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INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



EVENTS

26th-29th September Liberal Democrats' Autumn Conference. **Will be an Online event.**

23rd October Second reading of Alistair Carmichael's Hong Kong Bill, House of Commons.

For bookings & other information please contact the Treasurer below.

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Photographs: Dennis Graf, Mohamed Nossier, Andy Daer.



Chinese Liberal Democrats have an online survey on the situation in Hong Kong. To participate please go to <https://chineselibdems.org.uk/en/survey/survey-on-the-situation-in-hong-kong>



LIBG 2020 PROGRAMME



A programme of events for LIBG has been organised by the executive for the rest of the year. It is intended that these will be held physically at the National Liberal Club starting at 6.30pm in each case, but also broadcast online. These arrangements will obviously depend on both corona virus restrictions and technology.

Details of online access, speakers and exact subjects will be announced nearer the time for each. Please check the forthcoming events link on the LIBG website, www.libg.co.uk

The events are:

17 August:

Hungary Loss of human rights - worry for EU disintegration? Is Orban out of Control?

14 September

Forum on China

12 October

75 years of peace with the UN - is it still upholding the spirit of supporting human rights or does its form need to change?

9 November

Annual General Meeting (postponed from July due to pandemic restrictions) followed at 7pm by speaker meeting

7 December

What's happening to the USA's Global position, and what are the threats?

The Death of George Floyd.

Christine Graf.

“What, in our house?” The infamous words of Lady MacBeth were the first that came to mind when I heard about George Floyd, and how he had died in broad daylight, handcuffed, repeatedly apologizing, crying out for breath, for his mother, and how he finally choked to death under the knee of Derek Chauvin, a Minneapolis policeman.

This is not what one expects to happen here. Mississippi, maybe. Minnesota, no. Minnesotans, like Canadians, are said to be “nice.” But this was certainly not the first time the local police killed a suspect in a non-life-threatening situation.

A friend’s grandchild still misses Philando Castile, the kind and friendly Black who worked at her school cafeteria. Four years ago Castile was shot when reaching for his driver’s license during a routine traffic stop just about 3 miles north of here. His killing attracted nationwide attention when his fiancée livestreamed the incident on her cellphone. Castile’s mother now instructs people in the community on how to behave when stopped by police, what to do to avoid being shot. Others, like Jamar Clark and Thurman Blevins, died at the hands of police in previous years. By the way, there is little chance that I or my husband will be shot by a cop: we are white.

Normally a police officer who shoots someone goes on what is called “administrative leave.” Usually it’s “paid administrative leave.” Dave Bicking, a member of Communities United Against Police Brutality, told a New York Times reporter that since 2012 more than 2,600 civilian complaints have been filed against

Minneapolis police officers. In only a dozen cases involving 15 officers has any discipline resulted – the worst being 40 hours of unpaid suspension, “A week’s unpaid vacation” Bicking called it.

Many Black parents here and all over the U.S. feel they have to give their children, especially if they are boys, “the talk.” According to adolescent psychiatrist Adrienne Clark, children as young as 10 need to understand what they can expect from the police. They should hear about discrimination and racial injustice: when they’re 14 and older, they need to understand that bias might cause police officers to



“view them as older and more aggressive than their white peers.”

George Floyd had probably heard the talk. He cooperated with the police, did not resist when he was handcuffed, but balked at going into the squad car, saying he was claustrophobic. It was then that Officer Chauvin took him down and knelt on his neck for over 8 minutes. The police transcript recorded first his apologizing, finally his uttering “I can’t breathe” over 20 times before he died. Members of the public protested, but were not able to intervene to save him: two policemen helped to hold down the handcuffed man while another stood watch. This was all over a counterfeit \$20 bill, a minor crime, a misdemeanor.

For several days after the death of Floyd on Monday, May 25th, Derek Chauvin, the police officer responsible, remained a free man. He was finally arrested and charged on Friday, May 29th. As Jacob Frey, the mayor of Minneapolis, put it at a news conference on Tuesday the 26th: “Why is the man who killed George Floyd not in jail? If you had done it or I had done it, we would be behind bars right now.”

Derek Chauvin and the other officers did not expect to be jailed. They belong to a powerful police union. Its head, Lt. Bob Kroll, criticized Chief of Police, Medaria Arradondo for firing the four officers soon after Floyd's death. In an interview on Minnesota Public Radio, Janee Harteau, a former chief of police pointed out that the strength of the union makes it almost impossible for police chiefs to dismiss or discipline rogue officers: "When I either impose discipline or terminate officers for wrongdoing, it's either the union filing grievances fighting against me or it's the arbitrators who are undoing the discipline or the terminations," said Harteau. "So, who really has the power to change the culture?"

On June 1st, a week after Floyd's death, we went to a protest demonstration in front of the governor's mansion, about a mile from here. Most of the demonstrators we saw were young whites. Some brought their children; many people, because of the pandemic, wore masks. It was a peaceful demonstration on a hot afternoon, and we noticed many people carrying homemade signs. Along with the usual "Black Lives Matter" signs, we saw "Police the Police," "Rest in Power George Floyd" "Stop Killing Us" "No More Blue Klux Klan," and tellingly, "Arrest All Four" and "Arrest them All." This was on Monday, the first of June. It wasn't until Wednesday that the 3 other officers involved in Floyd's death were charged, with "aiding and abetting a murder."



Some people, including President Trump, chose to focus not on the lynching of a helpless man in police custody, but on the looting and burning that followed his death: "Shoot the looters" he tweeted.

It is true that looting became widespread within a day of Floyd's death. Over a hundred businesses, many of them small and immigrant-owned, were looted and in some cases burned down. George Floyd's brother Terrance came to the Twin Cities to see the place where his brother died and to appeal for peace: "I understand y'all upset" he said, "But I

doubt if y'all half as upset as I am. So if I'm not over here wilding out – if I'm not over here blowing up stuff, if I'm not over here messing up my community – then what are y'all doing?"

Later Governor Tim Walz echoed the plea for peace, pointing out that looters were doing a disservice to George Floyd's memory and distracting from valid protests against police violence. But it took the summoning of the National Guard, young men in camouflage uniforms beside military vehicles, lining the streets that already looked strange, the shop windows boarded up with plywood, to restore order to our cities.

But the worst violence had already happened outside Cup Foods, at 38th and Chicago Avenue in Minneapolis. Darnella Frazier, just 17 years old, saw a murder in progress and filmed it on her phone, posting it on her Facebook page at 1:46 a.m. In the video Derek Chauvin looks calmly out at her, hands in pockets, sure that he won't be held responsible for the murder he's in the process of committing. When the body of George Floyd was sent to the Hennepin County Medical Center, the police report stated that the suspect had stopped breathing while in their custody. Nothing in their report suggested that the police, whose motto on their squad cars is "Protect and Serve" had had anything to do with his death. The word of bystanders who witnessed the murder would not have been enough. It took a brave teenager to record the images that should sicken anybody who can watch even a few seconds of them, a video that just might, this time, lead to real change.

Christine Graf

THE DEATH OF PANDA DIPLOMACY? THE END OF CHINESE ASCENDANCY?

Joe Zammit-Lucia

Authoritarian regimes tend to display an uncomfortable combination of aggression and paranoia that feed on each other.

Has China entered an unstoppable cycle of increased belligerence?

As they gain confidence, they become more aggressive towards others. But, since they can only maintain their position through force and suppression, they also feel that threats, real and perceived, need to be met with yet more forcefulness. This uncomfortable combination risks leading to an unstoppable cycle of ever-increasing belligerence.

Has China entered this cycle? What are the implications? Is there a way back?

Under President Xi, China has become more assertive. From its actions in the South China Sea, to its proposed security laws in Hong Kong, to repeated provocative military flights over Taiwan, and now the confrontation on its borders with India where, reportedly, twenty Indian soldiers were killed, battered by clubs wrapped in barbed wire or thrown down ravines.

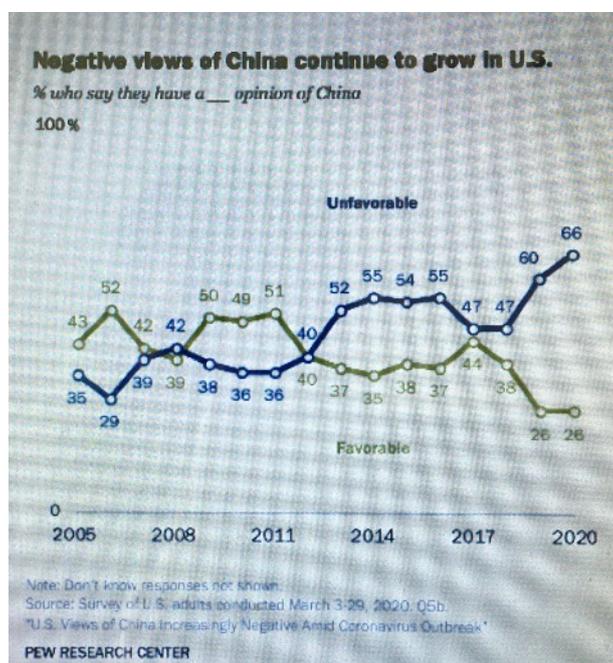
It seems that China has abandoned years of panda diplomacy designed to build its soft power and has moved to sharp power and hard power mode.

Why? And what does it all portend for the future of globalization?

Trump's American Provocation

President Trump has every incentive to continue his anti-China rhetoric and actions

President Trump's aggressive stance towards China is increasing as the November elections approach. There is precious little chance that this will be reversed since standing up to China forms an important part of the President's electoral platform and plays well to China's plummeting popularity in the US.



The greater China's aggressiveness, the more likely are negative perceptions to grow, providing President Trump with a strong incentive to continue with his policies.

Biden follows growing anti-China sentiment

Neither would a President Biden in January 2021 change that trajectory. Biden promises to make his efforts to curb China more effective than those of President Trump by building an anti-China coalition of allies.

Joe Biden would sanction China if president for its plan to impose new national security rules on Hong Kong, his campaign said on Wednesday, and accused President Donald Trump of having "enabled" Beijing's curbs on freedoms in the former British colony.

The United States had to “take a stand against China’s crackdown in Hong Kong,” said Tony Blinken, a senior foreign policy advisor for Biden, the likely Democratic nominee to take on Trump in November’s election. He said the former vice president would rally American allies to pressure China, leverage he said Trump had “forfeited,” and criticized the Republican president for praising leader Xi Jinping in the face of pro-democracy protests that shook the territory last year.

A Biden administration would “fully enforce” the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, “including sanctions on officials, financial institutions, companies and individuals,” Blinken said in a statement. As reported by Reuters 27 May 2020

Currently there seems little reason to believe that Sino-American relations will see much improvement in the short term.

Where is Europe?

Are Europe's aspirations in relation to China in any way practicable?

Europe's position remains one of trying to straddle the fence of standing up to China (how?) while also maintaining good trade relations. A summit between European and Chinese leaders on June 22nd ended with Ms Von der Leyen calling the EU relationship with China simultaneously “one of the most strategically important and one of the most challenging”. The EU also claims that human rights, fundamental freedoms, level playing field conditions and reciprocal market access are vital pillars for the EU. Sounds more aspirational than practical given where China is today.

“Rather than putting all its eggs in the treaty basket, the EU is pursuing a twin-track approach of engagement with Beijing coupled with tough, unilateral steps to level the playing field. “The only way to get their attention is if they cannot take the openness of the EU market for granted,” said [a] European official. EU-China meeting touched by frost as economic barriers grow Financial Times, 22 June 2020

While trying to avoid it or postpone it as much as possible, in due course, Europe will likely have to commit to a choice – a Western alliance or collaboration with China?

As the EU has repeatedly told the UK, having one's cake and eating it is not likely a viable option.

Meanwhile countries in Europe's own back yard, like Serbia, continue to deepen their China relations – and their dependence.

Will it all start to go wrong elsewhere?

Just as European imperial powers employed gunboat diplomacy, China is using sovereign debt to bend other states to its will. As Sri Lanka's handover of the strategic Hambantota port shows, states caught in debt bondage to the new imperial giant risk losing both natural assets and their very sovereignty.

BRAHMA CHELLANEY Professor of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin

As the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic start to become obvious, states that have become involved in China's Belt and Road initiative may come to take a different view of whether the initiative is as benign as they might have initially imagined.

China has not yet reached a stage where its assertiveness can go unchallenged

Is China's timing right?

It's all about timing.

Has China's power position on the world reached a stage where it can throw its weight around effectively either without fear of retaliation, or safe in the knowledge that retaliation will be ineffective?

In our view, China has not yet reached that position. We believe that it is premature for China to abandon its panda diplomacy and switch to a more aggressive stance that will weaken its soft power.

That said, we also believe that the replacement of Chinese collaboration with growing rivalry with much of the rest of the world is now possibly irreversible.

Is China 'done'?

The overall question is whether China's ascendancy is reaching its twilight. Chatting to a bunch of 17-year-olds recently, I asked them about their views of China. The unanimous response was "China's done." While, until relatively recently, they were fascinated by China and its rise, they now seem to have lost interest.

We shall have to wait and see whether they're right.

TAX, TAX, TAX.

Measures to rein in industrial scale tax shifting receive a nonfatal blow

One of the elements that continues to turn people against globalization is industrial scale tax-shifting practices within multinational companies. Tech companies have become the poster child of such tax avoidance.

The OECD initiative to address the issue on a multilateral basis have hit a roadblock as the US has withdrawn its support.

Yet, the issue is too politically (and fiscally) important to go away. It is likely that, in the absence of multi-lateral agreement, the major European countries will proceed with unilateral measure setting up further confrontation with the Trump administration.

Unlike the China issue, it is likely that a Biden win in November will open the door to further negotiations.

But Mexico is taking prisoners...

Meantime, Mexico is acting.

Raquel Buenrostro, the new head of the tax agency, is squeezing tax payments out of the largest multinationals under threats of criminal charges that include the possibility of jail time before trial. Some have labelled the approach as 'fiscal terrorism' – a charge that Ms Buenrostro strongly denies.

[There will be] zero privileges and zero waivers" Raquel Buenrostro, as reported in the Financial Times

POST-BREXIT BRITAIN

A new role for post-Brexit Britain?

There now seems little doubt that the UK will exit the transitional period and fully emerge as a third country at the end of 2020. We will not add here to the widespread views and speculations on whether some deal

will be reached, what sort of deal, or no deal. Our interest is in starting a discussion on the UK's place in the world post-Brexit.

An 'honest broker' role in a polarized world is more appropriate than a low tax, low regulation jurisdiction countries will proceed with unilateral measure setting up further confrontation with the Trump administration.

In a recent article¹ we argued that the UK still has considerable influence and continues to top soft power rankings. Our vision of a post-Brexit Britain is as honest broker to facilitate collaboration between the three disparate power blocks – the US, the EU and China. We believe that such a role is both more productive and more fitting than a race to the bottom as a low tax, low regulation jurisdiction – something we believe no longer to be viable. “Everything is in line with the law, everyone has to comply.

Joe Zammit-Lucia

Joe Zammit-Lucia is a RADIX Co-Founder and board member. He is an entrepreneur and commentator on business and political issues writing in outlets in the UK, US, Germany and the Netherlands. His particular interest is the relationship between business and politic

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¹ <https://reaction.life/london-can-be-the-new-geneva-for-international-diplomacy/>

About RADIX

RADIX is a non-aligned public policy think tank for the radical centre. Its aim is to re-imagine the way government, institutions and societies function based on open-source, participative citizenship. To kick-start the thinking that is needed for policy to embrace technology, innovation, social and cultural change.

Contact: hello@radixuk.org www.radixuk.org

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LI bureau condemns China's demolition of 'one-country-two systems' firewall

Today China has chosen to surrender its international obligations by demolishing the 'one-country-two-systems' firewall. On the day that Hong Kong people are set to celebrate the twenty-third anniversary of the Sino-British handover agreement – a treaty to safeguard specific civil and political rights until 2047 – the bureau of Liberal International stands in solidarity with the people of Hong Kong as China enforces its so-called national security law.

Despite assurances from Chief Executive Carrie Lam to the United Nations that human rights will be protected, we note with alarm that the first arrests of peaceful protestors under the new law have already been made. The voluntary, pre-emptive disbanding of pro-democracy groups, amid fear of severe legal repercussions, is warning that human rights across the Special Administrative Region are now threatened like never before.

Liberal International will work with our parties, parliamentarians, and partners to defend the democratic rights of the Hong Kong people. While we welcome the news that Taiwan and the United Kingdom have taken steps to protect groups of Hong Kong citizens the response must be global and unwavering.

1.7.2020

Questioning Western Nations’ Moral Values! Mohammed Nossier

In any given conversation, western citizens tend to express the pride they take in what they define as “western values”. Arguing that they abide by a set of high moral standards that sets them apart from the rest of the world, they fail to notice that the values they claim may be the accidental product of the strict rules and regulations that control and discipline their societies. Should these provisions ever degenerate, westerners will behave chaotically and immorally.

Western nations’ superiority is derived from the fact that they are scientifically driven nations that offer dignified, prosperous lives to their citizens and provide them with appropriate paths for personal growth, which positively reflects on their societies’ evolution. Moreover, western nations have articulated ruling mechanisms that allow their politicians to exercise and share power, but do not necessarily serve their citizens’ best interests.



Meanwhile, moral values can be better observed in the actions of human beings living in the absence of democracy and rule of law.

The authenticity of moral values is most noticeable in individuals who stand by their beliefs and values knowing that voicing these will result in certain disgrace. For example, unlike westerners whose freedom of expression is protected by law, citizens of autocratic nations often struggle between expressing their opinions, which – if not to the liking of the ruler – could land them in prison for years, and keeping silent, living safe, neutral lives.

“When in Rome, do as the Romans do” is a practical proverb that may safeguard the lives of people living in “Rome”, but that lacks the basic essence of morality. It reflects an attitude that encourages people to offer bribes when working in a corrupt nation and to refrain from doing so in nations where strict business regulations are enforced. Although many western nations penalize their citizens for committing bribery overseas, international companies often manage to overcome this obstacle by assigning a local agency to handle corruption on their behalf.

Decades ago, western nations habitually committed completely immoral acts such as serious crimes, national wars, gender inequality and sexual harassment, among others –until they put into place a number of transformative rules and regulations that allowed them to live progressive, moral lives, attain their present superior status and develop a constructive western interstate relationship. The West makes no attempt to build this type of constructive relationship with the rest of the world, where its relationships are driven mostly by economic interests.

Although western scholars often argue that autocracy is a barrier to national advancement, western nations tend to behave hypocritically by offering large amounts of aid to autocratically ruled countries with whose leaders they often maintain harmonious relations. Accordingly, they export arms and military equipment to these nations knowing that their military budget provisions could be better spent on offsetting real national deficiencies, such as education and healthcare!

Western nations have managed to develop a path to prosperity that serves them well and that revolves around self-interest, national strength and competitiveness; their moral values were probably formulated to advance this lifestyle. The present Covid-19 pandemic portrays how western nations deal with human evolution by advocating for providing ventilators to infected youngsters expected to spend long lifetimes in the service of

their nations, at the expense of their elders whose past national contributions are discounted. Meanwhile, the culprits behind the ventilator shortage have yet to be interrogated!

The majority of western populations no doubt behaves morally; however, they are the powerless citizens who are only able to make their voices heard once every few years, at elections, when choosing their representatives mostly from a predetermined basket of political elites who are often manipulating their nations' policies, regardless of their political belongings, leading us to question the very essence of western democracy.

By extolling their moral values, western nations tend to acquire a sense of false moral supremacy, which is eventually translated into imposing their ideas and policies on the rest of the world – a move that in itself dismantles the core of morality. Actually, the true achievement of western nations came at the hands of previous generations of westerners who fought to establish democracy and rule of law in their nations that had been sinking into a state of massive chaos, thus creating the supremacy status that the present western generation is arrogantly harvesting today.

Mohammed Nossier

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

Another Illegal Annexation.

Andy Daer

Claiming sovereignty over land overrun and occupied in war-time was, in ancient times, part of the cut and thrust of international relations. Thankfully, it was outlawed by the world community shortly after World War II.

Annexation was made formally illegal by the Fourth Geneva Convention in 1949. Its provisions have since been ratified by virtually every state in the world, including Israel and Palestine¹. Annexation is permitted in only two circumstances, when it has been approved by the UN, or in self-defence. Neither applies in the West Bank. Benjamin Netanyahu's announcement that up to 40% of the Palestinian territory in the West Bank is going to become part of Israel is an attempted land-grab by a nation which has overwhelming military superiority over its neighbour.

The timing may be an attempt to deflect attention from Netanyahu's trial for breaches of trust and fraud, or due to getting the thumbs up from Donald Trump, but the reality is that extending the borders of Israel to encompass the whole of what was Mandate Palestine has been the goal since the 1967 war, and in the case of some of Netanyahu's predecessors, for much longer than that.

The UK, of course, has a deep historical connection with this dispute. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1917, the League of Nations mandated the British to nurture the creation of a Jewish state in part of Palestine, provided the interests of the indigenous people in Palestine were safeguarded. When the mandate ended in 1948, Israel was created roughly in the place the United Nations wanted it, but no agreement was reached over statehood for the rest - mainly Gaza and the West Bank, and they were governed by Egypt and Jordan respectively for nearly twenty years. In 1967 Israel invaded Gaza and the West Bank in the course of a war with Egypt, Jordan and Syria, and has never left. Post-war military occupation is permitted on a temporary basis, but the 53 years since 1967 have stretched the definition of 'temporary' beyond breaking point. Few believed Israel ever intended to hand back captured territories to the Palestinians, and Netanyahu's plan to openly declare Israeli sovereignty proves the point. He has the approval of Donald Trump, but under international law, what he intends is still what the Geneva Conventions describe as a 'grave war crime'.

Strangely, the proposed annexations offer little of value to Israeli citizens. Responsibility for imposing a strict Israeli regime on Palestinians in the West Bank has for many years been partly offloaded to the Palestinian Authority, and annexation transfers that burden back to Israel. There are few tangible benefits for Israelis, who have been free to settle in the West Bank throughout most of the years of occupation.



With so little to offer anyone, the plan looks increasingly like a vanity project for Benjamin Netanyahu. Flouting international law may feel like a personal triumph, but only if he doesn't care that Israel is increasingly seen as a pariah state. Another tragic own-goal would be a rise in anti-Semitism, which would be wrong and unjust, especially to the Jewish diaspora, but is nevertheless a possible consequence. He also disastrously misjudges the effect of endorsement by the American President. In the past, Israel enjoyed support and financial aid from a succession of American Presidents who saw it as a

strategic ally in a region of pivotal importance. Today, it is more likely that Trump simply admires strong leaders, and sees in Netanyahu echoes of Putin, Erdoğan, Orbán, and, of course, himself. Netanyahu seems not to know that Trump is held in such low regard that his approval is far more likely to be counter-productive than helpful.

International law is clear, and we know that 1,000 European political figures recently signed a call for strong action if annexation went ahead, but Israel has defied international law and the disapproval of other nations for decades, with few consequences, and it is unlikely that disapproval alone can stop the annexation project. Sanctions, or the threat of sanctions, must form part of the world's response. Mere hand-wringing doesn't work.

There is also the danger that if annexation is halted or reversed over coming months, as it seems it well might be, the world will turn its attention elsewhere. Merely cancelling annexation would not be a triumph for world order. Even without the final step of formal annexation, Israel's existing occupation of the West Bank is illegal, and denies the human rights of a nation of people, as does the blockade on Gaza. Israel operates an apartheid regime within its own borders, and in the West Bank imposes martial law on Palestinians, but Israeli law on the illegal Israeli settlers. The military courts used for Palestinians require less evidence, and achieve high conviction rates. Although there are sporadic clashes between settlers and Palestinians, the Israeli military presence in the West Bank has little to do with security, and is designed mainly to make life unpleasant for Palestinians, as has been confirmed by many ex-IDF soldiers.

Netanyahu's reading of the political realities has so far been uncharacteristically poor, but it could get even worse for him. His botched attempt to ride roughshod over international law has focused attention on the West Bank, and it might unite the watching world in a demand for the two-state solution all Palestinians want. The world promised it to them in 1917, and the British Government took on the responsibility to provide it as "a sacred duty" of civilisation. We have failed the Palestinians too many times in the past. This time, we must not.

Andy Daer

Andy Daer is vice-chair of the Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine. LDFP have run a number of webinars throughout lockdown, go to their website <http://www.ldfp.eu/> for coming events.

¹ Palestine had been recognised as a state by more than half of the world's countries by the year 2000. Today the figure is 140 out of a total of 196 countries, but it doesn't include the UK, which says it agrees with the idea of Palestinian statehood, but is waiting for the right moment.

Solidarity With Black Lives Matter

Liberal International stands in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. Racism, and arbitrary discrimination of any kind, is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated in a modern democratic state. The racially motivated police killing of George Floyd has brought to the boil long simmering complaints of systemic social injustice in the USA that have only been exacerbated by the Trump presidency. The disproportionate killing of black and minority groups by the police in the country that is proud to label itself the land of the free, cannot go on.

Floyd's dying words – I can't breathe – have resonated with black and minority ethnic groups across the world and awakened a widespread, justified, and incontrovertible feeling that they regularly suffer discrimination from the institutions that are mandated to protect them. Despite COVID-19 related lockdowns, protesters have gathered in cities worldwide to denounce the systemic racism that still pervades our societies and to call on leaders to make the necessary changes.

Liberal International urges all liberals to join the chorus of voices speaking out in defence of human rights; and to call for genuine reform of the governance systems across the world that, to this day, perpetuate and protect racist and discriminatory attitudes.

Liberals have always fought for the respect of human rights and the inclusion of equality as a basic principle in governance models. In a well-functioning society, no one should not have to fear arbitrary violence or discrimination from their own authorities.

In supporting the aims of confronting racism and bringing about real and urgent change we also recognise that protests need to be cognisant of other current global challenges, including the essential need to limit the spread of COVID-19.

As Liberals, we must take the lead against racism, we must continue the fight for human rights at home, in the coffee shop, in policy-making, and, crucially, on the streets – If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.

All lives won't matter until black lives matter.

11/06/2020



Presidential term limit abused as Liberals claim democracy defeated

Liberal International is closely following the worrying developments in Russia. In a move that according to Grigory Yavlinsky, LI Prize for Freedom laureate and founder of Yabloko, defeated democracy in Russia, President Vladimir Putin has pushed through sweeping amendments to the Russian constitution after a national vote.

According to Russia's liberals, the 206 amendments, which were presented to the public as a bloc, are a further step by President Putin to undermine a wide range of democratic and human rights in Russia.

Internationally, much attention has been devoted to the so-called reset of Putin's presidential terms, enabling him to run for two more six-year terms and stay in his post until 2036 with increased powers. Other amendments include raising the status of the Russian language from the official language to the language of "the state-forming Russian nation", explicitly mentioning the faith in God of the population, ensuring patriotic education in schools, and constitutionally banning same-sex marriage. Another amendment notably gives the Russian Constitution primacy over international law.

LI member party Yabloko urged its supporters to abstain in the vote, stating that it was "fundamentally unacceptable for the Party as a constitutional political institution to participate in unlawful, unconstitutional, fake voting, the sole purpose of which is to draw society into the establishment of irremovable power in Russia and the consolidation of a corporate authoritarian regime in the country." They also developed, together with Russian constitutional lawyers, an alternative set of amendments to the Constitution – The Constitution of Free People – which would promote democratic and civil rights. The party campaigned for putting this alternative Constitution to vote as an alternative to Putin's.

After the adoption of the new constitution, the suppression of freedom of speech, already heavily under threat in Russia, intensified. *Pskov* journalist Svetlana Prokopyeva was, after 18 months of investigation and trials, found guilty of "justifying terrorism" and sentenced to a significant fine. Ivan Safronov, journalist of *Kommersant* and *Vedomosti*, was accused of treason. A search was conducted in the flat of Taisiya Bekbulatova, Editor-in-Chief of *Kholod*. Journalists and citizens who participated in single pickets by the Federal Security Service building in Moscow, protesting against these reprisals, were all detained.

Following the vote on the constitutional amendments, the State Duma has introduced a bill under the new Constitution labelling anyone who allegedly calls for a violation of the territorial integrity of the country (i.e. those who do not recognise Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea) as extremists.

Liberal International will continue to stand with its member party Yabloko and others who continue to fight for democracy and human rights in Russia.

reviews

The Unfinished Arab Spring: micro-dynamics of revolts between change and continuity, edited by Fatima El-Issawi and Francesco Cavatorta.
Gingko 2020 £28.00 isbn 9781909942486

In the wake of the December 2010 self-immolation of the impoverished young Tunisian street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, a wave of unrest swept across much of North Africa and the Middle East, leading to the ousting of presidents Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.

At the time, I railed against fellow journalists who adopted the lazy slogan of ‘Arab Spring’ for the new phenomenon.

Lazy for at least two reasons. First, the term was a clumsy adaptation of the 1968 (ultimately failed) Czech uprising against the country’s Soviet occupiers (the ‘Prague Spring’); just as virtually every US political

scandal since Watergate brought down US president Richard Nixon in 1974 has similarly been sloppily dubbed X-gate or Y-gate.

But the second, and more important, reason for my displeasure was that it was blatantly obvious from the turn of events, not least when they reached Syria, where I was lecturing in March 2011, that this momentous political trend was not a matter of just one season. Or indeed one year. I predicted it would take at least a decade, probably two, before we could map its trajectory or judge its success.

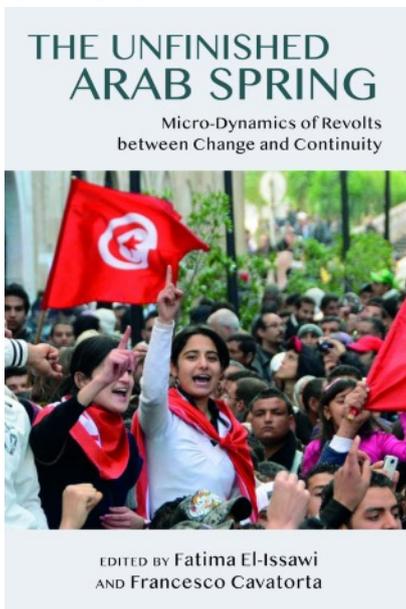
While I was working with the late Palestinian-Jordanian minister, Jamal Nasir on his autobiography we adopted a fresh term to describe what was happening: The New Arab Awakening. We were intending to write another book, with this title, deliberately echoing that of the classic 1938 history of the rise of Arab nationalism by George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, but sadly the nonagenarian Dr Nasir died before we got very far with that.

Now, however, a book has appeared that effectively does what we would have wanted to achieve, but with the added benefit of bringing together contributions from a wide range of distinguished scholars, many of them from the region themselves.

The title is well justified, too. The Unfinished Arab Spring is in two distinct parts. The first is a series of case studies, covering Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Libya, Morocco and Algeria (Yemen being an interesting omission). Each chapter’s author takes a different approach that is country-specific and illustrates well how very differently each uprising or revolution has turned out, from “delegitimising democratic demands” in the case of Egypt to “resource competition” in Libya.

The second part brings an analytical approach to the dialectic between the ‘dynamics of change’ and the ‘dynamics of continuity’. Various agents and actors are identified, from well-educated youth to secular women, but so too the technological context, not least the prevalence of social media and other alternative platforms.

In the second section, Tunisia receives particularly close attention, which can be justified not only because this is where the so-called Arab Spring began (in mid-winter, of course), but also because Tunisia is the one country in which the New Arab Awakening can be said, more or less, to have been a success. Whether



others will prove to be in the long term remains to be seen, though there have been encouraging recent developments in Algeria.

All of the chapters have extensive footnotes and at the end of each there is a very useful bibliography. This is, after all, a serious collection of academic papers, though most of its authors have nonetheless managed to write in a style that is accessible to the informed general reader.

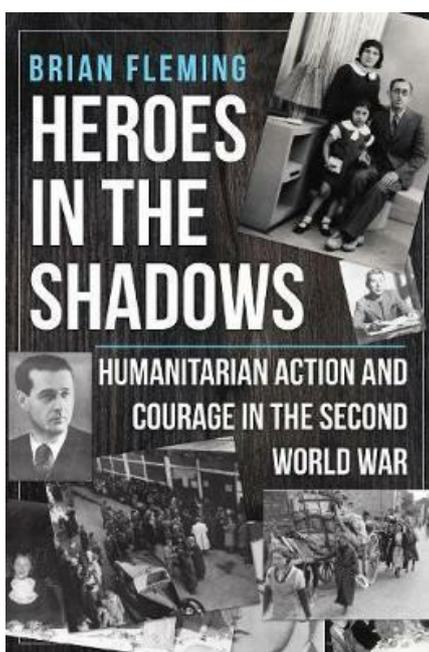
As a part-time School of Oriental and African Studies academic myself, I did momentarily balk at one chapter heading in Part Two: “Youth Activism and the Politics of ‘Mediapreneurship’: The Effects of Political Efficacy and Empowerment on Mediated Norm Conveyance in Tunisia and Morocco”. But do not be put off by this, or indeed by the price of the book. For a work of such scholarship, £40 was quite reasonable, so the £28.00 currently quoted on Ginkgo’s website is a bargain. And if you cannot afford to buy the book yourself, get your library to order it. You and they will be grateful.

Jonathan Fryer

Heroes in the Shadows, humanitarian action and courage in the Second World War,
by Brian Fleming.
Amberley 2019 £20.00
isbn: 9781445687322

Heroes in the Shadows is a natural follow on to Flemings’ earlier book, *The Vatican Pimpernel*, the story of Monsignor Hugh O’Flaherty, who saved at least 6,000 lives from the hands of the Nazis and Fascists during the Second War World. How do you measure heroism? The heroes in the shadows range from diplomats, most commonly now well known, to ordinary people. We are focussed around the Comet Line and other routes by which fugitives – refugees, airmen shot down over Europe, made their escape. Many of those who aided them would lose their lives, and the majority of volunteers were women.

It is worth recalling the motto of the Comet Line – *Pugna quin Percutias* – fight without strike, broadly an example of passive resistance against the Nazis. This aspect of opposition to the Nazis is less likely to be recalled than militant actions, though perhaps more so, relied on the solidarity of its members. The class and related conflicts in France and Belgium made resistance more difficult and infiltration more of a hazard.



There are some gripping passages as one moves through accounts of narrow escapes, the motivations of those encountered, the sheer audacity. It would be a spoiler to say more on that basis, but suffice to say we are mainly talking about ordinary people whose heroism and humanity deserves to be remembered.

Dr Brian Fleming sat in the Oireachtas, representing Dublin West in the Dáil from 1981-82 and the Seanad, from 1983 to 1987, for Fine Gael. This would have been around the time when Garret FitzGerald was considering bring Fine Gael into Liberal International - it did not happen and they are aligned with the Christian Democrats. I don’t know what Fleming’s stance on this was. Afterwards he was working in education and continues to promote education amongst the disadvantaged.

Stewart Rayment

International Abstracts

Egypt

Egypt needs to better leverage in its foreign policy, by Mohammed Nosseir
Modern Diplomacy, May 14, 2020

<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/05/14/egypt-needs-to-better-leverage-its-foreign-policy/>

Israel

Covid-19 in the time of Netanyahu, by Yonatan Mendel. London Review of Books 7th May 2020.

The report of the Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel fringe meeting at last September's Liberal Democrat conference was deferred as the Israeli general election was about to take place. It was inconclusive and no settlement came of it, causing yet another general election, the third, which was again, inconclusive. Then coronavirus cut in and the stalemate had to be resolved. Yonatan Mendel, of Ben-Gurion University, provides an update until we can have a more substantive review.

<https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v42/n09/yonatan-mendel/covid-19-in-the-time-of-netanyahu>

Turkey

Will Erdoğan hold on to his voter base at all costs, can he retain it?

Medyascope is a centre-left, even 'liberal' in the Turkish context, blog

<https://medyascope.tv/2020/06/11/turkey-will-erdogan-hold-on-to-his-voter-base-at-all-costs-can-he-retain-it/>

USA

They survived the worst battles of World War II and died of the virus, by Ellen Berry. New York Times 24th May 2020.

One of the saddest accounts from the Covid 19 Pandemic; though it relates to Trump's United States, it is somehow redolent of the Conservative's cull of the care homes in Britain.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/24/us/they-survived-the-worst-battles-of-world-war-ii-and-died-of-the-virus.html>

History will judge the complicit; why have Republican leaders abandoned their principles in support of a dangerous and immoral president? By Anne Applebaum. The Atlantic July/August 2020.

It takes a long time to get going, via tales of the German Democratic Republic and Vichy France, but eventually it gets there.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/07/trumps-collaborators/612250/>

Democrats will be lost without the Senate, by John Nichols. The Nation 13th July 2020

Simply winning the presidency isn't enough for the Democrats, if they can't wrest the Senate from Republican leader Mitch McConnell, Biden will be as hamstrung as the last two years of Obama's administration.

<https://www.thenation.com/article/politics/senate-democrats-biden/>

Has Trump adopted a viva-death approach to the presidency? Noam Chomsky interviewed by George Yancy. Truthout 5th June 2020.

<https://truthout.org/articles/noam-chomsky-trump-has-adopted-a-viva-death-approach-to-the-presidency/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=1bbd1e05-5185-42f9-8388-9433d07a4517>

and part of the story which you might throw at your neighbourhood Brexiteer...

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/25/exclusive-big-pharma-rejected-eu-plan-to-fast-track-vaccines-in-2017>

<https://www.statnews.com/2020/05/17/the-art-of-the-pandemic-how-donald-trump-walked-the-u-s-into-the-covid-19-era/>

<https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2020-04-23/trump-liberate-michigan-but-not-georgia>

Journal of Liberal History Issue 106 Spring 2020

In keeping with the times, James Moore writes on Lloyd George's brush with the Spanish Flu, Covid 19 of its day. Hugh Gault writes on Asquith's return to parliament at the Paisley by-election in 1920; this also marked David Low's arrival as a cartoonist on the British scene. Tim Hughes on Chartism and its legacy in Northampton. Michael Meadowcroft's obituary of Robert Maclennan, who died in January, is notable for its detail on the merger process between the Liberal party and the Social Democrats. International content comes, predictably in John Major's address to the memorial service for Paddy Ashdown, particularly his work as United Nations High Representative in Bosnia.

Liberator 401

Aside from Rebecca Tinsley's article, *China seizes its chance as Covid-19 hits Africa*, which is essentially the same as her *Africa, oil and COVID-19* article in interLib 2020-04, this issue is devoted to the pandemic and domestic politics. Claire Tyler & Margaret Lally put the boot into the Tories' cull of the care homes, followed by a spirited attack by community pharmacist Paul Klein, and more. Ideal reading to hone your attack on Conservatives as we move out of lockdown.