai, now the richest man in Japan & same age as Jimmy, went to meet Jimmy in Hong Kong to get inspired about the tricks of operation & supply chain how to make it work as the then Uniqlo was still an unknown small business founded in Hiroshima that was in bottleneck to break through. Despite Jimmy is a British citizen, we could hardly hear any Tories' officials (e.g. Cleverly) or media talked about it.

During the conference, I'm so moved about the story of Lynne Featherstone on same sex marriage & I have no idea she is the hero who started it. However, an analogy on this would be Paddy Ashdown – our legendary LibDem leader who was actually the first person who initiated the settlement rights of BNO. However, HK BNO immigrants have no idea about this & they are mostly Tories by default (i.e. I am an outcast), like the Cuban American in a similar sense. After this conference I feel I'm ever more prepared for how to approach my communities with the right message, especially with these 'unsung' heroes & 'unheard' stories for the general public.

Last Fri 20 Oct, 4 senior executives from WPP, a British communication giant, got arrested in Shanghai for suspicion of espionage. Under this backdrop, to fix the inconsistency of Britain's current foreign relation policies such as Sino-UK or EU-UK is more urgent than many would expect. We need more LibDem MPs in the parliament with a clear voice embedded with liberal values to protect UK's Citizen & Business interest & hopefully one day, UK citizen like Jimmy Lai could be released from prison.

***Matthias W***

*Matthias is a new member of Brent LibDems / 1<sup>st</sup> batch of BNO arrivals from Hong Kong*

# Some Cats in Kathmandu

## Wyn Thomas

So, having returned from Nepal, here I am, back in my study catching up with messages and emails. It doesn't take long to get back into it. Although, I must confess, I hardly hit the ground running today! Nonetheless, before I knuckle back down to work and undertake what is required to, hopefully, continue moving forward, I thought I'd try and write an account of my and Sue's trip to Nepal.

Perhaps I should begin by outlining that the original plan involved my waving Sue off at KTM's Tribhuvan International Airport, having spent a fortnight or so together, and travelling alone onto Tibet. But it was not to be. To my initial frustration, the post-Covid return to 8-day packaged visits to Tibet from Kathmandu has proved to be slow. Hence, the required numbers cannot be guaranteed at any given time. Moreover, the considered bureaucratic nightmare of trying to arrange a tourist visa for China (full itinerary expected along with hotel bookings confirmed, etc) rendered this latter option as requiring a degree of effort that I simply did not have the energy for. Hopefully, I/we can undertake the trip at some stage, perhaps for my 60th birthday.



Nevertheless, out of initial disappointment came something entirely enjoyable and uplifting. Our trip to Kathmandu was magical – an adventure guaranteed to inspire memories that Sue and I will treasure throughout our lifetime. Of the many thought-provoking attractions visited and sights enjoyed, the most memorable include the following:

The trip to the Royal Palace. As Sue, along with several other visiting tourists, deposited our bags in an adjoining and secure room, I engaged in a brief conversation with a Nepali soldier who was guarding the entrance to the main gate. As I voiced my

appreciation of the architectural splendour before me, to my surprise, the soldier suddenly said: 'Maoists. Maoists'. My blank and bemused facial expression brought forth a suppressed look of frustration and slight irritation from the soldier. I had wanted to visit the Royal Palace owing to hearing accounts on the BBC news of the horrific event that occurred there some twenty years ago – and the subsequent tide of grief-stricken emotions that washed over the Nepali people: shock, anguish, revulsion, disbelief and denial. During the evening of Friday 1 June 2001, it is alleged that in a hail of bullets, 10 members of Nepal's royal family, including King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya, were gunned down by a deranged, drunken Crown Prince Dipendra, who eventually turned the gun on himself. The real motive behind the massacre may never be known. But it is alleged that Dipendra's murderous alcohol and drug-fuelled rage was prompted by his parents' disapproval of the woman he wanted to marry.

I state that Prince Dipendra's responsibility for the awful deaths is 'alleged' because on returning to our hotel I asked the owner, Soham, who was educated at the University of Kathmandu and the University of Hannover, what he believed transpired. Believing it to be rather a delicate subject, I began by tentatively asking Soham if he considered King Birendra to be a good and respected man. 'Oh yes', Soham affirmed. 'King Birendra was a nice man, who did a lot for the people of Nepal – and they loved him in return'. 'And his son, Prince Dipendra?'. 'Yes, he was nice too. The people of Nepal loved him also'. Whom then did he believe was responsible for the massacre, I enquired. 'Well', Soham replied, 'there are some people who believe the Maoists were responsible. Since 1996, the Maoist communists had been waging its 'People's War' against the military forces of Nepal, seeking to seize political control of the country – which to some degree they ultimately managed to achieve. But I don't believe the Maoists were responsible. It takes a lot to kill a king; they are surrounded by tight security, and the Maoists did not have that degree of power'.



So, if not the Maoists, whom then did he believe had carried out the dreadful attack, and why? 'I believe', Soham responded firmly, 'that China, or India or the CIA was behind it. And not just me, many people in Nepal believe this. As for why: China had a vested interest in destroying all patriotic and democratic forces in Nepal, and seeing my country become weaker and more politically vulnerable. While India and the CIA, fearful that the Maoists would destroy the democratic, constitutional system exercised in Nepal, and destabilise the political make-up of the region, were angry with King Birendra for having refused to mobilise the Nepali Armed Forces to suppress the Maoists – and, for that, they decided he must pay with his life'. I remained silent but considered it an intriguing point of view. A moment or two of quiet contemplation passed before I finally asked Soham, 'But if the security surrounding King Birendra was so rigid, why did it allegedly take some 10 minutes before the king's security detail arrived after the shooting began?'. 'Yes', Soham nodded, affirming his knowledge of this perplexing detail in the frightful story, before adding quietly, 'I don't know'. Given such an entrenched view as to whom Soham considered responsible, and probably owing to the sheer awfulness of the massacre, I felt it futile and, indeed, disrespectful, to raise the matter of Prince Dipendra's alleged heavy propensity towards drug and alcohol abuse. Perhaps, I should have.

The visit to the royal palace was a strange day, indeed. Was Prince Dipendra responsible for the bloodbath, or were global political and security factors at play? I suspect we will never know. It is an awful tale that could have been lifted straight from the pages of a Shakespearean tragedy. But whatever did occur, the sight of those bullet holes in the garden wall, received when Prince Dipendra purportedly turned the gun on himself, will stay with me for a long time.

On Friday 3 November, Sue and me walked the 3-or-so-miles from our hotel in Thamel to Swayambhunath Stupa (the so-called, monkey temple). Constructed in 250 B.C, it is the largest Buddhist Stupa in Nepal. To reach Swayambhunath Stupa you walk up a steep series of 365 steps. The effort is unquestionably worthwhile, as the hundreds of shrines and other historical monuments that comprise Swayambhunath Stupa are stunning, while the views across KTM and the surrounding hills and mountains afforded from this vantage point are breathtaking.

On returning to our hotel, having decided to walk back, we showered, changed and left for our favourite KTM eatery: The Rooftop Cafe, in Jyatha, Thamel. We enjoyed a lovely meal of vegetables and buff momos, washed down with Gorkha beer, and returned to our hotel during the mid-evening. Sue and I chatted about the day's memorable events and drifted off to sleep. I have mentioned the following only to Sue. A short while later, as Sue slept beside me, I awoke. As I returned to something approaching full consciousness, I became aware that the large and heavy wooden wardrobe to my left in our hotel room was shaking ever so slightly upon the wooden flooring. I watched and listened, becoming increasingly certain that, yes, it was indeed shuddering – if only very little. A little while later, I fell back to sleep. Sue and I awoke some hours later at pretty much the same time. We wished each other a relaxed and yawning, 'Good morning', and I thanked Sue for having made my birthday so special. She smiled in that way of hers and said something kind. I then made us a coffee and turned on the television news.

At approximately 23.47 the previous night, the report declared, an earthquake of magnitude M6.4 had struck the Jajarkot, Karnali province in north-west Nepal, some 200 miles west of Kathmandu – which, the report stated, had felt the quake. I turned to Sue and recounted the events of the previous night. We continued to watch the news report in silence, learning that 154 people had been killed and at least 375 had been injured. A thought then registered in my mind. As I watched and listened to the large wooden wardrobe shake slightly in our hotel room some 8 hours earlier, 154 people were tragically losing their lives. It was a realisation that hung over me during the days that followed.

News of the earthquake may have rendered Sue and me more susceptible to the notorious 'KTM cold', which resulted in a day resting in our hotel room. On recovering, we decided to visit Pashupatinath Temple. Located some 4 miles east of Kathmandu, Pashupatinath Temple is the largest Hindu temple and is considered the holiest of all Hindu temples. It was constructed long before the Christian era.

In July 1997, having taken a bus from Kathmandu, I trekked from the small settlement of Jiri to the top of Kala Patthar and back. I consider it one of the most magical times of my life. Among the innumerable and brilliant memories, I have of the EBC trek (although Nepal's infamous 'jukha' (leeches) proved to be an unpleasant feature of the July wet season), one happy recollection concerns an elderly lady whom I met in the high Solu-Khumbu (Everest) region. There is a tradition in the Solu-Khumbu for women to run independently the small lodges (Bhatti's) or teahouses that pop up alongside the trail every couple of hours. These lodges range from modest extensions of a traditional wooden family home to rather well-appointed places with private rooms with attached toilets and showers. The women invariably run these

establishments self-sufficiently, owing to the fact their husbands work in the lower towns and regions, or as Sherpas (transporting goods of tremendous weight on their backs to towns and villages) or as guides along the trails. In running these 'hostelries' the women enjoy and derive much pride in their achieved status as independent providers and business entrepreneurs. They are habitually intelligent: managing with great effect these small but (in Nepalese terms) lucrative business concerns. I met one such lady when I stopped at her guesthouse for a bite to eat and rest high in the Khumbu region. She and I engaged in conversation.

As I stared at the snow-capped peaks all around me, how she must love living in such a spectacular location, I declared. She agreed with a broad smile and vigorous nod of her head that this was, indeed, 'home'. In fact, although a proud advocate of the democratic process, she could 'not wait' to return after walking the day's distance to cast her electoral vote in the local administrative centre of Namche Bazaar, where I had stayed a day or two earlier as I advanced up the Solu-Khumbu towards the Everest Base-camp. I was intrigued as to why she felt so negatively about undertaking such a journey. 'It's because', she explained matter-of-factly, 'elections are nearly always held in the warmer months, and it's so hot down there. I can't wait to get back up here!'. Please note that Namche Bazaar is located at an altitude of some 3,420 meters/11,220 feet above sea level.

Did she believe the Yeti existed; I asked her. She did not, but she thought the legend derived 'from the sound of the wind which shrieks and screams all around the houses during a cold and windy winter night'. Having discussed my love of history: 'Do you believe that the peace-process will hold in Northern Ireland?', she asked me. I could only reply that I hoped so. On the strength of our ensuing discussion concerning the delicate political picture in Northern Ireland, and other contemporaneous events on the world stage, how was she so well-informed, I respectfully enquired? 'I listen to the BBC World Service on the radio every night', she replied; adding: 'I have done for many years – it is the most reliable news there is'. I smiled and agreed that I thought so too. I mention this wonderful woman, whom I refer to in the journal I kept of my travels as a 'true lady of the mountains', because, during our recent trip to Nepal, I learned that the EBC trek now begins in Lukla – following a short flight there from Kathmandu. 'Lukla!', I exclaimed with deliberate theatrical indignation to the elderly owner of the t-shirt shop in Kathmandu. 'Lukla is cheating!'. This is because Lukla stands pretty much halfway to the Everest base-camp from the settlement of Jiri, where I began and ended my trek in July 1997. He laughed, and then proceeded to soundly clip my wings by informing me that the original trek to the Everest Base-camp from KTM had begun in Bhaktapur – which is only some 10 miles east of Kathmandu, and some 105 miles west of Jiri! Somewhat brought back down to size, I purchased the EBC trek t-shirt and politely asked the gentleman shop owner if he would embroider, 'Jiri', on the map embroidered on the back of the t-shirt, to indicate its position as my starting point on the fantastic trek I undertook some 26 years ago (please refer to the photo).

I enjoyed my discussion with the elderly embroiderer and shop owner. 'Do you like to see travellers visit Kathmandu?', I asked him, anticipating a positive response because of his livelihood. 'It's much better now', he replied, while writing out my bill for the t-shirt, along with the embroidery on the back and the badge of the Nepal flag, which now adorns the front. How so? 'In the 1960s and '70s', he replied, while momentarily returning his pencil to the counter, 'the hippies came here. We were initially in awe of them, because as white people we were raised thinking people from the West were almost gods'. I smiled incredulously, 'Really?'. 'Yes', he nodded. 'You see, when I was a little boy, I asked my grandfather: "Why is it that western people are white?". "They are so rich they drink only milk", he answered, "and not water, like us, and so their skin is white". When the hippies first came here, we regarded them almost as god-like people. But quite quickly attitudes changed. Because all they did was get lost in the streets and smoke drugs in the parks. They didn't care about how they looked either, and so people began to say: "They are not gods, they are like the beggars and street people". I listened and, while intellectually computing the information being received, gently nodded my head. It was not the first time I had received such information. It is not for me to sit in judgment of anyone. But if first-hand accounts from several elderly Kathmandu residents can be trusted (and I have no doubt they can) it would seem that many of the so-called 'flower children' spent their time in the mystical city avoiding soap and staring at the sky semi-comatose while stoned off their boxes singing excruciating versions of 'Mr Tambourine Man'! (As I say, it is not for me to sit in judgement of anyone).

And so, Nepal: Dhan-ya-bad (Thank you). It was a pleasure and an honour to spend a further 3 weeks in your magical company. The Diwali (or Deepawali) Festival (The Festival of Lights) which began a few days before we left was lovely to experience: the excitement of the children; the singing in the streets of traditional songs; the buildings all lit up in various bright colours; and the sincere and genuine pride for the festival as held and expressed by the Nepali people. The sight of Everest as viewed from the right side (starboard) of the plane when we left Nepal was just wonderful – it was a sight, among so many enjoyed on this trip, that Sue and I will never forget.

And so, here we are, back home. The various shelves in our home and the coffee table in the lounge are adorned with fantastic mementoes and keep-sakes of our trip. For instance, I have my statue of the Hindu Goddess, Saraswati, who represents knowledge, music, art and culture. She holds the Veena (a plucked instrument, rather like a lute) in her hands. I have proudly placed my wonderful Saraswati statue behind my guitar on the window sill in my study. It is strategically positioned to inspire further creative output. Mind you, the way I feel at the moment, she has her work cut out! That said, perhaps Saraswati is already casting her sagacious and artistic magic, because I opened a message earlier to learn that during the evening of 10 November, the BBC podcast I acted as the historical consultant on, titled, 'Drowned – The Flooding of a Village', won the Audio News & Current Affairs Programme of the Year in the Wales Media Awards. It is lovely news to return home to. Da iawn Huw Meredydd Roberts, Betsan Powys a phawb – I feel proud to have worked on such a fantastic project alongside a wonderful and committed team.

Before I sign off, I would like to add that there are, of course, many people in Wales and the UK who enjoy travelling – and it is always nice to see accounts and photos on FB of adventures undertaken. But for those who may wish to, but don't feel they have the confidence to undertake such a trip: just do it. Just go for it and immerse yourself in everything such a journey entails: the planning, the preparation, the trepidation, and the joy and uncertainty of being there. I am 99% sure that you will not regret it. I am, however, quite certain of one thing. There is no place like home! Cymru am Byth!

*Wyn Thomas*

*Wyn Thomas's 'Tryweryn: A New Dawn?' published by y Lolfa, was reviewed in interLib 2023-06.*

## Democratic Developments in Nepal

Nepal has come a long way since the end of its civil war in 2006 and is now a well-functioning multi-party democracy. According to the Freedom House assessment, Nepal is categorized as partly free, similar to India. Despite this, the country showcases a vibrant political landscape where numerous parties compete for power democratically, and there have been several peaceful government changes since the revolution and the fall of the monarchy.

To assess the current state of affairs, LI Vice-President Henrik Bach Mortensen held talks with the three leaders of Nepal's largest parties, all of whom have previously headed governments—often within various coalitions.

Current Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, of the Maoist Party, emphasized his party's commitment to fundamental liberal values such as human rights, the rule of law (both nationally and internationally), and freedom of the press. Similarly, former Prime Ministers K.P. Sharma Oli (Communist Party of Nepal – United Marxist Leninist) and Sher Bahadur Deuba (Nepali Congress) stressed their dedication to these core liberal democratic principles. Most political parties in Nepal identify with leftist ideologies such as Communist, Marxist, Maoist, or Leninist, but they all highlight their commitment to fundamental liberal democratic values. The Nepali Congress, in particular, aligns itself with Socialist International as a social-democratic party.

In November 2023, Nepal's Supreme Court issued an interim order allowing the registration of same-sex marriages for the first time, making Nepal only the second Asian nation to do so. This significant development contributes to building a more liberal-leaning multi-party democracy profile and highlights Nepal's credible progress in embracing human rights and equality.

However, Nepal lacks a truly modern liberal party not rooted in pre-revolution conflicts. During his visit to Nepal, VP Mortensen explored opportunities to identify potential future liberal partners to strengthen liberal thought and influence in the country.

30.4.2024

## Taiwan Vice President urges united response to authoritarian actors at CALD 30th anniversary Assembly

“We are faced with the rise of authoritarianism and must respond to increased tensions... fortunately, as liberal and democratic parties, we do not have to face these challenges alone... we can work together as societies and countries that are bound by shared values and interests.” This was the central message from Taiwan’s Vice President and 2024 presidential candidate, Lai Ching-te, as he addressed the 30th anniversary congress of the LI cooperating organisation Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD) over the weekend.

Hosted by the governing Democratic Progressive Party (DPP – LI full member) under the theme “The Future of Democracy in Asia”, Liberal International sent a large delegation in support of its Taiwanese colleagues, including Vice Presidents Henrik Mortensen and Philip Bennion and Secretary General William Townsend.

In addition to a video message from the LI President, Hakima el Haite, who emphasised that regional organisations like CALD are essential for upholding values of freedom, democracy and peace.

Among many global partners the LI delegates made a number of strategic interventions centred around ensuring that the future of Asia is free and democratic. In addition to addressing the opening ceremony, they participated as panellists and panel chairs to discuss closer cooperation and the future of democracy in Asia.

The anniversary assembly’s conclusions were a call to action for liberals worldwide: broader means of cooperation, idea exchange, and network-building among – and between – liberal parties, networks, and organizations is urgently needed to find innovative methods to tackle this deepening democratic recession, especially in Asia.

13/09/2023

## Lib Dem Friends of Ukraine at Bournemouth

Anyone who attended the Ukraine debate at the Bournemouth Party conference (2023) will have been moved by Olena Kushnirenko’s account of the full-scale invasion last year. Olena spoke little English when she arrived in this country last year as a refugee from Ukraine. Exceptionally she was allowed as a non-Party member to speak in the conference hall. In an emotional account she outlined how she, her husband and their three children fled from Kyiv, how they subsequently heard that their neighbour in Irpin had been shot dead by the Russians, his house burnt to the ground and their own house damaged.

The recently formed Lib Dem Friends of Ukraine featured strongly at the Bournemouth Conference. We successfully achieved AO status with the Party and were involved in the organization of two events. Throughout the conference we held a joint stall with the Lib Dem Friends of Hong Kong in our ‘freedom corner’. We were fortunate to have a fantastic team of colleagues from Ukraine, including Olena and her husband Pavel, who throughout the conference talked to people at the stall to share their experiences.



The Ukrainians highlighted their wish for a more secure future in the UK. Currently it is difficult for them to make any long-term plans as, for many, their visas are due to expire in little more than a year. Viktoria lives in Poole and previously worked as a conference and event organizer in Ukraine. She would dearly love to set up her own events business here but is unable to invest in this due to the uncertainty about her future. For those with children there is the added worry that the schoolwork they complete here may not be compatible with the curriculum in Ukraine.

On Saturday evening the Lib Dem Friends of Ukraine held a joint fringe event with the Lib Dem Friends of the Armed Forces and the Lib Dem Friends of Hong Kong on the theme of 'fighting authoritarians'. The panel, chaired by Lord Purvis of Tweed, included our co-President Richard Foord MP and our Vice President John Sweeney, well known war reporter who has spent much of his time in Kyiv since the start of the full-scale invasion last year and has made several visits to the front-line. Our Chair, Cllr Tony Paterson from the London Borough of Richmond, said a few words to mark the launch of our new AO. A lively discussion was summated by Julie Smith, Baroness Smith of Newnham.

On Monday the Standing with Ukraine policy motion submitted by the Twickenham & Richmond local party, moved by Richard Foord MP and summated by Sarah Olney MP, was overwhelmingly passed by conference. The motion can be found here: <https://www.libdems.org.uk/conference/motions/autumn-2023/f33>

All speakers were highly supportive of the motion. As it states, 'The defence of freedom, human rights and the rule of law lie at the heart of liberal values.' The motion recognizes the courage shown by Ukrainians defending their country and calls on the government to take further steps to support them.

On Monday evening we enjoyed a very well attended social event in the Marriott Hotel where those present were treated to delicious Ukrainian bread and cakes prepared by refugees living in the Yeovil and Bournemouth areas. Kira Rudik, leader of the liberal Holos party in Ukraine addressed us and led a heartfelt and very tuneful rendition of the Ukrainian national anthem, joined by the other Ukrainians present. As in her speech in the main hall, she urged us to continue supporting Ukraine with military supplies, humanitarian aid and to use frozen Russian assets to help with the reconstruction of the country.

The aims of our group are to keep up pressure on the government to give Ukraine the weapons it needs to win the war, to call for humanitarian and reconstruction aid for Ukraine, to welcome, support and advocate for Ukrainian refugees here in the UK and to campaign for Russia's ill-gotten gold to be used for the rebuilding of Ukraine. If you would like to join the Lib Dem Friends of Ukraine (currently no membership fee) please send your local party, membership number and email address to [ldfriendsofukraine@outlook.com](mailto:ldfriendsofukraine@outlook.com). Your membership number can be found at the end of any email sent by the national Party.

Thank you to everyone who has joined so far. We shall be arranging Zoom meetings with guest speakers on a range of Ukraine related topics over the coming year. We now have a Facebook group for Lib Dem members and registered supporters to share articles on Ukraine and best practice on supporting refugees.

***Julia Fletcher***

Convenor, Lib Dem Friends of Ukraine

Lib Dem Friends of Ukraine can be contacted at [LDFriendsofUkraine@outlook.com](mailto:LDFriendsofUkraine@outlook.com)



**Kira Rudik with Ed Davey and Layla Moran.**

# LD4SOS continues to champion asylum rights.

September's Bournemouth Conference marked the first gathering since the enactment of the Illegal Migration Act, which effectively bans the right to arrive and seek asylum in the UK.

Amidst this tragic backdrop, the Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary (LD4SOS) applauds our Party's unified voice against the Conservative government's inhumane policies. At Conference, we celebrated the passing of several pivotal motions:

- Motion Combating Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery, which calls for the immediate repeal of the Illegal Migration Act;
- Motion supporting the European Charter of Human Rights and the Human Rights Act;
- Pre-manifesto commitment to reinstate the 0.7% GNI foreign aid target, modified to ensure that costs related to asylum accommodation and the Ukrainian program are not counted towards the budget, at the cost of genuine foreign development aid.

Our fringe event, led by Dr. Ruvi Ziegler, Associate Professor in International Refugee Law at the University of Reading, and Lord Mike German, provided a deep dive discussion into the current state of the UK asylum system. The panellists shed light on the impending challenges posed by the Illegal Migration Act. Notably, if the Act comes into effect in its current form, individuals arriving post the Act's royal assent (20 July 2023) will be prevented from being processed through the asylum system, artificially creating what could be called a "perma-backlog". Lord German further highlighted the efforts of the LibDem lords to amend the most egregious aspects of the Bill prior to its passing, and shared his surprising experience of being denied permission to enter an Immigration Removal Centre, suggesting that even a Lord's status isn't deemed sufficient for such fact-finding visits.

Our AGM, convened during the Conference, drew observers from several Third Sector organisations fighting for refugee rights, including Help for Heroes, NACCOM, Rainbow Migration, and Safe Passage International. Their insights, grounded in hands-on field work, highlight the ongoing need for well-managed routes for those who assisted British authorities in Afghanistan, the urgency for safe and legal routes for asylum seekers anywhere in the world, the cessation of indefinite detention, and the reevaluation of the Adult Risk Policy. NACCOM particularly stressed the necessity to address homelessness as a homelessness issue, highlighting that policies of integration cannot exist at the same time with policies of deterrence.

Finally, we were delighted to reconnect with long-standing supporters and welcome new faces at our exhibition stall. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who took the time to engage with us.

At LD4SOS, we remain steadfast in our mission. The Party's current package of policies on asylum reflect our Party's preamble, and we urge our MPs to relentlessly advocate for the repeal of the Illegal Migration Act, together with a comprehensive overhaul of our immigration system and the Home Office. Arguably, such pressure is just as necessary if Labour should secure a majority, as Starmer has already indicated that he is against scrapping the Illegal Migration Act in full (even though, as Dr Ziegler noted during our fringe, the repeal could be accomplished through a single line of legislation, without any unintended legal consequences).

We always welcome new members to LD4SOS and greatly value your continued support for our work, which encompasses liaising with third sector organisations, creating party policy and lobbying MPs. You can join us by visiting our website -[ld4sos.org.uk](https://ld4sos.org.uk)- where you can also sign up to our newsletters to stay up informed on developments in the UK asylum system.

Michael Wang  
Council Member  
LD4SOS  
(Report from Bournemouth Conference 2023)



**Liberal Democrats for  
Seekers of Sanctuary**

# Apology

I have to apologise for the absence of *interLib* since last September; even more so because the international scene has not been so active since the journal first appeared in 1996. Russia's war against Ukraine continues, the HAMAS incursion into Israel and the ensuing conflict in Gaza has sapped Western support for Ukraine, diverting vital resources and has led to proxy conflicts elsewhere in the Middle East. The War in Sudan has been largely ignored and Nagorno-Karabakh has been incorporated into Azerbaijan. Haiti has erupted into a crisis (see next issue).

Liberal politics are largely run by volunteers, that is certainly the case with LIBG. Their lives determine the output. I returned from Bournemouth to find that the old computer had died, taking with it the ancient software that was used for *interLib*. When the Liberal Democrats adopted Affinity as their publishing software of choice my thought was 'if I'd wanted to be a graphic artist I'd have studied Dip.AD, rather than B.Sc.(Econ).' It was simpler to just soldier on with the old software at the time. 8 months later I still struggle with Affinity and cannot find anyone in the party able to help – the somewhat scruffy appearance of the phoenix *interLib* bears witness I'm afraid, but I'll probably get there eventually. If any readers use Affinity and could offer a one-to-one with me, I'd be grateful.

On top of that, regular readers will have noted over the years that the cycle of elections is also reflected in output. I was both agent and candidate in the May local elections and that dominated my political activity since at least January; we didn't win despite. And then there is the day job.

I had started putting this issue together just before the general election was called. It is a bit of a ragbag, doesn't say all that it should do (despite requests to certain players) but breaks the hiatus. The next issue (probably) won't appear until after July 4<sup>th</sup>, so get out there on the streets.

*Stewart Rayment*

## International Abstracts

### Journal of Liberal History Issue 120: Autumn 2023

There are two international articles in this issue. Michael Meadowcroft writes an obituary of Peter Hellyer (1947-2023) who was International Vice-chairman of the Young Liberals during the 1960s, at the time when they had a major platform against Apartheid. There is also a note that Michael Steed passed away recently. Both will be greatly missed.

The lead article is on William Gladstone and the Question of Slavery, 1832-33. It is a useful point of reference on a subject that could come up at any point, in hustings for example.

### Liberator 419

The Lib Dem conference issue of *Liberator* had plenty of international content, starting with its editorial, Commentary speculating on Trump. Maksym Kravchuk writes on how muralists are keeping morale in Ukraine. Rebecca Tinsley writes on the problems of Francophone Africa. Keith House writes on Somaliland; quite why the Liberal Democrats didn't push for recognition during the Coalition escapes me. George Cunningham's *The Great Powers Shift* also appeared in *interLib* 2023-06. There is also a review of the new edition of Helen Lackner's *Yemen in Crisis*, along with Ianthe MacLagan's *Bread and Henna*.

### Liberator 420 (November 2023)

Rebecca Tinsley asked why the mass killings in Sudan lack the attention focused on Gaza in Hypocrisy reigns in the Middle East (the article features in this issue of *interLib*). Running Up the Down Escalator, Michael Meadowcroft draws a lesson from Poland in how to effectively take on nationalism and populism. In A Long Road Home, Nick Harvey, now COE of the European Movement looks at getting the UK back into the European Union as a long-term goal. Suzanne Fletcher questions the Double Standards of why only certain people legally resident in the UK entitled to vote. Commentary, the magazine's editorial, focusses on the Israel-Palestine Question and Liberal Democrat responses to the Gaza crisis. Radical Bulletin takes up the case of David Ward and there is an obituary of Michael Steed.

## Journal of Liberal History Issue 121: Winter 2023-24

Kenneth O. Morgan looks at TransAtlantic Liberalism – Britain and the United States, 1870-1920. Otherwise, there is an appreciation of Michael Steed, including a letter from David Steel, and articles on Millicent Garrett Fawcett, perhaps the real heroine of the Women's vote, Liberals in the Lords and The Strange Death of Liberal England revisited. There is a reprint of An Essay on Power, by Jo Grimond, which first appeared in Liberator in October 1970 and reviews of books on Haldane & Morley.

### Liberator 421 (February 2024)

Less international content in this issue. Martha Elliot writes on Donald Trump and the problems he poses for American democracy. Liberal International Bureau member Lennart Saleminck writes on outcome of the Dutch General Election.

### Liberator 422 (April 2024)

Ukraine was the international content of this issue. Collective member Sarah Green MP writes on a parliamentary delegation to the country and Kiron Reid interviews Nataliya Torkut, the country's leading expert on Shakespeare and a professor at Zaporizhzhia National University, about Ukraine's continued resistance to Russia and the role in this of intellectual life.

### Gaza

UK must take a leading role in trying to find peace between Israel and Palestine, by Layla Moran, MP. HuffPostUK 12<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

[https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/layla-moran-mp-uk-must-take-leading-role-in-trying-to-find-peace-between-israel-and-palestine\\_uk\\_6527d246e4b09f4b8d4337bf](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/layla-moran-mp-uk-must-take-leading-role-in-trying-to-find-peace-between-israel-and-palestine_uk_6527d246e4b09f4b8d4337bf)

Coverage of the conflict the Financial Times has been balanced and good,

Liberal Democrats' overall policy position, predating the latest tragedies, is set out at <https://www.libdems.org.uk/conference/motions/autumn-2021/f39>

<https://www.libdems.org.uk/press/release/israel-gaza-conflict-liberal-democrats-call-for-immediate-bilateral-ceasefire> - Liberal Democrat press statement 11<sup>th</sup> November 2023 - there are other press statements, check their website.

<https://www.birminghamlibdems.org.uk/news/article/the-birmingham-liberal-democrat-position-on-the-situation-in-gaza>

<https://palestinecampaign.org/liberal-democrats/> - Liberal Democrat spokesperson is not named.

<https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-libdem-group/motions/template-liberal-democrat-council-motion-israel-gaza-conflict> - On Local Government Association website.

Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel - <https://www.ldfi.org.uk/> - promote a liberal Israel & a two-state solution,

Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine - <https://www.ldfp.org.uk/> & <https://www.facebook.com/LDFoP/>

The Alliance Party backed the Westminster motion calling for a ceasefire in November 2023

The Liberal Party's most recent statement is at <https://liberal.org.uk/2024/04/03/liberal-party-nec-statement-the-gaza-conflict-after-5-months/>

### UK

Time's Up, by Sam Knight, The New Yorker, April 1, 2024. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2024/04/01/what-have-fourteen-years-of-conservative-rule-done-to-britain>

A lengthy read over 11 pages, by The New Yorker's London-based staffer. Byline *The Conservatives have ruled Britain for almost 14 years. What have they done to the country?* Knight spoke with many leading Tories and the answers is aren't good. Useful reading for the campaign trail and hustings. Sending this article, our US correspondent wrote 'I hope things aren't as bad as this article suggests.' Unfortunately, they are.



# 64th Congress – Santiago de Chile

Details Relating to the 208th Executive Committee meeting are published here – please check LI webpage [https://liberal-international.org/santiago\\_de\\_chile\\_2024/](https://liberal-international.org/santiago_de_chile_2024/) regularly.

Liberal International are pleased to confirm that our 64th congress will take place 29 November – 1 December in Santiago de Chile, Chile at the invitation of LI full member parties **Evópoli** and **Partido Liberal de Chile**. This year's statutory event will be the first time in the organisation's 77-year history that an LI congress has convened in South America.

**Theme and date** 21 November – 1 December (inclusive) 2024

**Venue** TBC

**Visa Information** To avoid disappointment, please check with your foreign affairs ministry as to whether you require a visa to enter Europe as soon as possible.

## Political deadlines

→ Bureau jointly propose a draft theme resolution and an explanatory memorandum at the initiative of the Rapporteur – **Friday 20th September 2024** (ten weeks)

→ Deadline for submission of any proposed constitutional amendments (if any) – **Friday 20th September 2024** (ten weeks)

→ Submission of political documents (draft resolutions, world today resolution, bureau nominations, membership applications nominal vice presidents etc) – **Friday 4th October 2024** (eight weeks)

→ Political documents circulated to the LI membership, including amendment forms for draft and World Today resolutions – **Friday 18th October 2024** (six weeks)

→ Deadline for returning amendment resolution forms to the secretariat – **Friday 1st November 2024** (four weeks)

→ Text of all resolutions and amendments circulated to LI membership – **Friday 15th November 2024** (two weeks)

→ Deadline for receipt of urgency resolutions – **Thursday 10:00 28th November 2024**

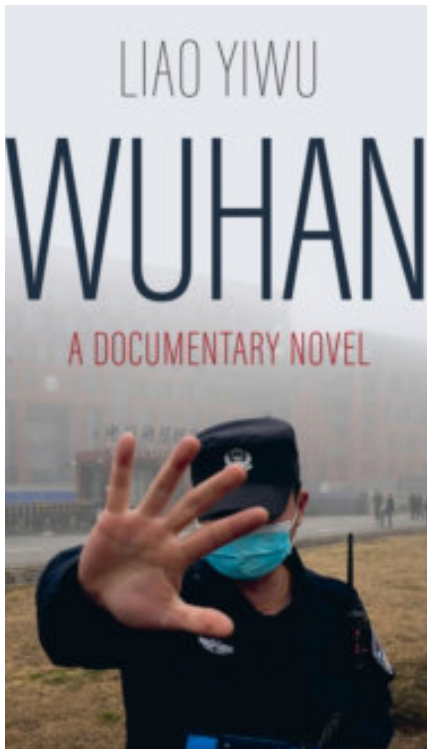
→ Congress – **Friday 29th November 2024**

*Please consult the [constitution](#) and [standing orders](#) of Liberal International in the first instance should you have any questions relating to the submission of political documents*

## Engage with us

Participants are encouraged to take photos and share videos and send their comments to us on social media before, during and after the event. The official hashtag is **#LI64Chile** and LI's Twitter account is [@Liberalinternat](#)

# Reviews



**Wuhan, a documentary novel by Liao Yiwu.**

**Polity 2024 £28.00 e-book £22.99 isbn 9781509562992**

The outbreak of COVID pandemic brought significant impact to everyone in our society. Being the first country affected by the pandemic, those living in China had an unpleasantly unique experience, and that is the reason for Liao Yiwu wrote his documentary novel *Wuhan*. He tried to elaborate how the pandemic affected the Chinese society through a story and expressed his views towards Chinese Community Party on COVID and geopolitics.

This novel is about the main protagonist, Ai Ding, trying to return from Germany to Wuhan his hometown at the beginning of the COVID lockdown. He was first stuck in Wunan due to a chain of unfortunate events and had a unique experience while travelling with a motorbike. He was an academic, so throughout the journey, he spoke with friends in Europe and his wife in Wuhan via Skype constantly and kept posting articles on his social media account. When he finally got home, he found out his wife passed away just days before because of COVID. He was later arrested by the Police due to his social media posts on COVID, and later died in the detention centre.

The narrative approach of this novel would be a bit too dramatic to some (Since I am not convinced with the rationale of how the drama unfolded), but through this extraordinarily journey, it covered the story of how COVID impacted the whole Chinese society on multiple levels. Some aspects were

not even covered by any press or social media, Chinese or Western alike, such as the discriminations towards people with Wuhan origins among Chinese (Such as passengers in flight expelling people with Hubei origins before take-off), tensions between Hubei province and the surrounding provinces due to being the source of the pandemic (Such as disputes between villages at the border of 2 provinces), and, more importantly, how the pandemic affected the culture and identity of the ethnic and religious minority communities (such as Muslim and Miao communities in Hunan provinces).

The novel also covered a few controversial topics on COVID, even up to this day. The author contributed the whole Chapter 10 to discuss the different point of views on where COVID originated, and how it became a global pandemic. Through Ai Ding, the main protagonist, and Zhuangzi Gui, a main character in this novel, they had a lively (and at times, filled with tension) discussions over the articles on social media. Both were academia educated in European universities, and their professionals are not in the medical sector. During the pandemic, Ai Ding was in China and Zhuangzi Gui was in Germany. The difference of their personal experiences resulted in their polarised views towards the pandemic. Ai Ding became more receptive towards the conspiracy theories, which argued the virus was created in P4 laboratory. Gui followed what the scientific theories, which argued the virus cannot be created by laboratory, and could only create through mutations. This chapter was a miniature of our society during the pandemic and how it affected our relationship during and beyond the crisis. Its impacts still existed, even in our political scenes.

Another interesting aspect is on the Unrestricted Warfare deployed by Chinese Communist Party, as seemingly suggested by the author. On Chapter 11, through Ai Ding, the author quoted the reference of Unrestricted Warfare, a military book co-authored by Qiao Liang, a Major General of the People's Liberation Army Air Force, and a professor at the National Defence University. The term means "a war that transcends limits and battlefields", capable of being surprisingly effective and changing military dynamics. He believed the battlefields can be multiplied, instead, advance will be made in countless directions and forms, such as intelligence, biochemistry, technology and so on. The author went on explaining Chinese authority adopted this strategy towards Hong Kong, as Gui in the novel said,

'The virus will be sent into Hong Kong – hasn't that story already been broken online by some media? I don't want to believe it because not long ago the Sino-US trade war finally resolved after 2 or 3 years.... Trump was smug, thinking that he'd signed the largest single trade deal in history... but in fact... (Chinese representative) understood the Emperor's goal in all this was to consolidate CCP control of Hong Kong... As the saying goes: "If you can't bear to lose a child, you'll not trap a wolf".'

Even though I have some doubts on whether the virus was intentionally spread to the city, yet the protest movement started died down since the pandemic restrictive measures were introduced, and the civil society movements never recovered since then. If it is a part of unrestricted warfare as suggested by the author, I would say there is some creditability on it.

The only criticism I have on this book was, surprisingly, the inconsistent narrative in some chapters of this novel. From Chapter 2 onwards, the author tried to elaborate Ai Ding's story through his writing on his diary. It went all the way till Chapter 6, suddenly the author elaborated the story with Ai Ding as the third person instead of carrying the same narrative method on the previous chapters. The diary was never mentioned in latter chapters, even when the National Security Bureau (NSB) interrogated Ai Ding. The diary contained sensitive information which could be used against Ai Ding, yet the NSB chose not to use it, which made the story less convincing.

*Larry Ngan*

**The Emotional Life of Populism, how fear, disgust, resentment and love undermine democracy,  
by Eva Illouz with Avital Sicon.  
Polity Press 2023 isbn 9781509558193**

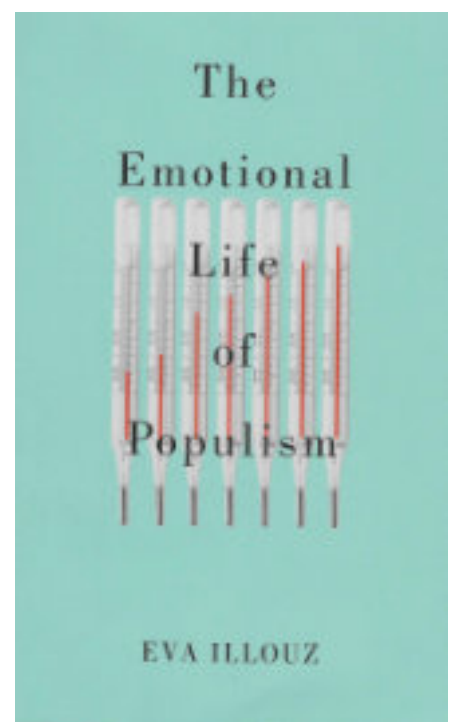
This book had its genesis well before October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, indeed was researched and written long before the Israeli constitutional crisis of March 2023 onwards. It is a horror story, which whilst one never takes sociology to be a neutral study, goes along way to explain the present situation in Israel. I wish someone with more knowledge of the country had come forward to review it; I haven't been there for nearly 40 years. That is also roughly the length of time that Likud has been the natural party of government in Israel, usually in coalition with various parties further to the right often representing religious minorities.

I have, over the years, made myself unpopular in trying to explain the demographic make up of Israel and its impact on the country's policies. Whilst we in the west tend to associate the creation of Israel with the Nazi Holocaust, there was another holocaust when very long-established Jewish communities were persecuted and unrooted from Arab countries in response to that creation and the Nakba. These refugees from Iraq, Morocco, Yemen and elsewhere were largely Sephardic Jews, the Mizrahim, and were despised by the largely Ashkenazi Jewish elites who were the engine of the creation of the state of Israel. I hadn't particularly been aware of this, since my East End impression amongst Jewish friends was that the Sephardi tended to be the toffs (coming primarily from Spain & Portugal, centuries ago). I had been aware that there were Jewish groups that tended to be looked down on in Israel (those pre-dating the Zionist colonisation for example – I forget whose study that was). One might have extrapolated an orientalism in that with more thought.

So, without going beyond the last 90 years (where Illouz and others will find it institutionalised) you have fear; and in terms of the Mizrahim, fear of Arabs. Set against one of General Moshe Dayan's speeches, the authors write *Because of the permanent perception of threat, the law is regularly tramped over for the sake of survival. This was to become the fundamental political blue print of Israel's politics as well as of its legal system.*

From fear it is easy to move on to disgust, particularly of a conquered people, who, let alone the circumstances that many of them live in (Gaza was a shit-hole before October 7<sup>th</sup>, perhaps one of the reasons for October 7<sup>th</sup>), have their own culture and habits. In a mixed-race partnership amongst my friends, one nicknamed the other 'Smelly' as a term of affection. The resentment might come from the underdog fighting back and also be directed to those who defend or seek to ameliorate that fight back, likely to be from a more privileged background, another cause for resentment. Although their parties have held (& manipulated) the reins of power for the last 40 years, there is a lingering (cultivated) sense of victimhood. Populist politicians Netanyahu, Trump, Farage, exploit that sense of victimhood – their own 'victimisation' by liberal elites extrapolated to their supporters. The paradox is that the policies promoted by these politicians often most hurt those who support them; the retreat from a welfare state to neoliberalism has largely been under Likud-led governments.

I've skipped patriotism, not necessarily a problem, an obvious need



in the context of Israel, but Illouz outlines its manipulation, particularly by the religious right, whereon it becomes dangerous. All of this paints a very disappointing view of Israeli society. Does the work resound beyond Israel's borders? Whilst much of the analysis is Israel, there are elements do have a wider play and need to be challenged.

Eva Illouz holds the Rose Isaac Chair of Sociology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and is the Directrice d'Études at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales; EHESS, in Paris. She helped write and co-signed the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism<sup>1</sup> in response to the controversial working definition of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)<sup>2</sup>. This book was first published in Germany in 2023 Suhrkamp Verlag under the title *Undemokratische Emotionen. Das Beispiel Israel – Undemocratic Emotions, the example of Israel*. In French it is *Les Émotions contre la démocratie* (Premier Parallèle). Either, perhaps, a clearer short title of the book.

### **Stewart Rayment**

<sup>1</sup> <https://jerusalemdeclaration.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>

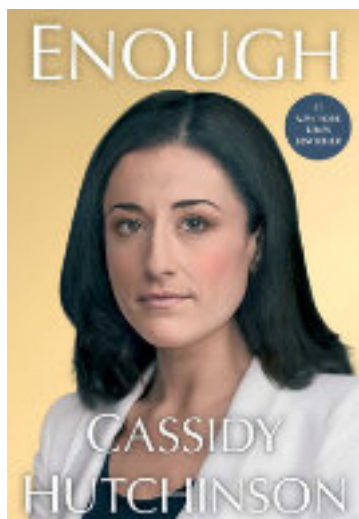
**“Enough” by Cassidy Hutchinson**  
**Simon & Schuster 2023 £20.00**  
**isbn 9781668028285**

Sometimes the little people make the best witnesses. They're the ones you don't normally notice because they're in the background, just doing their jobs. Always there but inconspicuous. The Miss Marples of the story.

“Enough” is the account of one such person, Cassidy Hutchinson, a special assistant to President Trump and his chief of staff Mark Meadows. She tells of her working-class background in a Republican family, her rise from summer intern to assistant to Meadows and close to the Oval Office in the White House. She was well organized and efficient, and had a way of chatting with people, putting them at their ease, quickly getting on a first-name basis with other aides and even with Meadows.

In Washington D.C., the January 6th committee into former President Donald Trump's actions on that day in 2021 called many witnesses to testify. There were the police, the front line against the savage attack on the Capitol: several of them lost their lives as a result of that day, and many are still disabled. One of them, Michael Fanone, was beaten and tased: he had a heart attack and brain injury, surviving only because he managed to blurt out “I have kids.” Election workers in states that went for Biden were persecuted: Ruby Freeman and her daughter Shay Moss spoke of how, after being falsely denounced for election fraud by Rudy Giuliani, Trump's attorney, they were afraid to leave their homes. They received expletive-laden racist attacks from people who said they should be hanged for treason. This is the background to Cassidy Hutchinson's decision to testify.

A young woman in her mid-twenties, Cassidy was the surprise witness, her identity kept secret until she appeared. Nobody outside the Capitol knew her name before she walked into the committee room.



Hutchinson had worked as an intern and later a special assistant in the White House, gradually assuming a dizzying array of duties, many of them assisting Mark Meadows, who was closest to President Trump. She was a natural at this - she learned names and faces with ease, remembered birthdays, anticipated problems before they developed.

The book “Enough,” and Hutchinson's revelations about Trump's behavior on January 6th would not have happened if not for lawyers who agreed to work pro bono on her behalf. After her job with the Trump administration ended, Hutchinson had nothing to live on but her meager savings: she couldn't pay her rent, and she had no family members who would help. So when she received a subpoena and had to testify, she needed an attorney. The Trump organization supplied one, Stefan, who told her “Just say you can't recall.” And she did say that, for the first series of interviews, until her conscience started to nag at her.

Dozens of calls to law firms later, she finally found the firm of Alston & Bird, and unlike the attorney who'd required a six-figure retainer before he'd represent her, the lawyers there agreed to work pro bono.

Her televised testimony before the Jan. 6th Committee gave us unforgettable images and moments in a presidency that many would like to forget: the ketchup dripping down the wall after Trump had hurled plates during one of his rages, when the news wasn't to his liking, the Covid mask stained with his orange-hued facial makeup - "bronzer" - that would stop Trump from wearing a mask in public. The president shouting that Security should remove the "mags", or metal detectors that detect weapons on January 6th, because, as he said of the mob, "They're not here to hurt me." Trump's grabbing at the throat of the driver who refused to take him to the Capitol on January 6th, and his settling in for an afternoon of watching the riot on television as if it were entertainment, ignoring for hours the aides and family members who pleaded with him to put a stop to it.

"Enough" offers a valuable perspective into the Trump administration. It would be easier to use with an index and a glossary - I found myself wondering at times who various officials and aides, identified usually by their first names, were - but it gives us the point of view of an insider who for most of her time there didn't question anything she saw. She was inspired by the examples of Liz Cheney, a leading Republican who lost her seat in Congress for opposing Trump, and decades before her, Alex Butterfield, whose mention of Nixon's secret tapes led to that president's resignation. January 6th made her realize finally that her boss's outbursts, his "volcanic temper and egotism" had motivated the mob that attacked the Capitol with the goal of overturning the election no matter what, even if killing Vice President Mike Pence might be part of the process. With her knowledge of just how dangerous supporters of the Trump cult can be, Cassidy Hutchinson's decision to speak out when so many seasoned Republican politicians remain silent tells us something about her character.

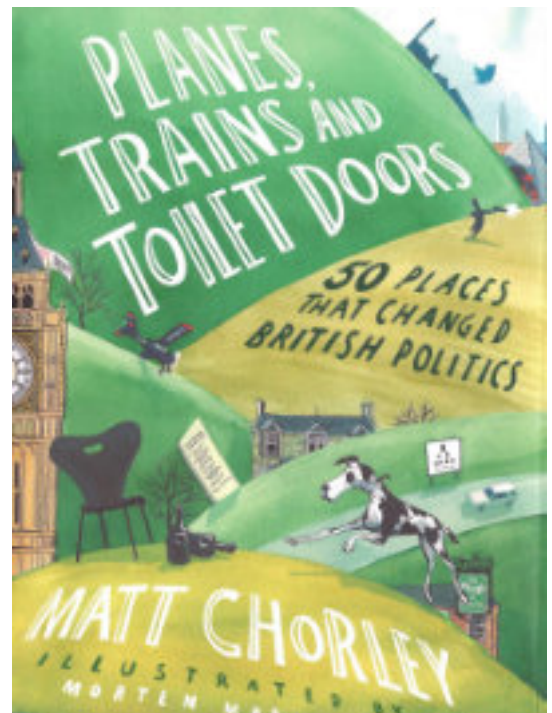
*Christine Graf*

**Planes, Trains and Toilet Doors, 50 places that changed British Politics, by Matt Chorley, illustrated by Morten Morland.**

**William Collin 2023 £20.00  
isbn 9780008622060**

Liberal and Liberal Democrats are often under-represented in entertaining glosses on the political scene, but that is not the case here. It opens for us. 39 pages in, with Ed Davey, as Energy Secretary confiding that he wore jumpers at home; I'll leave it to you to decide whether this was outrageous or not, but it reminds me of the cover of *Liberator* 421.

There is, of course, a chapter devoted to David Owen's kitchen table in Narrow Street, Limehouse, and to Chard Guildhall, but not Willis's Rooms (presumably nothing salacious there). Thorpe was acquitted of the charge of conspiracy to murder. Chris Huhne's trousers were not so lucky... some misjudgements on his behalf there. Soak up the story of Vince Cable's bath. Ashdown, Gladstone & Lloyd George crop up throughout, Tierney duels with William Pitt Jnr.



The Coalition is thought of as a bad move for the Liberal Democrats throughout; mishandled no doubt, but one of the governing principles in politics is *necessitas*, you do things because you have to do them, not because if you want to. Remember that when dealing with the Labour scum in the coming fray. It was a sacrifice in the national interest; from my experience of Irish politics, I was amazed that we came out of with as many MPs as we did – our sister party in the Republic, the Progressive Democrats were decimated, as was the Green party.

But back to the book... what a devious, shifty bunch all of us are... a jolly romp, difficult to put down once you start, and a boon if quiz nights are part of your social calendar.

*Stewart Rayment*

**Yemen in Crisis, Devastating Conflict, Fragile Hope, by Helen Lackner.**

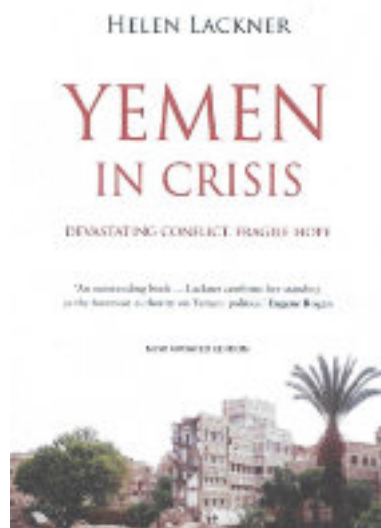
**Saqi Books 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2023 isbn 9780863561931**

**Bread and Henna: My time with the women of a Yemeni mountain town, by Ianthe Mary Maclagan.**

**Bradt Travel Guides 2023 £8.88 isbn 9781784779757**

Yemen is a land of stark contradictions. Despite its deep tribal roots, it is predominantly associated with conflict, instability, terrorism, a pervasive humanitarian crisis and often perceived as a war-torn nation.

Yet, it boasts a diverse and distinctive cultural heritage, standing as one of the oldest sites of civilisation on the Arabian Peninsula. Yemen's unique architecture, culture, history and strategic significance on both regional and global scales, along with its uprising in 2011, add further layers to its complexity. Two recent books, authored by women who are also social anthropologists, offer contrasting perspectives on Yemen. In *Yemen in Crisis* Helen Lackner delves into the country's geopolitical and socio-economic landscape through accessible thematic chapters M 36 demonstrating deep, knowledgeable and insightful analysis.



Ianthe Mary Maclagan's *Bread and Henna* offers a different lens. During her fieldwork for her PhD in the 1980s, Maclagan immersed herself in the daily lives of women in a small mountainous town in western Yemen.

She vividly portrays the intricacies of their lives, from marriages, raising children and domestic work, all while socialising, sharing meals, and chewing qat during leisurely afternoons. Filled with rich details, her work is a beautifully observed and utterly captivating account. The characters, power dynamics and relationships among these women shine through the pages, providing a poignant glimpse into a society that may have evolved significantly since. At the end of the book, I missed those women – a testament to the authors ability to draw readers into the lives of the people she portrays.

Both diverse perspectives offer the opportunity to explore the many faces of Yemen – although sadly without the ability to explore the country in person. The nation's resilience, enduring geopolitical and cultural significance, and ability to adapt to change become apparent when seen through both the macroscopic lens of geopolitics and the intimate stories of its people. Yemen remains a compelling subject for exploration, inviting readers and academics alike to engage with its complex narrative and appreciate the richness and diversity it embodies.

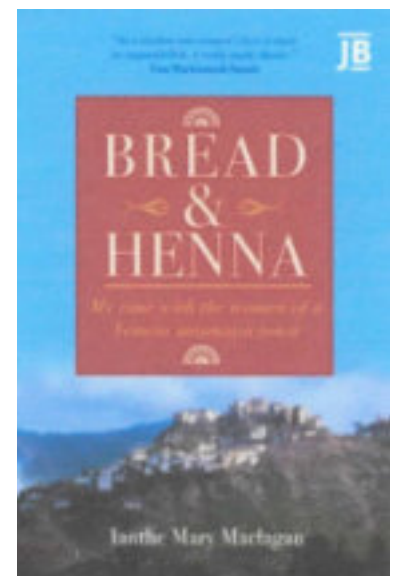
***Susan Simmonds***

*Helen Lackner's 2017 edition of 'Yemen in Crisis' was reviewed in interLib 2018-04 page 24. Helen Lackner was also a contributor to the LIBG Forum on Yemen, reported in interLib 2018-03 pages 11-15.*

***Cell, written & performed by Cindy Oswin.***

Cell is a one woman, one act play by Cindy Oswin on the life (or death) and thoughts of one woman, Julian of Norwich. I say death, because Julian was an anchoress, a woman who was walled in a cell to live a life of prayer and contemplation, in this case 12 foot by 12 foot in the church of St Julian in King Street, Norwich. She had contact with the rest of the world through three windows, to the church, for its rituals, to a servant for sustenance, and to the outside world, where she might advise passers by and spent maybe 40 years in this condition. Julian became an anchoress after a near fatal illness during the Black Death in 1373, indeed the lates rites were administered. During her illness she had vivid shewings of the Passion of Christ, These and her later meditations were set down in her *Revelations of Divine Love*, a short version which may have been written shortly after her illness, and a longer version.

*Revelations of Divine Love* is significant in many ways. Contemporary with Geoffrey Chaucer, it is the first work known to have been written by a woman in the English language. As a work of medieval Christian mysticism, it may not have been unusual in its time, but would later be regarded as heretical, at least by the Roman Church. Julian regarded God as both Mother and Father, not a difficult concept, but in the face of increasing patriarchy in religion, controversial at times. Jesus is spoken of as a mother.





Cindy Oswin imagines this through the words of a volunteer tourist guide to the church (although the cell was destroyed during the Reformation, and the church itself was rebuilt after the Blitz). She talks at first to an imagined audience, somewhat world-wearily and then in an imagined dialogue with Julian herself.

The work was originally commissioned by Somerville College, Oxford, with the support of TORCH, Oxford, for the New Visions of Julian of Norwich conference, where it was first performed on July 16<sup>th</sup> 2022. Oswin revisited Cell at Christ Church, Silchester Road, St Leonards-on-Sea on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2023. The music was by Camilla Saunders and Nick Weekes and sound design by Martin Redfern. The puppet Julian was made by Julia McLean. Cindy Oswin is an actor, writer and librettist based in St Leonards. She was part of the original stage cast of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, and later provided the voices of Trillian/Tricia McMillan and other ladies on the audio re-recordings of the first two books.

Cell can be watched on YouTube and more details can be found at <https://cindyoswin.com>

### ***Stewart Rayment***

**Torrid Times, by Peter Brookes  
Biteback, 2023 £30.00  
isbn 9781785908.**

Peter Brookes is 80. He has been informing and entertaining us in The Times since 1992 but has been working from home since the Covid Lockdown. He has survived six changes of editor, as Nick Newman said opening his exhibition at Chris Beetles Gallery, even the great Gerald Scarfe was eventually sacked by the Sunday Times. Peter said that The Times had always given him a free hand, even when he was against their editorial line, he was against the Iraq War from the outset, and currently on migration, he felt that the paper gave a little bit of headroom to Suella Braverman, thinking she says things that need to be said, whereas he thought she didn't need to say anything. Children of immigrants themselves, he found both Braverman and Patel, her predecessor, disgraceful in their lack of empathy and compassion.

Nick, the Sunday Times pocket cartoonist, went on to say that whereas the pocket cartoonist relies on humour, the political cartoonist produces what he described as a chin-stroker, adding that Peter's great success is that he is able to combine humour with the chin-stroker; if in doubt, seek out a small detail in one of his works that you missed the first time.

Torrid Times covers the period July 2021 to June 2023, so we have Covid 19, Partygate and its aftermath – the short premiership of Liz Truss and even shorter career of her Chancellor, Kami-Kwasi Kwarteng, Ukraine, Ukraine, Ukraine, the Cost-of-Living Crisis and the fundamental racism of the party that has assumed the name ‘Conservative’. Peter Brookes is an angry man; seeing his collected work brings this home. But it is not just anger at what may be the worst period of British government ever, he is angry with the strikers taking advantage of this situation with no regard for rest of us; nurses have a case, but he discounts the rest of them.

Browse through this book to recall the evil the

Tories have brought to our nation since 2015. But remember, the Tories aren’t the only conservatives in the coming general election battle.

If you want an original, they market at £1,450.00, or £2,750.00 for Nature Notes, from Chris Beetles Gallery - <https://www.chrisbeetles.com/artists/brookes-peter-born-1943.html> where you can also find the work of Nick Newman.



### ***Stewart Rayment***

### **The Idea of Prison Abolition by Tommie Shelby. Princeton University Press 2023**

This is a book about the total abolition of prisons. Strangely, it is not written by a prison abolitionist. It is a thought experiment by a Harvard philosophy professor, who considers the arguments put forward by abolitionists and assesses whether they have any advantage over what could be achieved by simply reforming prisons.

Prison abolition is an interesting topic, but the way it is presented in this book is slightly tortured. It is more like an academic brainteaser than a book. Shelby spends a lot of pages explaining what prison abolitionists think, and also imagining how they would respond to various criticisms he raises. He then goes on to conclude that abolition is (a) unnecessary; and (b) impossible without wider societal reform. The structure would have been a lot simpler if he had said 'I believe in prison reform, but it is worth considering whether prisons are salvageable as an institution or whether they should be abolished altogether.' And then got on with his analysis. Instead, you have to wade through lots of material where Shelby tries to faithfully explain a position that he does not agree with. Perhaps this is an academic style favoured at Harvard School of Philosophy, so I have tried to look past it and consider the substance.

Although the particular viewpoints presented by Shelby seem quite niche, and barely merit an entire book dedicated to analysing them, the pros of prison abolition are a serious topic to consider. Prisons, and in particular large-scale incarceration as we know it today, are a modern phenomenon. For most of human history, other forms of punishment were used. We need to know why prisons were established and what we are aiming to do with them so we can assess whether they are working or capable of reform. And as much of prison reform is about reducing the size of prison populations, alternative forms of punishment need to be considered. If we do not consider these issues, we cannot know which crimes (if any) require incarceration and cannot be dealt with through other means.

Shelby does a good job of considering these issues, although arguably he could have done more if he had not spent so much time setting out the abolitionist views. He also places prisons within context in society and suggests that more needs to be done to prevent crime, including structural reform, if prisons are to become superfluous. His views are measured, thoughtful and easy to understand.

This is a strong book on an important topic; I would recommend it for any advocate of prison reform to test the extent of reform that they wish to see.

### ***Eleanor Healy-Birt***