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# INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



# EVENTS

**29<sup>th</sup> October** – Layla Moran Zoom panel on Foreign Aid (see page 4)

**30<sup>th</sup> October** – Liberal Democrat Party nationwide virtual day conference on the future of Europe.

**1<sup>st</sup> November** – LIBG AGM (followed by speaker on South America) – 6.30pm Zoom (see page 4)

**25<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> November** – 49<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, IFLRY. Athens, Greece

**11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> February 2022** – Scottish Liberal Democrats Spring Conference, The Town House, Hamilton.

**11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> March 2022** - Liberal Democrats Spring Conference - Online

*For bookings & other information please contact the Treasurer below.*

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Photographs: Liberal International, Stewart Rayment, Sudan & Lebanon - anon.

Cover Photograph – Woman on street, Sudan 25<sup>th</sup> October.



## **LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL BRITISH GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Please be advised by this notice that the Annual General Meeting of Liberal International (British Group)(LIBG) will be held at 6.30pm on Monday 1 November 2021.

Due to pandemic issues this will be held virtually on Zoom at: [https://us04web.zoom.us/j/9159958278?  
pwd=ejVMejB3S3NuM1pZVFltY0szV2xqZz09](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/9159958278?pwd=ejVMejB3S3NuM1pZVFltY0szV2xqZz09)  
Meeting ID: 915 995 8278  
Passcode: LIBG011121

In the event of any difficulty logging in please contact: [adrian.trett@gmail.com](mailto:adrian.trett@gmail.com)

### **ELECTIONS**

Elections will be held for the following positions:  
President

Membership Secretary

Minutes Secretary

Treasurer

12 ordinary members of the Executive

In the event of a contested election, ballot papers will be sent out before the AGM.

### **AGENDA**

- 1) Minutes of the 2020 AGM
- 2) Apologies for absence
- 3) Matters arising
- 4) Chair's report
- 5) Approval of Annual Accounts (to be tabled at the meeting)
- 6) Membership report
- 7) Result of the annual elections
- 8) Election of honorary auditor
- 9) Closing remarks

Please notify any apologies for absence to:  
[generalenquiries@libg.co.uk](mailto:generalenquiries@libg.co.uk)

Documents for the AGM can be found at  
<https://libg.co.uk/en/document/libg-agm-1-november-2021#document>

## **JOIN US FOR AN EVENING WITH LAYLA MORAN**

### **INTERNATIONAL AID: WHERE NEXT?**

The Tories have slashed the UK's International Aid Budget. They have abandoned the 0.7% target.

Here's some of the implications of this:

- 1) UNICEF funding for children will be cut by around 60% from the UK
- 2) The UN Family Planning Agency will lose around £130 million
- 3) The UK has terminated a three-year grant agreement for Women for Women International in Nigeria
- 4) The International Rescue Committee has said up to 70% of its funding will be cut.

The UK has a proud history of leading the world in foreign aid and international development, this decision to cut funding wrecks our reputation.

That's why we are hosting an exciting panel discussion of **Friday 29<sup>th</sup> October 16.00-17.00**.

The panel will be led by Layla Moran MP our spokesperson for Foreign Affairs.

### **We would love to see you there!**

This is a chance for members to hear from Layla about the cuts to foreign aid, ask questions and get involved.

This is not an LIBG event

Registrations can be made at

[https://libdems.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_V1ZY234TrmmfpXrG6NOrQ](https://libdems.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_V1ZY234TrmmfpXrG6NOrQ)

# Sudan: An Islamist Power Grab

## Rebecca Tinsley

At dawn on October 25th, several civilian members of Sudan's fragile transitional government, including the prime minister, were abducted by the military leaders with whom they were ostensibly sharing power. But it would be wrong to classify this coup as a simple military power grab. Behind the generals are the old guard from the former Islamist regime of Omar al Bashir. Their aims are ideological, personal and financial, and they would not have made this move without a green light from regional powers who could not tolerate the prospect of free and fair elections in an Arab country.

A popular people's revolution overthrew Bashir in 2019. His former military backers offered him as a scape goat, deflecting attention from their roles during decades of violence against Sudanese civil society and minorities. A transitional government took the place of Bashir's National Congress Party (the rebranded National Islamic Front), with an uneasy combination of civil society, led by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, and the military, headed by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan.

From the beginning, it was feared that the deputy chair of the Transitional Military Council, General Dagalo, known as Hemedti, would undermine the fledgling government. Hemedti began his career in the Janjaweed, the mainly Arab militia responsible for the genocide of Black African Sudanese in Darfur. He rebranded the Janjaweed as the Rapid Support Forces, a paramilitary group involved in the brutal suppression of civilian protests in April 2019.

Hemedti is the link between the military and China, which has oil interests in Sudan and was a faithful backer of Bashir's regime. Tellingly, while other international actors condemned the October 25<sup>th</sup> coup, China urged dialogue, not the reinstatement of the transitional government. Sudan watchers believe Hemedti has continued to sow discord and to stir up ethnic grievance in a bid to undermine the move to a free and democratic society.

The transitional government inherited an economy in ruins, and it has struggled to control inflation. It has been sabotaged by elements of the old Islamist regime who had personal financial interests in businesses connected to corrupt government procurement and a web of military-owned companies. The old regime has also been appalled by the progressive drift of the transitional government (e.g. signing international laws on human and women's rights, and overtures to Israel) and it has provoked economic chaos through currency manipulation.

Sudan specialist Gill Lusk believes the coup echoes the 1989 National Islamic Front coup, when those responsible "won valuable time to consolidate by making outsiders think it was *only* a military coup, not an Islamist one."

Lusk continues, "Recent moves by the civilian cabinet to send Bashir [sic] and other leaders to the International Criminal Court for trial over genocide in Darfur threatened all senior Islamists, many of whom are in goal in Sudan. Once the evidence of their atrocities was exposed in public, they too could find themselves at the Hague or on trial in Sudan. It was time to act."

Lusk says Sudanese she has talked to since the coup began "have in the main no doubt it was engineered by the previous regime... The signs had been there for some weeks, as known Islamists encouraged the blockade of Port Sudan, the only port, and of the Presidential Palace."

Thousands of pro-democracy citizens responded with counter demonstrations supporting the transitional government. According to Sonja Miley from the NGO Waging Peace, "As recently as September 21<sup>st</sup> a military coup attempt was foiled. Widespread press about this thwarted coup confirmed pleas from activists

to the international community to pay attention to the undermining efforts of the military and former regime spoilers.”

However, Hemedti’s Rapid Support Forces and their allies in the military and the old regime’s Islamists grabbed their chance on October 25<sup>th</sup>.

### **The international response to the coup**

China’s reaction, urging dialogue, is in stark contrast with the immediate condemnation offered by the Biden administration, the EU, France, Germany and even the normally spineless African Union and the Arab League. While the USA has paused the transfer of \$700 million of aid, the UK has yet to attach economic penalties to its expression of concern about events in Khartoum. A former Conservative minister tells me he doubts the British government will take as strong a position as the Americans.

### **The Makings of a Regional Mess**

Sudan watchers fear that the military/Islamist coup would not have gone ahead without the approval of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The latter two bankrolled Bashir for years, and all three regimes have a vested interest in stopping Sudan’s planned elections. None of these countries want genuinely free and fair elections in a majority Arab and Muslim country.

Also of concern is the position of the South Sudan regime of President Salva Kiir. Kiir recently offered himself as mediator in the war between the Ethiopian government and the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front. However, the Ethiopian leader, Abiy, rebuffed him. Kiir reportedly flew to Egypt, which is in a war or words with Ethiopia about the Grand Renaissance Ethiopian Dam (GERD) which, Cairo believes, will disrupt Nile water reaching Egypt. The Sudanese military is believed to have sided with Cairo in the GERD dispute.

In contrast, Suzanne Jambo, leader of the opposition group, STEPS, says, “We South Sudanese have strong historical cultural ties and share a lot in common with the Sudanese people. We therefore, and in the strongest terms, condemn the military coup against the will of the Sudanese people who mandated the transitional government in Sudan in 2019 that the military must step aside in November 2021 and pave the way for a full return to civilian government toward the democratic transformation of Sudan.”

Egypt has followed Saudi Arabia’s lead in calling for self-restraint, rather than defending the transitional government, democratic transition or the Constitutional Declaration of 2019. Meanwhile, Ethiopia pointedly “reiterates the need for the respect of the sovereign aspirations of the people of Sudan and the non-interference of external actors in the internal affairs of the Sudan.”

### **The Civilian Response**

Since the coup, thousands of protesters have taken to the streets, being met with tear gas and bullets. There have been ten confirmed deaths and hundreds of injuries, but with the internet and phone lines cut, it is hard to establish the scale of the military reaction. At least 400 soldiers invaded a student dormitory on the night of October 25<sup>th</sup>, torturing students. There are reports that civilian members of the government have been beaten by their captors.

General Burhan justifies the seizure of power and the dissolution of the transitional government, saying infighting was threatening the country’s stability. He has promised to hand over to an elected civilian government in 2023. The military is framing the coup as Prime Minister Hamdok being ousted, as opposed to being abducted.

The heavy-handed tactics of the military and Islamists are familiar to Sudan’s Black African minorities in Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan. They now fear a resumption of the previous regime’s sustained ethnic cleansing campaign. Suzanne Jambo warns that “human rights violators in Sudan will continue to kill

Darfurians and other marginalized communities in Sudan.” She also warns against the destabilizing factors in the Horn and east Africa region. “The Sudanese people know these culprits.”

Sonja Miley from Waging Peace concludes, “The military are now emboldened, acting again with impunity and returning to the old regime ways including abductions and the killing of peaceful protestors. A disturbing video has emerged of a woman surrounded by uniformed men who were ferociously beating her with long batons as she walked down the street in broad daylight.”

A Sudanese woman told Waging Peace, “Sudanese people continue to fight peacefully the counter revolution and the brutal military coup in Sudan. They deserve urgent support from Sudan friends, human rights defenders and the international community.”

*Rebecca Tinsley*

## Dr Sima Samar awarded 2021 Prize for Freedom

At the Liberal International (LI) 204th Executive Committee meeting, the Executive Committee approved the Bureau’s selected awardee of the 2021 Prize for Freedom, Dr Sima Samar.

She has served as a human rights defender for over 40 years, dedicating much of her life to promoting and advocating for democracy and the rights of the world’s impoverished, marginalized, and under-represented populations.



Dr Samar began her career as a medical doctor providing health care in Afghanistan’s most isolated and marginalized region and experienced displacement and statelessness herself as the conflict in Afghanistan escalated. She went on to serve as Afghanistan’s first ever female Vice President, Minister of Women’s Affairs, Chairperson for the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, and as UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Sudan, and has been selected by the UN Secretary General to be a member of the High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation and, as of 2020, a

member of the High Level Panel for Internal Displacements.

Throughout her career, Dr Samar has been a consistent advocate for women and girls, even when this advocacy endangered her safety. Her unwavering dedication to challenging patriarchal norms, championing the meaningful inclusion of Afghan women, and pushing for systemic democratic change in international fora and on the ground make her an exemplary recipient for the LI Prize for Freedom. She is an exceptional representation of the values espoused by our Liberal family.

The Prize for Freedom is awarded annually by LI to honour an individual who has made an exceptional contribution to the advancement of human rights and political freedoms. Other recipients of the award include Uyghur economist Ilham Tohti, Venezuelan politician María Corina Machado, and leader of the Democratic Party of Hong Kong, Martin Lee.

# The Last Days of Pompeii or Erdoğan on his way out... A.Kurt

Erdoğan on his way out; everybody shares this sentiment on the streets of Turkish cities even Erdoğan's close allies but for a few exceptions in the higher echelons of his party members. On the other hand, nobody has a slightest idea how this era will end. Recently an article was published at the Foreign Policy website<sup>1</sup> about Erdoğan's future and his health (rather his health problems); this article suggested that his well-being is fast deteriorating. Naturally the author of the article was not primarily concerned about Erdoğan's health, rather who would take his place after he has gone. Every researcher around the world working on Turkish affairs is aware that under a regular election atmosphere Erdoğan's party would lose heavily. Almost everybody agrees either there would be a state of emergency (in the event of his death) followed by a new dictator emerges or the political vacuum would give way to a large scale of bloody battle. There is no clear way out for him or rather for the country if events take a dramatic turn.

The recently released Pandora Papers show that most of his close cronies already have dozens of offshore accounts and have transferred some of their wealth out of the country. Apart from many other signs, just the volume of offshore accounts are clear signs of nobody (even his cronies) are sure of the country's future. They stole too much, they killed so many, they corrupted too much, they are basically worse than any banana republic officials in modern history therefore they cannot go silently. They will certainly not accept the election results; assuming there would be an election anyway. Most probably they would try to apply a new emergency state rule. Whether public would accept it or not that is another matter.

They are desperately trying to find alliances from West in order to strengthen their position. If they see even a slight chance that they would have the support of western governments then they will crush or try to crush the opposition.

None of the likely candidates who are seen as possible successors would be able to win an election as he did in the past. Without Tayyip Erdoğan, AKP and its followers will surely be crushed. Nobody from his party has any chance to win any election or convince the nation that they are capable of running the country. They know that; but they are so deeply corrupted and if there is even a slight chance of restoration almost all of them will end up jail or lose their ill gained wealth. Because of this crushing reality they will do whatever they can, to stop the change.

Tayyip Erdoğan will definitely topple but the events that could follow have a great potential to rattle the region as well as Europe.

A few days ago, Erdoğan said something strange even weird. while he was talking one of his "ceremonial openings". He said 'we would like remind to the opposition that it could be better for them to stop saying that they are demanding to govern the country'. This is one of the latest threat of many targeting the opposition, coming directly from him.

*A Kurt*

<sup>1</sup> Erdoğan might be too sick too sick to keep running Turkey, by Steven A. Cook. Foreign Policy, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/10/01/erdogan-sick-lead-turkey/>

Foreign Policy also carried an article in reply by Halil Karaveli – Erdoğan's heir apparent isn't a problem, on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/10/05/hulusi-akar-erdogans-heir-apparent-problem/>

# Twenty years after 9/11 Saudi Arabia still exports hatred

## Rebecca Tinsley

President Biden recently declassified intelligence reports that found a direct link between the Saudi Arabian government and the 9/11 plotters. Yet, until recently the Kingdom donated millions of books around the globe that incited racism, extolled the exceptionalism of the Wahhabi faith, reinforced jihadist messages, and fuelled hatred of other faiths.

After 9/11, Saudi authorities repeatedly promised and failed to amend the books it gave to mosques and madrassas worldwide. Although Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports that the Kingdom has finally revised its school textbooks, removing the most overt anti-Semitism and incitement to kill Christians, millions of the previous toxic editions remain in use around the globe, from Pakistan to Indonesia to Bradford and Minneapolis.

Analysts suggest the recent revisions are to make the Kingdom palatable for inward investment, following the US intelligence reports on Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's complicity in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

### Saudi responds to the Iranian Revolution

Following the 1979 Iranian revolution, Saudi authorities spent an estimated \$100 billion spreading the conservative Wahhabi version of Islam across the globe, including to British institutions. Dore Gold claims that between 1982 and 2005, the Saudis spent an estimated £75 billion globally on 200 Islamic colleges, 210 Islamic centres, 1,500 mosques and 2,000 schools, all teaching an intolerant, fundamentalist creed.

Parents in poor countries jumped at the chance to send their sons to free schools. According to Mohamed Charfi, the former minister of education in Tunisia, Saudi-backed madrassas in Pakistan and Afghanistan have played significant roles in strengthening radical Islam there. Saudi institutions have trained thousands of teachers and preachers in their intolerant interpretation of Islam.

King Salman offered to build 200 Wahhabi mosques for Syrian refugees arriving in Germany, but not a penny to help with their re-settlement or more basic needs. Yasmin Alibhai-Brown described it as the "Trojan horse of the secret Saudi crusade."

In Nigeria, at least 20,000 Christians and mainstream Muslims have been killed by Boko Haram and Islamic State proxies. A Nigerian journalist (anonymous, for his own safety) says Saudi has sponsored hundreds of fundamentalist imams, including Boko Haram's ex-leader Mohammed Yusuf, paying for their study in the Gulf, and bankrolling Nigeria's intolerant Salafist Islamist movement. He points to Nigeria's political and economic links with Saudi, warning it has deadly consequences for those rejecting Boko Haram's ideology.

### What was the problem with Saudi textbooks?

The Kingdom's pre-sanitized books teach that non-Wahhabis are polytheists heading for hell regardless of their good deeds. Shi'a and Sufi veneration of prophets is "heresy," while criticism of Islam is "apostasy," deserving the death penalty. Students must avoid friendship with members of other religions. They also encouraged both violent and non-violent jihad against non-believers.

Among several now-expunged passages is a reference to Jews as monkeys and Christians as pigs. HRW reports that the website of the Saudi committee issuing fatwas continues to proclaim that "hating infidels is obligatory because they are the enemies of God and His messenger and the enemies of Muslims."

Of the new editions, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom former Commissioner Johnnie Moore says: "We are heartened that advocates for international religious freedom - including within the government itself - are making progress in Saudi Arabia..... Some might say astonishing progress."

Nina Shea of the Hudson Institute argues that reforming textbooks is only part of the problem. "Innumerable Sunni Muslim villages and city neighbourhoods in Africa and Asia have been indoctrinated in lessons that direct students to fight and kill the religious other, thanks to Saudi-government-published religious texts and export policies. Two years ago, one of the leaders of Al Azar, the great centre of Sunni learning in Cairo, told me that his institution still taught some courses from Wahabi textbooks. Saudi schools in major Western capitals long taught from these texts. Saudi Arabia must replace them everywhere and see that the old editions are destroyed. It must replace them on the Internet. Riyadh must stop inciting, through its prior textbook editions, extremism and terror abroad, as well as at home."

## Does Global Britain care?

There are 30 state-funded Muslim schools in England and Wales, and 180 private ones. The BBC estimated that the unrevised textbooks were used by about 5,000 students in the UK. How many religious leaders in British mosques have studied in Saudi, even though the vast majority of British Muslims are not Wahhabi? Will the British government ensure the old textbooks are replaced? What about online material? My attempt to get answers from the Saudi embassy and via written Parliamentary questions proved fruitless.

The Department of Trade website states that Saudi is the UK's third largest trade partner outside the EU. (Less discussed is London's "money butler" role managing the Saudi royals' money and Gulf sovereign wealth funds). Yet, the Foreign Affairs Select Committee suggests that trade policy should be coordinated with other UK priorities to avoid the incoherence of British international policy. Given the UK's role supplying Saudi's war in Yemen, and managing Gulf money, what chance is there our officials will remove poisonous textbooks from British institutions any time soon?

**Rebecca Tinsley**

Rebecca Tinsley's novel about Sudan, *When the Stars Fall to Earth*, is available in English and Arabic.  
See: [www.amazon.co.uk/When-Stars-Fall-Earth-Africa/dp/0984512950](http://www.amazon.co.uk/When-Stars-Fall-Earth-Africa/dp/0984512950)

*This article first appeared in Independent Catholic News 26<sup>th</sup> September 2021 (Updated 27<sup>th</sup> September, 2021)*

## International Abstracts

### Liberator 409

An apposite cover after Raab's performance as Foreign Secretary over Afghanistan (the day after his chum Johnson gave him the chop, ostensibly making him Deputy Prime Minister – though we thought he'd already risen to his level of incompetence). George Cunningham writes extensively on the subject of Afghanistan, which also features in Commentary. Becky Tinsley's article on Sudan previously appeared as separate articles in interLib 2021-06 and 2021-07. Otherwise, there is much on and around social care, Norman Baker writes on the Rail White Paper,

### Journal of Liberal History, Issue 112 Autumn 2021

At first glance, not primarily an international issue. Dick Newby writes on Shirley Williams, Kathryn Rix on Bertha Bowness Fischer, the first woman political agent and David Williams on the rise of the Liberal party in Richmond. There are also a reports on the Liberal party in the 1950s and the debate Asquith vs. Lloyd George, and an article on Lloyd George and the Liberal Summer School.

### USA

How Trump's election mobilized women - including me, by Jennifer Rubin. The Washington Post 20<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

[Opinion | Jennifer Rubin: Trump's election mobilized a resistance of women - The Washington Post](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/09/20/trumps-election-mobilized-a-resistance-of-women/)

# How should we consolidate success in Lebanon?

## Renaud Girard

Just when we were not expecting it anymore, good news came from Beirut on 10<sup>th</sup> September. Finally, a Lebanese government was formed, officially enthroned at the presidential palace in Baabda. To reach this result, it took thirteen months of political stalemate.

Prime Minister Hassan Diab had resigned on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2020, six days after the gigantic explosions that had ravaged the port of Beirut and the historic districts around it, killing 220 Lebanese and injuring 6,500.

This government, chaired by the telecommunications giant Nagib Mikati, composed of 12 Muslims (5 Shiites, 5 Sunnis, 2 Druze) and 12 Christians (5 Maronites, 3 Greek-Orthodox, 2 Greek-Catholics, one Armenian-Orthodox, one Latin-Catholic), was constituted in accordance with the Taif criteria<sup>1</sup>. This historic agreement, which put an end to the civil war that started in 1975, and which constitutes the last major amendment to the Lebanese constitution, provides for a strict balance of power between Christians and Muslims. It is an agreement that all four million Lebanese citizens have good reason to criticise, but which, to paraphrase Churchill, remains the worst constitution apart from all the alternatives.

None of the ministers chosen have been warlords in the past. They are not great leaders, but rather technical ministers, who are less subject to the traditional political cartel than their predecessors.

It is a diplomatic success for Emmanuel Macron, who managed to obtain both political support from Iran, an American carte blanche, and co-operation between the Maronite president of the Lebanese Republic and his Sunni prime minister who holds a parliamentary majority. This is the proof that the President of the French Republic, who created Lebanon in 1920, was right to invest a lot to save the country, notably by visiting it twice.



*The challenge the new government has to meet.*

electricity is produced, at prohibitive prices, on Turkish barges off the coast of Beirut. As Council President Mikati said, he would maintain the abandonment of state subsidies for hydrocarbons, the traffic of gasoline to Syria will automatically stop.

Now, such a government can only be judged by actions. It has seven urgent matters to deal with. First, it must conduct a clear and comprehensive audit of the public accounts, so that it can begin serious collaboration with the IMF and other international financial institutions. At the CEDRE conference, held in Paris in April 2018, Lebanon had obtained more than eleven billion dollars in aid of all kinds. But then it had not carried out any of the reforms that conditioned this aid.

Secondly, the new cabinet must reinvent an energy strategy for the country. It is not normal that the Lebanese suffer so many power cuts. Some of the

The third emergency for the government is to stop drug trafficking from Lebanon. Saudi Arabia stopped buying Lebanese fruit and vegetables after it discovered Captagon<sup>2</sup> pills hidden in shipments of bananas and pomegranates.

Fourth, the Mikati cabinet will have to re-establish an independent judiciary, capable of pursuing a thorough investigation into the causes of the explosions at the port of Beirut<sup>3</sup>.

Fifth, it will be up to the new authorities to re-establish good relations with all Arab countries, starting with the Gulf states, which were once generous donors to Lebanon.

The government will also have to stabilise its relations with its Israeli neighbour, by concluding the armistice agreement foreseen in the Taif Agreement and by proceeding with the maritime delimitation of the exclusive economic zones on this Mediterranean shore.

Last but not least, the Prime Minister will have to put in place the legal and material framework necessary to make sure that the legislative elections of June 2022 are conducted in a fair and transparent manner. They will be an opportunity for all reformers opposed to the confessional political system in force since 1920 to count themselves.

Will the Mikati government engage deeply and sincerely on these urgent issues? Has France obtained guarantees from the Lebanese political cartel that it will not resume its old avoidance tactics?

The Americans, the Europeans and the Gulf petro-monarchies all want a peaceful and prosperous Lebanon. But they can no longer stand the procrastination of the Lebanese political class. France has played a big role in Lebanon. It must therefore remain extremely vigilant, so that its efforts lead to concrete reforms. Otherwise, its diplomatic breakthrough will turn into a ball and chain.

### **Renaud Girard**

Renaud Girard is Chief Foreign Correspondent at Le Figaro;

*This article was first published in Le Figaro and in Radix on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021.*

<sup>1</sup> The Ta'if Agreement - the National Reconciliation Accord was an agreement reached to provide ending of the civil war and a balanced body politic in Lebanon, reflecting its diverse communities. It was signed at Ta'if in Saudi Arabia on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1989 and ratified by the Lebanese parliament on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1989

<sup>2</sup> Captagon is reputedly one of the most popular leisure pharmaceuticals amongst affluent youth in the Middle East. It was used by the US military, as a performance enhancer, but was banned and production ceased in the 1980s. Illegal manufacture continued and a variant is widely used by ISIS both for military and economic purposes.

<sup>3</sup> Events since this article was written demonstrate the difficulties in this. Hezbollah has opposed the appointment of judge Tarek Bittar. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-58913864>



***Public opinion for change back in August***

# Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel at Conference.

Just over two weeks ago the Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel were involved in two large scale events at this year's Liberal Democrat Autumn Conference; our always memorable fringe event, and as speakers in Layla Moran's policy motion on Israel and Palestine.

Our conference fringe event was a resounding success with one of the largest attendances at a fringe event for this year's virtual conference. Liberal Democrat members from all over the country jumped at the chance to hear from Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister, Idan Roll. The Deputy Foreign Minister is a member of our Zionist, secular, liberal and centrist partners, Yesh Atid, who only this week joined Liberal International as Observer Members. Yesh Atid are the largest party in Israel's new coalition government, consisting of parties from across the Israeli political spectrum.

Deputy Minister Roll was a fascinating guest at our fringe, where he spoke about the new government's vision for Gaza and answered challenging questions on Israel's ongoing conflict with the Palestinians. He also explained how his party, Yesh Atid, brought about this extraordinary coalition, as well as how this former model, lawyer and gay rights activist decided to join politics and now is one of Israel's most senior diplomats. The Deputy Foreign Minister was a warm and engaging interviewee and is a real shining light in Israeli politics. LDFI look forward to working with him in advocating for Israel in the UK, and particularly within the Liberal Democrats.

You can find a link to our conversation with Deputy Foreign Minister Roll [here](#).  
[The Case for Liberal Israel with Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister, Idan Roll - YouTube](#)

In addition to Lib Dem Friends of Israel's fringe event, we were also heavily involved in Monday's debate, on Layla Moran's policy motion, F39: Building a Lasting Peace in Israel and Palestine. LDFI proudly worked alongside Layla in developing the motion which called for greater cooperation between the UK and the Israelis and Palestinians, as well as using trade as a tool for peace, and upholding international law and human rights. Thanks to consistent lobbying from the Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel, the calls for the Alliance for Middle East Peace's International Fund for Israeli Palestinian Peace, was included in the policy motion. The debate featured contributions from Hon. LDFI President Lord Monroe Palmer, Hon. Chair Gavin Stollar and LDFI Parliamentary and Communications Manager Toby Davis. The motion passed, which included an amendment by Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine members, calling for a ban on trade with Israeli settlements in the West Bank, until a negotiated peace agreement is reached. Following the adoption of the motion, Lord Palmer and Gavin Stollar said:

"The motion passed at Liberal Democrat conference calls for greater trade links and cooperation with Israel. No other political party explicitly grounds increased trade and cooperation at the heart of their policy on Israel and Palestine."

The Lib Dems are also the first party to officially support efforts to establish an Israeli Palestinian Peace Fund, which promotes coexistence and peace-building. We are serious at advocating for practical solutions to the conflict, not just platitudes.

This change in Liberal Democrat policy is not pro-BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) and is not anti-Israel. Like the LDFI, it is anti-occupation and settlement expansion.

We, alongside, the Liberal Democrats will continue to champion the State of Israel for the liberal democracy it is, and for a two-state solution."

Toby Davis

Toby Davis is Parliamentary and Communications Manager, Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel. Follow us on Twitter: [@\\_LDFI](#)

# **Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine at Conference**

The 2021 Liberal Democrat Autumn Conference adopted a motion which marks a sea-change in the party's engagement with the Israel/Palestine conflict.

The drafting was carried out by the parliamentary foreign affairs team and agreed with Friends of Israel (LDFI) and Friends of Palestine (LDFP). It was proposed by Layla Moran, Foreign Affairs spokesperson and summated by Alistair Carmichael, a former FA spokesperson who had taken a close interest in this issue for many years. Amendments were proposed and agreed at Conference and the final motion that was passed by an overwhelming majority criticised violence and human rights abuses on both sides and called for stronger UK trade links with both Israel and Palestine, but at the same time called for a ban on all trade with the settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Some speakers feared that a ban on settlement trade might seem too hostile to Israel, and would be unhelpful in the search for peace, but the conference was reminded that such a ban would target only the illegal settlements, not Israel as a whole, and should be seen as a means to conflict resolution. The motion also called for more support for initiatives to build peace between Arab and Jewish communities in both countries.

This conference decision was intended to re-assert Liberal Democrat belief in the rule of international law, and to send a message to settlers and the wider Israeli public. Settlements of the kind seen in Palestine are prohibited under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, and yet have been ongoing since 1967. The world community has occasionally protested, but has for the most part turned a blind eye to the illegality, and successive right-wing Israeli governments have used this passive response to press ahead with a de facto annexation of much of Palestine. The two-state solution has been much talked about, but with over 700,000 settlers now in place, it is growing increasingly difficult to implement.

Part of the problem is that for most Israelis the occupation of the West Bank is not a day-to-day concern. Those who do think about it might be assuming the world community has given its approval. In fact, of course, the failure to act has often been due to larger strategic concerns, in which the rights of the Palestinians have taken second place.

A move to ban all trade with settlements sends a strong message of disapproval. Right-wing Israeli governments have in the past had an easy ride because of the perceived strategic importance of Israel, especially in the eyes of successive US Presidents. After the events of last May, that card is not as effective as it once was, and the timing of this call from the Liberal Democrats is very timely.

Another feature of the debate at Liberal Democrat conference in September was that criticism of Israel was no longer being dismissed as antisemitism, perhaps another consequence of the world-wide disapproval of Israeli actions in May. This welcome move towards debate of the real issues could be a signal to other parties, and indeed, the Labour Party Conference subsequently passed an even stronger motion at their Autumn Conference. However, it was quickly disowned by the party leadership.

Reactions in the Jewish and Palestinian communities to discussions about Israel and Palestine are always closely watched. We were pleased to see positive articles in the Jewish Chronicle and the Israeli Times and positive tweets from liberal Jewish organisation Yachad. The Palestinian Ambassador to the UK also tweeted his approval.

*Andrew Daer*

# Chinese LibDems at Conference

It was another action packed 4-days at conference with a wide array of debates, diverse fringe and training sessions at conference. These included the Uighur motion that was passed with only 2 objectors, an emergency trade motion "Solving the Supply Chain Crisis" proposed by Sarah Olney MP and drafted by CLD executive member, Paul Reynolds (see below), and a Race Equality amendment to the Strategy motion drafted by LDCRE (LibDem Campaign for Race Equality) and supported by CLDs.

The party launched a new China focus group within FIRC (Federal International Relations Committee) and they hosted a fringe event on China with guest speakers including MEPs Reinhard Butikofer and Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Baroness Julie Smith and former diplomat and Chair of FIRC, George Cunningham. The lawyers' group, Rights Liberties and Justice held a fringe entitled "Human Rights Challenges for the UK Foreign Policy" ably chaired by James Sandbach, with panellists Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, chair of the Uighur Tribunal and Michael Marrett-Crosby, speaking on the deteriorating situation in Myanmar. Young Liberal's foreign affairs spokesperson, Peter Douglas Banks, summated on the discussions.

As in previous years Chinese LibDems had a virtual stall at the Conference Exhibition where we could share with anyone interested about our vision, aims and objectives, campaigning work as well as support for candidates. We were pleased to have welcomed members from other groups such as Young Liberals, LibDems Abroad as well as The Patchwork Foundation.

In the Leader's speech, Ed invoked the words of our former leader Paddy Ashdown:  
*"Our role,"* Paddy said, *"is to be the catalyst, the gathering point for a broader movement dedicated to winning the battle of ideas which will give Britain an electable alternative to Conservative government."*

Ed stressed the key messages and solutions provided by the LibDems: to restore the British fair deal, starting with parents and children, a catch-up fund of £15 billion for school children, extensive new measures to turbo-charge education and called for more support for small businesses.

More on the Trade Motion (summarised by Paul Reynolds)

The motion tabled is critical of the UK government's record on signing trade deals to replace trade agreements between the EU and third countries, and new trade deals with countries where no existing EU trade agreements had been made, such as with Australia.

The proposer was Sarah Olney MP, the Party's spokesperson on international trade. Sarah accepted an amendment from former Party leader Tim Farron which called for more protection for British produce in the wake of imports which are cheaper due to lower regulatory standards.

More politically the motion pointed out that under the previous international trade secretary, now Foreign Secretary, the government had spun its trade deals to date as 'better' than pre-Brexit arrangements; an untrue claim. In the debate and in the motion itself, many examples of this were cited, including Japan, Norway, and Australia. The motion and debate also focused on the UK deleting human rights clauses which featured in pre-Brexit EU trade deals with third countries, citing Cambodia and Cameroon as examples.

## Liberal Democrats Autumn Conference

We would welcome further commentary on the Liberal Democrats' Autumn Conference. The first LIBG fringe had trouble with the Zoom connection. We hope to have further coverage of the Afghanistan and Uyghur debates in our next issue. Sen in your reports please.

The Labour party conference debated Israel and Palestine shortly after the Liberal Democrats conference, somewhat less successfully. After their motion was passed, Shadow Foreign Secretary Lisa Nandy said the leadership rejects the 'unbalanced' approach and 'cannot support this motion'.

# Responding to the Afghanistan Crisis

## Layla Moran

As Liberal Democrats we are holding the Government to account for its foreign policy failure over Afghanistan.

20 years on from the US-led invasion, the Taliban have swept into Kabul. They seized power illegitimately without the consent of the Afghan people.

### **The UK has a moral duty to the people of Afghanistan"**

Life under the Taliban regime is one of terror. Women and girls are excluded from education, work and government. Human rights are utterly disregarded with medieval-style punishments used on those who do not conform to Taliban rule.

LGBTQ+ rights are non-existent. Women cannot walk unaccompanied outside the house. Public executions, extrajudicial killings, mysterious disappearances of anyone who speaks against the Taliban will now, once again, be a part of life in Afghanistan.

The UK has a moral duty to the people of Afghanistan - we were there for twenty years. We owe the interpreters, the people who spoke out against the Taliban and the Afghan citizens who provided intelligence and cooperated with UK forces at the risk of their own life.

To not help these people would be utter negligence, and the UK government is failing to do so.

Conference believes that the UK has an obligation to the Afghan people and a responsibility to ensure Afghanistan does not become a breeding ground for international terrorist organisations.

That's why today we voted to:

- Reform refugee policy and grant immediate asylum to Afghan people who need it especially those who are now most at risk due to their cooperation with the UK Government.
- Support local and international gender-based violence services to help Afghan women and girls against an oppressive Taliban rule.
- Take urgent action to stop Afghanistan from becoming a stronghold for terrorist organisations.
- Expand the Armed Forces Covenant to include Afghan soldiers and interpreters who have been evacuated.
- Launch an immediate public inquiry into the Government's involvement in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021.

We must honour our obligations to the Afghan people after twenty years.

# Taking a stand against the treatment of the Uyghurs

## Liberal Democrat statement post-conference

The sickening treatment of the Uyghur people by the Chinese Government is genocide. And we cannot stand idly by while these gross violations of human rights are perpetrated.

The Uyghur population are being rounded up and **forced into internment camps**.

**Half a million children** have been taken away indefinitely from their parents.

We all have a moral duty to take a stand against this abhorrent behaviour.

There are horrific accounts of the **systematic use of forced sterilisation and forced abortions** on Uyghur Women.

We all have a moral duty to take a stand against this abhorrent behaviour.

We cannot simply watch and do nothing whilst the Uyghur people are subject to torture, unjust imprisonment and industrial scale abuse.

The treatment of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang is a crime against humanity.

That's why at conference today, **we voted to formally recognise what is being done in Xinjiang as a genocide**.

Britain must step up. To help Uyghurs suffering this terrible oppression, we must:

- Grant asylum to Uyghurs fleeing persecution
- Work to reunite families where children have been forced into camps
- Boycott the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing
- Introduce tough sanctions on any persons and entities involved with the persecution of Uyghurs.

We must not allow this appalling behaviour from the Chinese Government to continue.

**This genocide must end. Now.**

### F14: The Uyghur Genocide: Motion as passed by conference

Conference notes that:

- A. There have been eyewitness reports and footage of the widespread human rights violations against Uyghurs by the People's Republic of China in the province of Xinjiang.
- B. These violations include forced sterilisation, torture, restrictions on childrens' names, destruction of religious sites, forced separation of families, and detainment in re-education camps.
- C. The most recent figures from Adrian Zenz, senior fellow in China studies at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, suggest that over 1.5 million Uyghurs have been forcibly detained in internment camps, with a further half a million children indefinitely separated from their parents in re-education 'schools'.
- D. Disturbing accounts of the aforementioned re-education camps have been released by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists in the China Cables.

- E. The Sanctions and anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 includes gross human rights violations as grounds for imposing sanctions on a person or an entity.
  - F. In July 2020, the UK government introduced Magnitsky-style sanctions under this legislation on specific nationals of Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Myanmar as well as on two organisations involved with North Korean gulags.
- li>The Liberal Democrats have a proud history of supporting the rights of oppressed minority groups around the world.

Conference notes with great concern the recent atrocities committed in Xinjiang, namely:

- g. The systemic use of forced sterilisation, forced abortion and involuntary admission of intrauterine devices on Uyghur women by the Chinese state in order to lower the birth rate in the Uyghur population.
- h. The harrowing testimonies of interned Uyghurs recently published in a report by Amnesty International which documents that:
  - i. Detained Uyghurs are physically punished if they speak a language other than Mandarin.
  - ii. Physical and non-physical torture is used against detained Uyghurs.
  - iii. All detained Uyghurs are subject to non-stop surveillance, depriving them of any privacy.
  - iv. Uyghurs outside of re-education camps are subject to intense surveillance, with the use of facial recognition, the collection of biometric data and invasive interviews by government officials.

Conference welcomes:

- IX. The work of Alistair Carmichael MP, as Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Uyghurs, calling for:
  - A. Recognition of the actions taken against the Uyghurs as a genocide.
  - B. Sanctions in response to the persecution of Uyghurs.

X. Votes taken in Parliament to declare that China is committing a genocide against the Uyghurs.

XI. Layla Moran MP, Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs, explicitly calling actions of the Chinese government in Xinjiang a genocide.

Conference believes that:

- xii. The Chinese government's actions in Xinjiang constitute a genocide, based on the description of genocide as laid out in Article 6 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
- xiii. The deliberate, systemic persecution of, and violence against, the Uyghur population of China well surpasses the definition of gross human rights violations and thus meets the standard for imposing sanctions on persons or entities under the Sanctions and anti-Money Laundering Act 2018.
- xiv. The UK Government has a moral duty to take actions to oppose human rights abuses.

Conference therefore calls on both the UK Government and the Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Party to be explicit in their condemnation of the actions of the Chinese state as being that of a genocide.

Conference further calls on the UK Government to:

- 15. Introduce Magnitsky-style sanctions on persons and entities involved with the persecution of Uyghurs under the Sanctions and anti-Money Laundering Act 2018.
- 16. Call upon the Chinese government to cease the systemic mass incarceration of the Uyghurs.
- 17. Grant asylum to Uyghurs fleeing persecution.
- 18. Call for the reunification of all families where children have been forcibly entered in re-education camps.
- 19. Boycott the 2022 Olympics in Beijing, unless and until the Chinese government ceases its crimes against humanity in Xinjiang.

# RADI>< The Chinese Conundrum: Sir Vince Cable in conversation with Annabelle Timsit.

The Radix think tank hosted a discussion between Sir Vince Cable, former leader of the Liberal Democrats and Washington Post reporter Annabelle Timsit just before the publication of his new book *The Chinese Conundrum: Engagement or Economic War?*

Timsit opened by asking Sir Vince Cable about his rift with members of the Liberal Democrats over his views on China and the Uyghur Genocide in particular, which culminated in the Young Liberal Conference in Manchester earlier in August calling for his expulsion from the party<sup>1</sup>. This had followed a controversial interview on GB News. He replied that whilst China had Human Rights issues, the use of the word genocide to define them was not helpful. When identifying an evil, it helps to be specific about what it is. It is undoubtedly the case that the Uyghur minority in China is badly treated, but were people being killed? East Turkistan groups had been on the terrorist lists of the UK & USA<sup>2</sup>. Cable thought that a lot of anti-China debate was initiated by hard-right Republicans in the USA and progressive people should question that. He wanted an open debate with the evidence looked at in a dispassionate way. It was hypocritical to apply one set of standards to China, and another to Saudi Arabia<sup>3</sup>. Cable said that he was more bull than bear on the future of the Chinese economy; he thought the difficulties could be resolved, and had to be because of their ripple effects elsewhere through Chinese investment. A major crisis was not in China's interest because it devalued their assets. Britain's relationship with China had deteriorated with Hong Kong, starting with Huawei through to the AUKUS pact. He didn't see what immediate interest the UK had in AUKUS, the French had been treated shabbily, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines were non-committal, Vietnam was showing interest, having had its

problems with China. On Taiwan, he didn't see any immediate likelihood of a military takeover unless Taiwan should specifically declare their independence; the USA etc. has been signed up to the One China solution.

China had previously invested in the UK for two main reasons; access to Europe, which had now gone because of Brexit and hoped the City would act as a market for Chinese money, the Renminbi, as a global currency. They are also heavily involved in steel in South Wales.

Was there a risk in China's involvement in the UK's nuclear industry and other high-tech areas? Cable thought that China would like to get out of Hinckley Point if possible, because of costs. This was initially French nuclear technology. The Chinese had become involved because of their interest in Bradwell, further down the line, where they hoped to demonstrate a safe reactor that they could then export elsewhere. High-tech acquisitions are primarily aimed at getting hold of know-how; the UK needs effective screening in this, otherwise our technology disappears abroad all too easily.

China uses of their economic weight to achieve political outcomes; the boycott of Norwegian salmon after the award of the Nobel Prize for Peace to the dissident Liu Xiaobo in 2010 for example and the boycott of British cloth following Hong Kong protests. China should, and Cable thought wanted to, abide by WTO rules, but President Trump's actions had set this back a long way. The UK finds it difficult to trade with Iran



*Vince Cable at the Paddy Ashdown Forum at the NLC on 30<sup>th</sup> September.*

and Cuba because of US policies which use economic levers for political change, so the problem is not just China, though Chinese actions tend to be too crude.

Summing up, Cable said that he had not been inspired by expertise to write his book, but by curiosity to make sense of the arguments about the Chinese. China is important because of its size and technical sophistication. The relevance of its economy lies in the legitimacy of the regime depends on its economic success and how far that can continue. How should we deal with China? They are certain a competitor and a threat, but backing away loses economic advantages. Problems won't go away with engagement.

On the question of equivalences in our democracy & laws, the hypocrisy of our complaint about Chinese treaty breaking over Hong Kong when we won't implement our European treaties on grounds of our sovereignty, Cable speculated as to whether we have had an ethical foreign policy since Robin Cook; similar standards apply to China, South Africa, Turkey and Egypt. Honesty is needed.

### ***Stewart Rayment***

RADI>< The Chinese Conundrum: Sir Vince Cable in conversation with Annabelle Timsit. Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> September 6.00pm UK time, by Zoom.

<sup>1</sup> see interLib 2021-07

<sup>2</sup> China was very quick to identify Uyghur groups with the War Against Terror after 9/11. The UN Security Council's Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee listed the East Turkistan Islamic Movement as a terrorist organisation from 2002. The USA removed ETIM from their list of Terrorist Organisations in 2020.

<sup>3</sup> China ranks 129<sup>th</sup>, Saudi Arabia 151<sup>st</sup> on the Cato Institute's Human Freedom Index. The UK & USA are equal 17<sup>th</sup>. <https://www.cato.org/human-freedom-index/2020>

You can listen to the talk on

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC34bvm38k4w1g8HoHPimkVA/videos>

If you missed the event or would like to watch it again, you can find a recording on Radix's Facebook page here: <https://fb.watch/8c4d072ac0/> or you can watch it on the Radix Big Tent YouTube Channel here: [https://youtu.be/\\_x6ehWZ1Jag](https://youtu.be/_x6ehWZ1Jag)

## **The Cable Conundrum Larry Ngan reviews Vince Cable's new book**

The former business secretary and my fellow party member Vince Cable has published a book 'The Chinese Conundrum: Engagement or Conflict' last month, which is the time when he was criticised for dismissing the Uyghers genocide as not a genocide, and the youth wing within the party (Young Liberals) even took action to expel him from the party. In such a stormy time, has the publication of this book helped him to reclaim his creditability in the party?

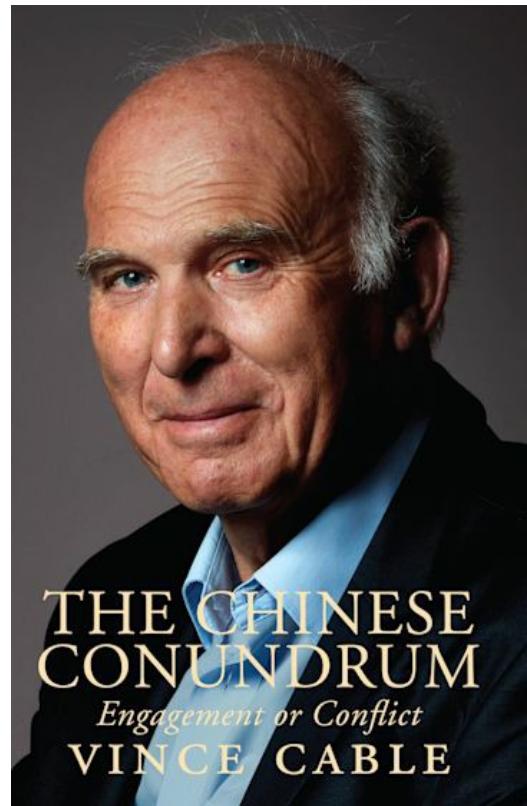
In his book, Mr Cable first started explaining the mentality of China towards Western Powers through its history, and concluded China has no intention in territorial expansion other than those regarded as its own sphere of influence. He then analysed the socio-economic data and observed the CCP policies on its economic, social and foreign affairs. He concluded China would be such a powerful global economic and scientific powerhouse no one can ignore or isolate, despite its countless problems in its economy and society. He even made a few predictions on how China would look like in the future: whether it will turn to be 'Davos China' (the China dominated the global economy by the means of international cooperation or harmony), or 'Sparta China' (the China who will dominate the world through military means). He concluded we should cooperate with China under the scenario of 'Davos China' otherwise war could be broken out no matter hot or cold.

This book covered a variety of topics in China (with a lot of potential issues we could discuss, such as inaccuracy in pre 1980s historical facts, and on the matter of Xinjiang Genocide he pointed out the

‘Sinicization’ program in Xinjiang is an assimilate policy and would be more readily understood in Portugal and France, that I found it outrageous), and if I have to cover every flaw and topic in it, I could have written another book in more or less the same length. Therefore, in this review I am going only focus on a few crucial areas which is more related to his central observations.

### ‘Every number tells a story’, and the flaw of the data in this book

A lot of people said ‘every number tells a story’, but what the data was intended to tell us and what it actually told us can be very different. In this book, Mr Cable mentioned some reservations on the prospects and current policies on certain foreign and socio-economic affairs, such as its policy towards Afghanistan (namely cooperating with Taliban) and the aging population, but the data he presented mostly pointed to a rather rosy picture. He quoted a lot of growth figures since the 1980s, such as GDP, increase in patent registration, size of military budget, doctoral dissertations in field of science. The pattern of the figures he quoted led us to believe China had become nearly perfect global economic powerhouse and have a lot of promising



prospects despite the concerns. It also painted a picture of the declining west particularly the United States, and assumed the United States went against China because they felt threatened by its emerging economic power.

As a critique of such a book, one issue we would focus on is what the data did not tell, and whether it is neutral when it comes to analysing the data, as suggested by Mr Cable himself. Unfortunately, the way he presented the data did not tell some underlying factors behind the figures.

In the chapter ‘The New Economic Superpower?’, he quoted a lot of figures to prove the growth of GDP, and did mention the debt bubble (household and government) that never burst by quoting a lot of debt ratio figures, and emphasised, first, China is very far from having a sovereign debt problem, with a low ratio of (gross) national debt to GDP and large official assets holdings in foreign currency; and second, property markets are regulated both from the demand side (30% minimum deposits for mortgage borrowers and a ban on borrowing for second homes) and on credit supply (loans no more than 70% of assets).

Unfortunately, he ignored the fact that most of these growths in the 2010s were stimulated by government interventions, in which both national, and notably, local governments played a big role. The state intervention was much bigger than what the book proclaimed. The more important point is, the motives behind such an intervention. The local governments in China had a long habit of a bit of ‘competitions’ among themselves, not only provincial governments, but also the borough governments. In such a scenario, for a cadre in charge of economic developments in the local government, if they wanted to outperformed others, they had to propose big infrastructure projects in order to set a bigger growth target while reporting to the central governments in their annual performance review.

We should keep in mind, China is a rather centralised state in terms of policy makings and executions, it is a norm that the central government would frequently instruct local governments over a wide range of policies, particularly over economic developments. In the 2010s Chinese central government urged local authorities to create large infrastructure projects in order to stimulate the economy. As the result, tons of infrastructure projects were built in the 2010s (and quite some of them turned to be white elephants), they were financed mostly by the local governments through 2 sources: 1. issuance of local government bonds. Public and private enterprises were encouraged to buy these financial leverages (Which can be found in the financial statements of the financial institutions in China), hence it became a circle when these corporate invested in local economy. 2. Land auction (which is a major source of regular revenue for local

governments). It would require certain kind of cooperation and negotiation with property developers such as Evergrande.

Unfortunately, this model would only work when the economy grew substantially. After the COVID pandemic and the recent trade war between China and the United States, the Chinese central government is short of cash and financial leverage, a number of auditing was carried out on the local government and it turned out a number of local governments was on the edge of bankruptcy or financial troubles, mostly because of poor managements/governance over infrastructure projects. According to the recent report ('The Debt Ratio Rankings of Cities') from jointly Chinadatapay and Tencent, in 2020 85 cities has the debt ratios over 100%, 75 of them has doubled their ratios since 2019. The top 10 included big cities like Tianjin, Changjiang and Wuhan, which are all over 500%. It was even before the Evergrande crisis imploded in recent months, which could result in the reduction in revenue from land auctions (A major source of revenue of local governments), which means in 2021 the figures would be unlikely to be improved.

When Mr Cable said in this book that the sovereign debt ratio remained low in China, I suspected he had overlooked its definition since the local government debt ratio is clearly very high. Quite some economists and political pundits already warned that the problems in the debt and real estate markets in China could be spiralled out of control for years, but now the impact is only becoming obvious. CCP would not let it happening since it would shake the foundation of its grip of power, but it would take some time for it to



*The death of whistleblower Dr Li Wenliang, who was punished for trying to raise the alarm about corona-virus sparks grief and anger at the Chinese government's response to the crisis.*

*See Peter Brookes Desparate Times page 28*

GDP per capital is CNY 30,000 per annum. One can argue the gap between Rich and poor is widening, but it could also imply there are some creditability issue with the official economic figures. Therefore, when Mr Cable argued China became a dominate global economic power which can't be ignored by the western powers, the flaw in his analysis compromised his observation and left readers in doubt whether China is as great as it is.

### CCP: A collective of factions

The lack of understanding on how the Chinese political system worked mentioned above also showed in other chapters. In this book, Mr Cable seems to have a clear understanding in the political stances of different Chinese leadership, but he seems in lack of understanding of a distinct feature in post-Deng CCP: It is no longer an united party, but a collective of factions from within. Even after the leadership resigned from their positions, their base of power still existed in a number of ways.

In the section of 'How private is private enterprise', Mr Cable mentioned 'the attitude of the authorities (toward private enterprises) is, on one level, very supportive', 'but there are definite limits. Few business leaders would dare to criticize the regime in public, and those who have found themselves facing criminal charges leading to imprisonment or worse'. What he failed to mention (or realise) is the relationship between business leaders in China and the factions in CCP. We should keep in mind, most so-called private enterprises in China can only grow big because of the personnel relationships of the senior management

resolve the debt crisis of the local government and keep the economy growing at the same time. The economic growth figures on Q3 2021 already showed some worrying sign. It could not keep the growth of GDP above 5% as promised at the beginning of the year. Power cut, Evergrande, debt in local government and other pending problems engulfed at the same time and would hinder the economic growth and social stability in China for some time. Not to mention around the same time when this book is published, Li Keqiang, the Premier in China just dropped a bombshell which could throw the creditability of the economic figures quoted in this book in doubt: out of 1.4 billion population in China, over 600 million (42%) among Chinese population only has the gross monthly income CNY1000 or below, even though the official

with those in some factions in the CCP. Evergrande, for example, and Hainan Airlines (once largest in China) are known to have the backing of Wang Qishan, the current Vice President of PRC (And a potential rival of President Xi). Jack Ma, the former CEO of Alibaba, is known to have the backing of the Jiang Ximin's faction in CCP (And even rumoured to be the major figure in managing the financial resources of those in the faction). The founder of Fantasia Holdings Group Company Ltd, another major listed real estate company, is the niece of the former Vice-president, Zeng Qinghong (part of Jiang faction). The family of Li Peng, the former Premier of China, monopolised the electricity sector in China, while the family of Jiang Ximan monopolised the mobile network sector of the country.

As you might have noticed, most of these enterprises are dominated by the Jiang faction (It was also referred as the Shanghai faction, the power base of Jiang). That actually caused problem to Xi Jinping when he became the General Secretary of CCP on 2012, then President on 2013 since Jiang became so powerful in the economy and politics in China. A series of power struggle between Xi and Jiang faction took place which lasted even nowadays. For those business leaders who criticised President Xi, they mostly had the backing of at least some in factions within CCP, and they were arrested mostly because of the power struggle. The anti-corruption campaign in China in the 2010s was well known to be a movement for Xi to eliminate his political opponents, particularly the leading figures of Jiang faction who are still within the government. (In this book, he regarded the anti-corruption movement as if for real and did not regard it as a tool to remove political opponents) Among political pundits and mass media in Greater China (and even some Asian countries, except those sponsored by CCP), it is a consensus that the current political events in China (And in Hong Kong) are mostly motivated by the power struggle between Xi and Jiang factions. For example, in the chapter 'China and ideological competition'. When Mr Cable tried to use the example of Hong Kong as the clash of western and Chinese values in recent years by recalling the history of Hong Kong and its significance in the whole Sino-American trade war, there are countless of flaws in the short 5 pages section (such as inaccuracies in Hong Kong history as a whole, disregard of the motive of the 2019 Hong Kong protest as 'unclear' even though the protesters clearly made the '5 Demands No One Less', and didn't seem to understand the significant presence of American commercial interest in Hong Kong), but the most significant flaw is that he did not realise Hong Kong is actually the one of the major base for the Jiang faction.

Major business establishments in Hong Kong, particularly the real estate giants such as the Li Ka Shing Family, were long known to have a close relationship with the Jiang faction. Hence President Xi never had full control in Hong Kong affairs, first because of the presence of Americans, second and more importantly, it is firmly in the hands of the Jiang faction. Political pundits in Asia of course viewed the protest movements in Hong Kong as democracy movements, at the same time they agreed President Xi viewed the protests as something to threaten his power, particularly since he had little control in the situation in Hong Kong throughout 2019-2020. The passing of the National Security Law and the recent proposal of confiscating land owned by property developers on one hand were actually measures to regain social order from President Xi's view (since he regarded the protest is a social problem caused by the shortage of housing in the city), but more importantly they were measures to eliminate the power of the pro-Jiang businessmen (Since most of them are real estate developers) in the city.

### **Was Mr Cable's Conclusion on China compromised by the flaws:**

The flaws I have mentioned above were more about the lack of understanding on how the political and economic system works in China, and the flaws actually affected his views on how effective President Xi had achieved. Mr Cable is a bit too willingly to believe if there is a trade war between China and the west, it would be the west who suffers, but he didn't realise the impact of trade war can be more



Protests erupt in Hong Kong when the controversial new security law enters force...

*See Peter Brookes Desparate Times page 28*

widespread, and by the end of the day China, more precisely President Xi, would be the one who had to pay for the consequences.

It is particularly obvious when it comes to his observation on the Australian foreign policy towards China. In the section ‘the exposed Anglosphere’, he said ‘Australia’s experience has been even more fraught and painful. The Chinese response was in effect to tear up the trade agreement; impose sanctions on \$20 billion of Australian exports, 10% of total export, disrupt the coal trade by keeping coal-carrying vessels waiting long periods before unloading in China …(It)has unambiguously opted for one side in a hardening “cold war”, and is paying the price for doing so.’ Unfortunately, since this book is published, there are massive power cuts throughout China as the result of this policy, and it was China not Australia who suffered. In order to comply his promises on climate change action plan in 2017, President Xi instructed regional electricity companies in China to reduce its pollution while generating electricity by coal. Coal mines producing low quality coal were instructed to be shut down, and the country relied on high quality coal for generating power. It turned out China did not produce enough high-quality coal locally, and before the trade war with Australia, China relied on the high-quality coal in Australia to produce electricity (0.2 billion tons per annum). The domestic usage of coal in China was 4 billion tons per annum, since the Chinese government shut down these coal mines from 2017 onwards, the domestic production in China had been reduced from 5 billion ton to 3.7 billion ton per annum. The cost of acquiring electricity increased because there is now reduced option for acquiring coal, while renewable energy is still underdeveloped in China. The cost of producing electricity was therefore skyrocketed: According to an open letter co-written by 8 major electricity companies to the central government (And of course these companies, as mentioned before, monopolised by Li Peng family), In June 2021, the cost of coal increased by 56.9%, by July 2021 it was increased by 65.3%, and it kept on raising.

Unfortunately, in China, electricity fee is set by the central and local governments, but it was the electricity companies who had to bear cost incurred. Facing the increase in production cost, the electricity companies found themselves running a loss in producing electricity. Pictures emerged throughout China showing power plants ran low or even out of coal in their warehouse since Sept 2021. The electricity companies had no choice other than rationing electricity supplies. Major cities in China started suffering from blackouts with only notices of a few hours if not the day before, some foreign companies started hastening their pace in moving out from China because of that. The central government (not directly from President Xi) ended with no choice but first to revoke its policy on reducing pollution from power generation, allowing electricity companies to acquire as much coal as possible, and allowing the electricity companies to increase the electricity fee to their customers. Reports from Financial Times dated on 4<sup>th</sup> Sept 2021 showed coal from Australia had been unloading in China, and according to custom data China actually acquired a lot of natural gas from Australia in order to get around from the embargo issued by itself. Another report from India showed India purchased the Australian coal for USD\$10 per ton when China imposed the embargo, recently they purchased those coal from India by paying USD\$120-150 per ton.



That shows when it comes to trade war, it is sometimes less obvious on who is going to suffer, and in this case, it seems it is China who suffered. It also showed there are a few weaknesses in the administration in China (and some even rumoured the whole scenario was orchestrated by the Li Peng family to discredit President Xi, just the month before the 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress was about to take place). To conclude the West would be the one to suffer if we chose to conflict with China is a bit immature and it could compromise his observation on China as a whole.

## Conclusion

As a history graduate from Hong Kong, it is quite a pain to read through this whole book. It is not because there are flaws in the facts, but because the flaws in Mr Cable’s view on China were based on his lack of

grasp in the political structure in CCP, his failure in understanding the aim of the protest movement in Hong Kong, and most importantly, these flaws affected his judgement on how much China would achieve, and how the West should tackle China in long terms. Although Mr Cable tried to position himself as neutral in the matter, he represented the view of Pro China politicians in the UK who argued economy is above everything in China policy without understanding how actually Chinese economy and political system works. His understanding on CCP largely based on, as he mentioned, European sources and it could hinder his understanding on China. Recent events also proved quite some of his observations did not stand the test of time and expired rather quickly.

### **Larry Ngan**

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

**The Chinese Conundrum, engagement or conflict, by Vince Cable.**  
Alma Books 2021 £20.00 isbn 9781846884689

## **UNHRC resolution formally declaring clean environment a human right is an important step in the right direction**

At its 48th session, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution declaring access to a clean and healthy environment a human right. The resolution passed with overwhelming support with 43 votes in favour, 0 against, and 4 abstentions. This is a historic step and one that is celebrated by Liberal International; LI, in collaboration with the ALDE group of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, has been breaking ground on building political consensus around the link between human rights and climate change. Albeit not being legally binding, the resolution sends a powerful message and can help to shape global standards in the area.

Liberal International has been working alongside the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to globalize the policy link between climate change and human rights. As the only international network of political parties working to introduce the right to access to a safe environment, we salute the innovations that the Parliamentary Assembly is producing for Europe – just a week before the UNHRC resolution was passed, the Assembly adopted a series of reports containing recommendations regarding human rights and the environment, to be further approved by the Committee of Ministers. One of the key demands is that a new right to “a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment” is added as a protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights.

On this UN day, Liberal International celebrates these new developments which recognise how environmental degradation seriously impacts the enjoyment of human rights.

“The recent initiatives by the UNHRC and PACE are important steps in the direction towards shifting the intersection of human rights and the environment from a policy issue to a normative and value-based issue globally. However, advocacy is now needed to ensure that the resolutions and recommendations lead to concrete results”, deputy chair of LI’s Climate Justice Committee Susanna Rivero Baughman states.

# reviews

## The Making of Oliver Cromwell, by Ronald Hutton

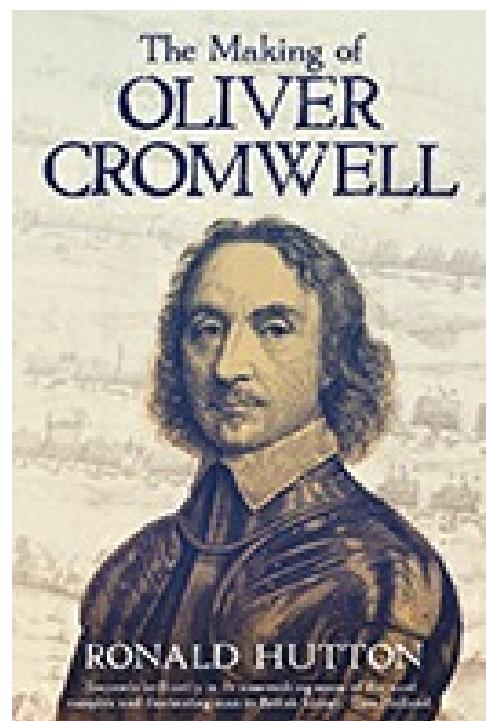
Yale University Press 2021 £25.00.

isbn 9780300257458.

This is a remarkable book, the definitive account of the life of Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) up to the end of the First Civil War in 1646. A lucid, gripping narrative accompanied by stimulating analysis, the book makes two significant contributions to our understanding of Cromwell's early life and his rise to power. The first is its handling of military history. Cromwell's astonishing ascent from provincial obscurity to head of state was brought about by his remarkably successful military career. Equally breath-taking is the fact that Cromwell had no military training, he learnt the art of war the hard way, in the saddle. Hutton is a gifted historian of the Civil War, and his book explains key aspects of early modern warfare, its theory and practice; and he takes us by the hand through Cromwell's military experiences, from the occasional early blunders to his part in the battles that led to the outright defeat of the king and his supporters.

The second important contribution is made via Hutton's handling of seventeenth-century sources and his engagement with Cromwell's other historians. The first forty years of Cromwell's life have always presented a difficult problem to scholars because so little evidence relating to him is extant. From then on, as Cromwell found his political calling in the opposition to Charles I whilst rising to prominence in the parliamentarian army that fought the king, we have a different problem. There is much more evidence relating to Cromwell, but much of it is contradictory or vague. Indeed, this issue characterises the whole of Cromwell's life throughout the 1640s and 1650s, exacerbated by the man himself whose surviving letters and speeches are notoriously inconsistent or lacking in the sorts of detail that historians savor. If only Cromwell had left us a thorough written record of his political philosophy and aims, in the manner of, say, James VI and I.

Yet Hutton explains and navigates these troubles with such coherent erudition, courtesy and humour, that the book is, at times, a page-turner. Hutton's postmodern historical interpretation illuminates



Cromwell afresh whilst revising many earlier readings of him. Hutton separates fact from fiction, often revealing that things that we thought we knew about the young Cromwell are either unconfirmed or were invented by his early modern biographers. These writers fell into two camps, unsurprisingly – the hagiographers versus his enemies who set out to destroy his reputation once the Stuarts had been restored. Thus, it is highly unlikely that the young Cromwell studied law at Lincoln's Inn, even though those who sought to 'emphasise his credentials as a conventionally educated gentleman' maintained that he did. On the other hand, his detractors wanted to demean his early status, spreading the story that he had run a brewery; again, this is almost certainly untrue. When dealing with contradictory evidence, Hutton weighs up different accounts, exploring the motivation of various authors before explaining to the reader which is the most plausible interpretation, and why. Broad contextualisation is also utilised to very good effect. Whilst no new stash of documents has been found germane to Cromwell's early life in the East Midlands, Hutton furnishes us with useful information concerning the towns, villages and countryside with which Cromwell would have been very familiar.

And what of Cromwell himself, his ambitions and aims, his mindset, and his ways of operating? The prevailing tendency amongst scholars has been to take Cromwell pretty much at his word, for at least the

last thirty years; Hutton reveals the naivety of this without engaging in spats with his colleagues. Hutton's Cromwell is still a Godly Puritan who saw the hand of God everywhere, especially in the defeat of the king; but in this study Cromwell is at times manipulative, ruthless, and a political streetfighter. Thus, Cromwell's military victories against the royalists were written up in the parliamentarian press in ways that were especially favourable to himself, even at times exaggerating his contributions. Although we do not know the procedures by which such accounts made it into the newspapers, it is inconceivable that Cromwell had no hand in the creation of his reputation in the media and his own image manipulation. This view is reinforced by Hutton's close readings of Cromwell's letters to parliament in which he informed both houses of his successes in battle. He used the first person plural ('We destroyed the king's cavalry'), a technique that meant that he did not have to name other victorious commanders and share the glory. Cromwell's ruthlessness is evident throughout the book. As he rose to prominence he settled scores with various people from his pre-war life, while the leading role that he played in the destruction of the duplicitous Hothams, both father and son, is very telling regarding Cromwell's brutality -- or as he would no doubt have put it, his commitment to expunging the enemies of his Godly cause.

All history books reveal something about the times in which they were written and this one is no exception. At various junctures Hutton tells us that certain royalist military commanders were upper class twits, promoted way beyond their abilities. On reading this one immediately thinks of our current Prime Minister. And the book is peppered with vivid descriptions of the English rural landscape, its fauna and flora. This adds greatly to the reader's ability to picture events in their imagination, but it also makes me think of the looming climate catastrophe and all that we have to lose.

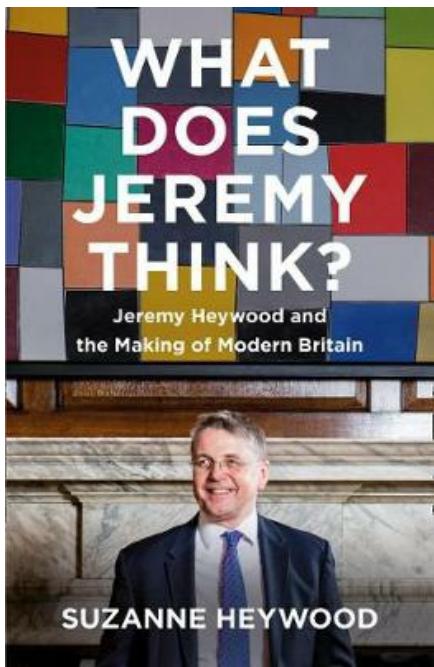
In sum, this is a meticulously researched and highly readable book. Its methodology means that it is on a par with the best recent biographies of partially elusive subjects, such as Natalie Zemon Davis' study of the diplomat and hostage Leo Africanus, *Trickster Travels* (2006), or Steven Nadler's *Spinoza: A Life* (1999, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2018).

### **Stephen Brogan**

**What does Jeremy think? Jeremy Heywood and the making of Modern Britain, by Suzanne Heywood. William Collins 2021 £25.00  
isbn 9780008353124**

The book opens with the events leading up to Black Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> September 1992 – in the middle of the Liberal Democrat Autumn conference in Harrogate – I remember some delegates packing their bags and leaving immediately. As one knew, or suspected at the time, on becoming Prime Minister, John Major barely ceased being Chancellor of the Exchequer as well. Norman Lamont does appear as something other than Major's poodle, but then as The Guardian pointed out in their review Heywood's assessment of David Davis's approach to the Brexit negotiations as 'less exhaustive' than Theresa May's does not necessarily contradict Dominic Cumming's appreciation of the man as 'thick as mince and lazy as a toad'. Whilst this will be an importance reference to the careers of Blair, Brown, Cameron & May, it does not contain any dramatic revelations and is nuanced in the way one would expect from a civil servant. It should, one hopes, at least provide a litmus paper against which to judge the autobiographies and biographies of the usual suspects.

From a Liberal point of view, the book is probably of most interest in so far as it deals with the formation and workings of the 2010-15 Coalition. A sceptic at first, as a master of compromise he came to see the virtues of the Coalition. We can thank Vince Cable for his opposition to the proposed take-over of AstraZeneca by Pfizer – we might have one less vaccine otherwise and a weaker pharmaceutical industry. Ed Davey as Secretary of State for Energy & Climate Change '*refusing to compromise on the government's green commitments.*' Apparently, Cameron '*stopped inviting Ed to the meetings and even held one particularly controversial discussion in his office... leaving one of the private secretaries to guard the door in case Ed tried to break in.*' And we find out the purpose of the Liberal Democrat Conference – delivering the knockout blow to Andrew Lansley's Health & Social Care Bill, though some of its provisions had already attained a life of their own.



Where then, might we ask questions about the veracity of the book? There is circumspection about the death of David Kelly – Iraq War whistle-blower and the Hutton Inquiry, which it says Heywood advised Blair to set up. The book attributes Heywood's departure as Principal Private Secretary to Tony Blair to his desire for a new role and domestic reasons in a new family. Wikipedia, not necessarily a reliable source, says '*he left the civil service in the wake of the Hutton Inquiry where it emerged that he said he had never minuted meetings in the Prime Ministerial offices about David Kelly, a job he was required to do.*' Suzanne Heywood, on the other hand, says '*When the Hutton Report was published... it cleared Jeremy's No. 10 colleagues of any wrongdoing – and didn't mention Jeremy at all since he hadn't been involved in any of the key meetings or decisions.*' Heywood tells his wife that '*a veil of sadness had settled on Number 10 from the day on which they'd heard the news of Dr. Kelly's death.*' One draws one's own conclusions. As Heywood warned Blair, '*it would haunt him for years.*'

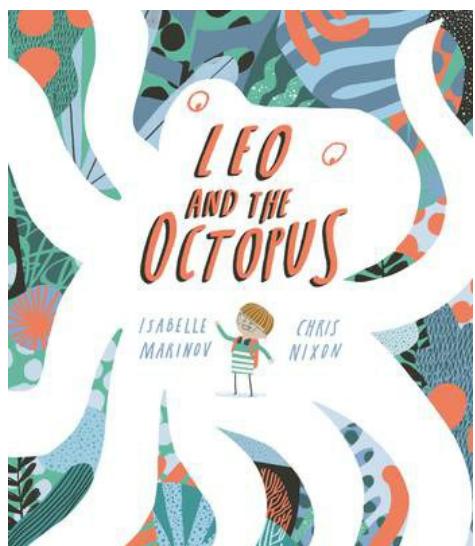
The book is a compilation of Heywood's notes and recollections, together with those of his wife, the author. They worked together on the book, much of the time in his last days in hospital (he died of lung cancer) including prompts of questions to put to colleagues and politicians in interviews thereafter. David Cameron reputedly tried to block the publication of the book it is thought because of revelations that he had instructed the Civil Service not to prepare for the possibility of a Leave victory. We are however, dealing with the Prince of Fools.

There is one problem with this book, which might be addressed when it goes into paperback; it needs appendices, first and foremost of abbreviations – simply looking them up doesn't work, because time moves on and new meanings come into being. Consider ERM, encountered in the opening pages - the first European Exchange Rate Mechanism, which lasted until 1999. A dramatis personae might also be of value, since I suspect this book will be a primary source for years to come.

One would expect discretion from a senior civil servant, especially one of the character ascribed to Jeremy Heywood; every book of this kind has its element of self-justification. Tumultuous times; so I would see this as a yardstick to judge the recollections of others.

### *Stewart Rayment*

**Leo and the Octopus, by Isabelle Marinov, illustrated by Chris Nixon.**  
Templar Publishing 2021 £6.99  
isbn 9781787416550



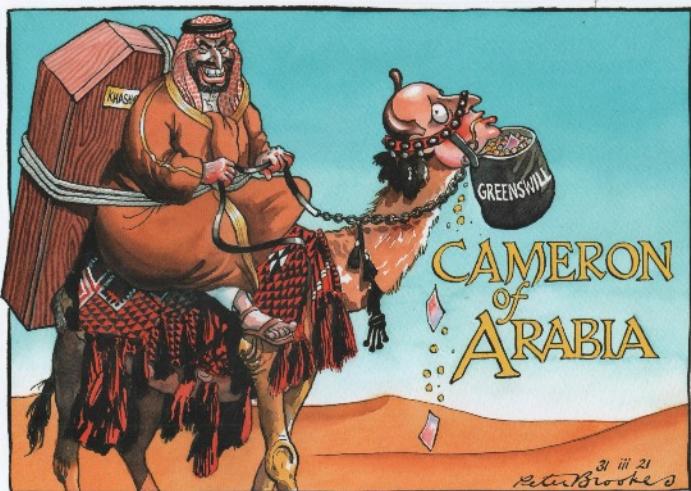
You have be careful when buying books about Leo, they aren't always that good. This one, however, is brilliant. Leo has an autism; there's nothing wrong with that, but he has difficulties with his life until he meets an octopus named Maya. So, every child and adult will find this book valuable, either in understanding their world or understanding the world of their friends and colleagues. I note that it is already being used professionally in that field; every school and library should have a copy.

Isabelle Marinov has been writing since she was nine in German and Luxembourgeois, her native language but her published work has only recently appeared. Chris Nixon is an Australian illustrator whose affinity with surf culture blends well with an octopus.

### *Stewart Rayment*

**Desperate Times, by Peter Brookes**  
**Biteback Publishing 2021 £20.00**  
**isbn 9781785906886**

Read the introduction to Peter Brookes' latest opus; it is always worth reading, but this time is much more poignant. Cartooning for a newspaper is a difficult challenge – where or what is the news? Brexit was a gift to the cartoonist, not least for the sheer incompetence with which it was handled (and still is); how would they cope once it had past and things got back to normal? I've never thought of Brookes as a single issue (Brexit) cartoonist, still less on Covid-19 – these just happen to be the stories that dominate. To those who think his treatment of Johnson or Starmer is harsh (a Labour voter, Brookes doesn't warm to him), the answer is simple – you chose to assume this position yourself, if you can't stand the heat get out of the kitchen.



With Covid-19 on the coat tails of Brexit, Brookes regrets that he hasn't been able to give as much attention to the climate crisis and international affairs as he might have liked.

Peter Brookes cartoons will be on show at Chris Beetles Gallery in Rider Street, London SW1Y 6QB until 30<sup>th</sup> October, but can also be viewed on their website [www.chrisbeetles.com](http://www.chrisbeetles.com). The original cartoons can be bought for £1,450.00 and there is clearly a brisk market in them.

*Stewart Rayment*

**The Nature Seed, how to raise adventurous and nurturing kids, by Lucy Jones and Ken Greenway. Souvenir Press 2021 £16.99 isbn 9781788167970**

Part of the ethos behind the establishment of the Soanes Centre, where Ken Greenway works, was that if you teach children to know their environment then they will love and respect it. Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park (E3 4PN) is London's inner-most woodland – 3 miles from the City, 30-odd acres, so it is a tough challenge. Ken, and Lucy Jones have pooled their experiences to take that message beyond those boundaries and share that knowledge with parents who want their children to grow close to nature; it is never too early to start. To this end, there are lots of practical examples of things to do, how they work out for you is a matter of trial and error, but here is a guide. Don't keep your crabs in a bucket for too long... they'll probably die – a rather grimmer message than the authors' – and come on Ken, it's much more fun to use a flint and steel to get a fire going than a lighter.

There are some useful comments on inequality of access to nature, which would serve those of you who are in a position to make decisions on open spaces. It is fairly easy to scan through the book and see which sections are relevant. Also note that the situation will change with time.

This is a book for parents and teachers to nurture their children; it is broad practical guide and you'll need other resources, some of them suggested. You cannot leave fighting climate change to politicians. Assuming they are on the right side anyway, they have far too many other decisions to balance, and nobody is going to thank them for any of them. Start making those small steps your self; we all know what acorns grow into (I hope).

*Stewart Rayment*

