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INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



**The International Unites.
Nick Clegg speaking to the LI Exec.**

EVENTS

December 2011	
19th	Christmas Reflections on the Situation in Syria – joint event with Lib Dem Christian Forum. NLC. 7.00pm
February 2012	
6th	LIBG Forum – Belarus. NLC. 6.30 for 7.00pm cash bar
28th	Diplomatic Reception, NLC. 6.00-8.00pm tickets £25.00 from the Treasurer (below)
March 2012	
2nd – 4th	Scottish Liberal Democrats Spring Conference, Inverness.
9th – 11th	Liberal Democrats Spring Conference, Gateshead.
29th -31st	LI Exec. Barcelona
May 2012	
3rd	local elections across UK, including London Mayoral/Assembly
June 2012	
21st	Lord Garden Memorial Lecture. Jon Snow. Chatham House 13.00-14.00
September 2012	
22nd – 26th	Liberal Democrats Autumn Conference, Brighton.
October 2012	
2nd	127th Liberal Party Assembly, Wolverhampton
17th-21st	LI Congress, Abijan, Côte d'Ivoire

For bookings & other information please contact the Treasurer below.
 NLC= National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE
 Underground: Embankment
 Liberal International (British Group)
 Treasurer: Wendy Kyrle-Pope, 1 Brook Gardens, Barnes, London SW13 0LY
 email w.kyrle@virgin.net
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 Comments and articles can be sent to
 Lockhart & Hastings, Creative Media Centre, 17 & 45 Robertson Street, Hastings TN34 1HL, email lockharthastings@btconnect.com

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Chair's Letter

Dear Colleagues,

We were honoured to host the bi-annual Liberal International Executive Meeting in London in October, working alongside the Lib Dems and LI Secretariat. The LI Secretariat stayed close to home as the Executive took place in the National Liberal Club directly above the LI office. Members of the Executive were delighted that Nick Clegg took time out of his hectic schedule to come to speak at the end of the formal meeting. Nick also had the chance to talk to LI President Hans van Baalen and the LI Bureau. The evening was rounded off by a Reception hosted by LIBG President Simon Hughes and generously sponsored by BTP Advisors. We are most grateful to BTP and delighted that Peter Thompson was able to join us and say a few words at the Reception. Earlier in the year, LIBG received a bequest from Ronnie Fraser whom we took a moment to remember at the Reception. Reports and photographs of the event can be found elsewhere in this edition of InterLIB and on the website.

In October, Simon and I visited India where we had the wonderful opportunity to visit the Golden Temple at Amritsar, one of the most spiritual places I have ever been, before talking to members of the Sikh com-

munity there about human rights and the death penalty. We also had talks about the situation in Kashmir at the University of Jammu. In both places we were also lobbied about the UK government's approach to migration and mobility, with the Vice-Chancellor of Jammu stressing how difficult it is for him to recruit students from the UK because of the FCO's advice about the security situation in Kashmir, while others stressed the negation impact of the UK government's approach to highly skilled immigration. Simon then joined an all-party parliamentary visit to the Tibetan government-in-exile in Dharamsala organised by the Tibet Society. It is clear that on a range of issues Liberal International has a role to play enabling minority groups to act more effectively in

the Region. We hope to be able to foster some of this activity, for example by working with the Tibet Society.

On a personal note, I step down as Chair of the East of England Lib Dems on 31st

Simon Hughes and Julie Smith with Parmjeet Singh Gazi, President of the Sikh Student Federation and Jaspal Singh Manjhpur, a spokesman for the Youth Akali Dal, PanchPardani, outside the Golden Temple at Amritsar



December and therefore look forward to being able to devote more time to LIBG and international matters more generally.

I hope to see some of you at our pre-Christmas meeting on 19th December and wish everyone a merry Christmas and happy New Year.

Julie

LLOYD GEORGE WEEKEND

The Lloyd George Society will be holding its annual week end school at the Commodore Hotel, Llandrindod Wells, on the 17th/19th of February next. The programme includes Tom McNally speaking about civil liberties; Professor John Roper on American Politics and Barack Obama; Doctor Sandy Waugh on aspects of Welsh and Scottish Liberalism; and D J Britton the playwright who wrote "The Wizard, the Goat and the Man who won the War "on Lloyd George.

Bob Russell MP will give the after dinner speech and also take part in a debate on the Monarchy with Mrs Campbell of Republic. On Sunday morning there will be a discussion on current politics and the coalition.

Enjoy an interesting weekend with pleasant company away from it all in Mid Wales. £140 for the full Week End Friday night to Sunday Morning, special £50 discount offer for those attending for the first time.

Further details from Bill Barritt, The Leasowes, Wenlock Road, Tasley, Bridgnorth, Shropshire WV 16 5LZ.

Email wmbarritt@btinternet.com

Responsibility to Protect: A Liberal Approach?

Jonathan Fryer

Ever since the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, which ended Europe's Thirty Years War, the concept of the nation state and the principle of national sovereignty have together been central to international relations. Although first applied to a limited number of countries – predominantly European monarchies – over time they have taken on a global significance, especially since the independence of former colonies. Thus the United Nations, the post-War world family, brings together 193 sovereign states – though interestingly in the name of their peoples, rather than their governments.

The invasion of a sovereign state by an outside power is an accepted justification for war (e.g. Germany's invasion of Poland in



1939 and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990). The country that has been thus violated can call on outside assistance, which may actually be formalised within a treaty, such as those covering the NATO member states, which are obliged to go to each other's aid, and the six (Arabian) Gulf Cooperation Council countries. But at least until recently, the accepted wisdom was that in all but the most exceptional circumstances national governments – of whatever type – bear the sole responsibility for running their own country's affairs and safeguarding its internal security. Indeed, some states, notably the People's Republic of China, object strongly to any sort of outside interference, including criticism of their human rights record. It is worth noting, however, that while for millennia Imperial China incorporated the principle of the Mandate of Heaven – the divine right of the Emperor to rule – it also accepted that an Emperor

could sacrifice that right if he ruled extremely badly, and could thus be legitimately overthrown, usually leading to a change in dynasty. Implicit in this example is the assumption that any ruler or government has a responsibility to protect its own people – from hunger, poverty, abuse, invasion or the like – and deserves retribution if it does not.

But what happens when a government signally fails in that responsibility and the country's people are unable to overthrow the government, either through elections or by revolution or other means? When does it become the international community's responsibility to protect an oppressed or endangered population? Who should do it? And how should it happen? These are just some of the difficult questions now faced by governments worldwide, especially those in which Liberal parties form a part.

From a Liberal perspective, there are clear moral imperatives which should at least make easier such decisions by those governments in which Liberal parties are solely or jointly in power. First and foremost is the unequivocal Liberal commitment to the defence of human rights. The world cannot simply stand idly by while gross violations of human rights take place within a country, though this begs the question of when exactly such violations should be considered to have surpassed the level of unacceptability. Sometimes the answer is clear, such as in 1988, in the final stages of the Iran-Iraq War, when the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein launched a horrific poison gas attack on his own country's Kurdish population at Halabja. More than a decade later, in March 2010, the post-Saddam Iraqi High Criminal Court acknowledged that the attack had been an act of genocide. A Dutch court had reached a similar verdict five years previously and sentenced a Dutch businessman, who had brokered the deal for exporting to Iraq the chemicals concerned, to 15 years in jail. The later sustained assault on Iraq's Kurds after the First Gulf War and the consequent refugee crisis triggered the imposition of a no-fly zone over the Kurdistan region of Iraq by the US, the UK and France. Many would say that in that case, international intervention was clearly justifiable, but unfortunately not all cases of human rights abuses (including charges of genocide) are so clear-cut.

The second core Liberal concept which is relevant to the current debate on R2P is Freedom. The Liberal concept of Freedom is in many ways distinct from that of the Conservative Right (for example that championed by the Tea Party movement within the Republican Party in the United States). We Liberals recognise both individual and collective freedoms in key areas such as movement, association, expression, information and participatory democracy. However, the relativity relating to Freedom is even more problematic than that relating to Human Rights when it comes to making judgments about the performance of other countries' governments and the consequent moral obligation on the international community – or at least, Liberal states – to embark on some form of intervention or punitive action. To cite just one example, the suppression

of freedoms in Myanmar (Burma) is self-evident, yet there is little consensus within the international community about what to do about it, with Japan, for one, arguing the case for ‘positive engagement’.

R2P as a Concept in International Law

It is only over the past decade or so that there has been serious discussion about the right (some people might say ‘duty’) of humanitarian intervention, by which a state or a group of states can intervene coercively, including using military action if necessary, against another state in order to protect people at risk in that state – what has become known as R2P or the international Responsibility to Protect. In 2000, the then UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, highlighted the central dilemma of the related debate about whether R2P over-rides national sovereignty when he declared, ‘if humanitarian intervention is, indeed, an unacceptable assault on national sovereignty, how should we respond to a Rwanda, to a Srebrenica – to gross and systematic violations of human rights that affect every precept of our common humanity?’

Rwanda in particular still resonates in the collective guilty conscience of the world which did so little, until it was too late, to stop the 1994 genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi minority and the consequent reprisals against the majority Hutu. Questions were asked at the time whether African lives were worth any less than others (to which any sound Liberal would of course respond ‘No!’). But why did the world not intervene in Rwanda, or indeed in Cambodia in the late 1970s, yet did so in Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo – in the last-mentioned case involving a successful NATO military operation without specific UN authority. In the Kosovo case, the related issues of ethnic conflict and ethnic cleansing were seen by sufficient countries as justification for outside intervention in 1999. As the Canadian writer and Liberal politician Michael Ignatieff explained in his book *State Failure* (2003), the rationale behind humanitarian intervention in such instances is that countries (in this case Serbia) that are unable to maintain order within their borders and are suffering from raging ethnic tensions are in fact ‘failed states’; presenting a challenge to stability, they therefore do not deserve to retain the international rights of sovereign countries, or so the argument goes.

Yet the historical record highlights in relation to different parts of the world a woeful inconsistency, even in the 21st Century, and the tragedy of millions of lost lives has been the price for non-intervention in the worst cases. One of the most glaring examples of insufficient international action has been Darfur in Sudan, where Islamic militias sympathetic to the government have been involved in the decimation of the indigenous population through slaughter, house- and crop-burning, mass evictions and rape. The level of violence against the people of Darfur have led many Western governments and NGOs to describe what has been happening as genocide, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2008 issued an associated arrest warrant for the Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir. He nonetheless remains firmly in power in Khartoum, apparently immune and certainly still vociferously supported by some of the more illiberal regimes in Africa and the Arab world.

It clearly is a matter of contention about when a genocide can or cannot be said to have taken place (the Turks and Armenians are still arguing about this nearly a century after the terrible events during

the First World War). In 1994, during the horrendous killings in Rwanda, several Western countries seemed to be in a state of denial about whether genocide was or was not taking place. But International Law does acknowledge the heinous criminal nature of genocide. The Convention on Genocide, passed by the UN General Assembly in December 1948, still has resonance and relevance today, in that its first Article states that: ‘the Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish[my italics].’ This could be seen as legitimising action taken to prevent genocide even when it proves impossible to get a formal resolution on the matter passed by the UN Security Council.

Given this background of inconsistency and uncertainty relating to gross violations of International Law one can easily understand the recent desire to define a set of internationally acceptable criteria which can be applied in current and future cases in which there might be a need for humanitarian intervention, including possible military action if all else fails. Already, the core concept of R2P is recognised as a new element in the ever-evolving body of International Law, but for politicians, particularly in a grouping such

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endangered population?
Who should do it?
And how should it happen?*

as Liberal International, there needs to be much more than a core concept. It would be useful to draw up a set of well-argued guidelines that could help political parties and governments make judgments and take decisions, singularly or severally, knowing that they do this not based on a purely emotional response, but rather on a rational, humanitarian one, in accordance with International Law – which itself is rightly occupying a more prominent place in international relations in our increasingly inter-dependent world. The Liberal International is probably the ideal forum for such a process to begin, enshrining in its work core values such as human rights and freedom, as mentioned above.

International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICSS)

A significant amount of groundwork was done in this field by the government of Canada, in collaboration with various foundations, which together established in 2000 the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, initiated by Canada’s former Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy. The ICSS prepared a Report that was submitted to the UN General Assembly the following year, in the hope of moving forward towards an international consensus. How far forward, or not, that consensus has in fact been moved in the intervening decade will be discussed later in this paper, but let us consider the main findings and recommendations of the ICSS. Two core principles were identified:

- State sovereignty implies responsibility, and the primary responsibility for the protection of its people lies with the state itself.
- When a population is suffering serious harm, as the result of

internal war, insurgency, repression or state failure, and the state in question is unwilling or unable to halt or avert it, the principle of non-intervention yields to the international responsibility to protect. Three distinct elements of the Responsibility to Protect were defined:

- The responsibility to prevent: to address both the root causes and the direct causes of internal conflict and other man-made crises putting human life at risk.
- The responsibility to react: to respond to situations of compelling human need with appropriate measures, which may include coercive measures like sanctions and international prosecutions, and in extreme cases military intervention.
- The responsibility to rebuild: to provide, particularly after military intervention, full assistance with recovery, reconstruction and reconciliation, addressing the causes of the harm the intervention was designed to halt or avert.

Of the three elements, prevention was seen as being the most important single dimension of the responsibility to protect: 'prevention options should always be exhausted before intervention is contemplated, and more commitment and resources and resources must be devoted to it,' the Report said.

The 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington occurred while the ICSS Report was being finalised. Though terrorism – especially international terrorism of that kind – was largely outside the Commission's remit, 9/11 and its aftermath inevitably affected the international climate into which the Report emerged, undoubtedly blunting its impact as a result. The main concern, at least in the West, with the United States still the acknowledged world 'Leader', became the so-called War on Terror, resulting in foreign intervention in Afghanistan – still ongoing – and two years later, the controversial US invasion of Iraq, in which Britain was Washington's only ally of major significance (despite the opposition of a large part of the British population, including the Liberal Democrat Party). Significantly, Responsibility to Protect was not used by Bush and Blair as a major justification for the Iraq intervention – although there was plenty of evidence of Saddam Hussein's oppression of his own people, including the Marsh Arabs. Instead, the argument was deployed that Saddam presented an external threat, through his supposed possession of hidden weapons of mass destruction. Eight years on, the intervention remains controversial, not just because of the high number of lives lost and the colossal amount of material destruction during the war but also because Iraq is a more fragmented and in many ways insecure country now than it was back in 2003.

Precautionary Intervention

Since the invasion of Iraq, there has been a great deal of debate in academic circles about so-called precautionary intervention, which could be said, in some cases, to respond to the 'responsibility to prevent'. The idea in this case is that in principle it should be possible to predict some man-made humanitarian disasters and therefore intervene to prevent them. Libya (of which more below) is an interesting case in point. The UN-authorized intervention in Libya in early 2011 took place because there was good reason to believe that Muammar Gaddafi was preparing to slaughter a sizeable proportion of the population if Benghazi if his army successfully recaptured the city from rebel forces. Given what both he and one of his sons, Saif al-Islam, had declared on television there was indeed due cause for concern. But does the international community – or any constituent part of it – have a crystal ball capable of foretelling what atrocities will be committed if precautionary intervention does not take place? It would be difficult to reply with an unequivocal 'yes'.

Indeed, there is a danger that people may misread the signs, or read too much into them. Dick Cheney, George W Bush's Vice-President, argued in relation to Iran that if there was a 1% certainty of Tehran developing nuclear weapons then the United States must treat it as a certainty. This became known as Cheney's '1% Doctrine', supplementing Bush's own doctrine of 'preventive war'. Even some of Washington's closest allies were sceptical about Cheney's argument, or else worried that it opened the door to deadly mistakes, whose ramifications could turn out to be worse than the supposed threat that was being foreseen. Encouraging (or at least not dissuading) a hypothetical pre-emptive Israeli attack on Iranian nuclear facilities would seem to fall neatly into that category.

Nonetheless, in the view of Professor John Williams of the School of Government and International Affairs at Durham University, 'the precautionary principle is a useful tool for directing thinking towards areas of uncertainty and unpredictability based upon the limits of knowledge and asking how we should act as a result.' He adds, 'Risks must be taken in situations such as that in Libya or the Ivory Coast and those risks come in many forms: immediate risks of "collateral damage" arising from the use of military force; medium term risks to the stability of neighbouring states; long term risks to established patterns of political practice, to name but a few... Precaution is about honesty in the face of uncertainty and the limits of knowledge.'

Liberal Interventionism

More mainstream in the political arena is the concept of Liberal Interventionism, espoused by such figures as Lord Ashdown, former UK Liberal leader and High Representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This doctrine essentially supports foreign military engagement in countries in which a significant proportion of the population faces a mortal threat from their government or fellow citizens. Sierra Leone is a good example. There is

no doubt that both there and in Liberia, further bloodshed and appalling human rights abuses were averted by intervention, even

though that itself of course had a human cost. Moreover, a new dimension was added to the Liberal Intervention scenario in these West African cases, in that Charles Taylor, Liberia's ousted President, was successfully transferred to The Hague to face charges of crimes against humanity. This can be seen as a welcome advance in the implementation of International Law.

Despite such successes, Liberal Interventionism has been criticised in some quarters as a new kind of neo-imperialism, particularly when the United States takes a leading role. Though Nigeria has been involved in some related operations, as well as in peace-keeping, in West Africa, it is significant that sub-Saharan Africa's other major regional power, South Africa, has been far more critical in its attitude. Notably, the ANC government in Pretoria strongly opposed action beyond sanctions against Robert Mugabe's thuggish regime in Zimbabwe.

It is probably fair to say that the argument for Liberal Interventionism was not being won in much of Africa, Asia and

'prevention options should always be exhausted before intervention is contemplated, and more commitment and resources and resources must be devoted to it,'

Latin America, at least until recent events in Libya. Though the Obama administration wisely decided to let the Europeans – British, French and Italians primarily – take the lead in the 2011 Libyan intervention, it nonetheless participated. And it is from a US National Security Advisor, Ben Rhodes, that we get this interesting reflection on why Liberal Interventionism might be considered a success in Libya: ‘The fact that it is Libyans marching into Tripoli not only provides a basis for legitimacy for this but will also provide a contrast to situations when the foreign government is the occupier. While there will be great challenges ahead, one of the positive aspects here is that the Libyans are the ones who are undertaking the regime change and the ones leading the transition.’ In other words, Liberal Interventionism works best when sufficient locals are on board, and preferably in the driving seat.

The British Conservative Prime Minister, David Cameron, who swiftly went to visit ‘Free Libya’ with the equally triumphant French President, Nicolas Sarkozy after the ousting of the Gaddafi government, declared afterwards that the Libyan operation had shown that three conditions need to be met before international action can be taken against repressive regimes:

- The UN must agree to the action;
- Other countries in the region must be supportive in the way that the Arab League supported the no-fly zone over Libya;
- Action must be tailored to the needs of the particular country in question.

This marks a notable departure from what one might call the Bush–Blair Doctrine of preventive intervention, but it is not necessarily an argument that Liberals would endorse 100 per cent, if global humanitarian principles are seen as having greater legitimacy than the political positioning that sometimes goes on inside the UN Security Council.

If Libya, Why Not Syria?

The so-called Arab Spring that began in Tunisia in December 2010 has changed our perceptions not only of North Africa and the Middle East but also about how dictators and human rights violators can be removed – ideally by a country’s own people, but sometimes maybe with a little help from their friends. Tunisia and Egypt were both remarkable examples of longstanding despots who, backed up by ruthless security forces, kept their populations quiescent largely through fear; yet when there was sufficient critical mass among protestors, these dictators were shown to be paper tigers. Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen may well follow Ben Ali and Mubarak out of the exit door, though it is too soon to say in any of these three cases whether a healthy, stable, functioning democratic future awaits. At the time of writing, Libya’s fate is even more uncertain, not just because Gaddafi is still on the run but because of the diverse nature of his opponents. What happens then is not guaranteed, and Western governments applauding the turn of events would do well to remember the third of the ICSS’s elements of Responsibility to Protect: the responsibility to rebuild.

Meanwhile, another uncomfortable query needs to be addressed: if Libya was a casebook study of R2P being put into action, why has intervention not occurred in Syria? The Syrian regime has shown itself to be just as nasty as its Libyan counterpart; indeed, demonstrators are still being killed in the streets as this paper is being written. Moreover, while at the beginning of Syria’s protests in April 2011 local activists urged foreign powers to stay well out of things, their pleas have started to change, with some now calling for foreign intervention, to stop further bloodshed. Moreover, Turkey – which

had previously enjoyed good relations with Syria’s Bashar al-Assad, as part of its Good Neighbours policy – has now not only called on him to go but has hinted strongly that it might be obliged to intervene if the situation continues or, perish the thought, get worse. The West has issued verbal condemnations and ratcheted up sanctions, including threatening some of al-Assad’s immediate circle with ICC prosecutions, but there is no appetite for any form of military intervention. That is not just because the major Western military powers and their defence budgets are overstretched (think Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya), but also because they fear any direct military intervention in Syria could set the whole Middle East alight. The region is a tinderbox as it is, with some Palestinians moreover demanding to know R2P why doesn’t seem to apply to them.

So When Should R2P Swing into Action?

We can usefully turn once more to the findings of the ICSS, in its 2001 report, as this provides some helpful parameters.

First, it argues for what it calls ‘the just cause threshold’, acknowledging that that military intervention for the purpose of human protection is ‘an exceptional and extraordinary measure’. To be warranted, there must be serious and irreparable harm occurring, or imminently likely to occur, of one or both of the following two kinds:

- Large-scale loss of life, actual or apprehended, with genocidal intent or not, which is the product either of deliberate state action, or state neglect or inability to act, or a failed state situation.
- Large-scale ethnic cleansing, actual or apprehended, whether carried out by killing, forced expulsion, acts of terror or rape.

Moreover, the ICSS recommended four cautionary principles (though here they were using ‘precautionary’ in a different sense from that discussed above):

- Right intention: the primary of the intervention, whatever other motives intervening states may have, must be to halt or avert human suffering. Right intention is better assured with multilateral operations, clearly supported by regional opinion and the victims concerned.
- Last resort: military intervention can only be justified when every non-military option for the prevention or peaceful resolution of the crisis has been explored, with reasonable grounds for believing that lesser measures would not have succeeded.
- Proportional means: the scale, duration and intensity of the planned military intervention should be the minimum necessary to secure the defined human protection objective.
- Reasonable prospects: there must be a reasonable chance of success of halting or averting the suffering which has justified the intervention, with the consequences of action not likely to be worse than the consequences of inaction.

I quote the ICSS Report at length, not because I think it has all the answers but rather because there is no point re-inventing the wheel. Nonetheless, in the light of intervening events, one might make additional points or draw some different conclusions. This is particularly true in regard to the authority needed for action.

Is the UN Fit for Purpose?

There was a widespread assumption at the end of the Cold War that the United Nations might be able to solve all the world’s conflicts. The experience of the past 20 years has shown that is clearly not the case. Indeed, getting Security Council approval for international action such as humanitarian intervention is often proving extremely difficult, even if the concept of Responsibility to Protect is now large accepted as part of International Law. As referred to earlier, China has indicated that it does not in general like the idea of

external powers intervening in other states' affairs; after all, if it did give the green light often, that could provoke renewed international interest in China's own policy towards ethnic and religious minorities, especially in Tibet and Xinjiang. Moreover, the Soviet Union may have collapsed, and Communism with it, but Russia still does not appreciate what it sometimes sees as Western adventurism in areas of the world in which it has an historic political or economic interest. Even more disconcertingly, as has been shown in recent months, some non-aligned non-permanent members of the Security Council such as Brazil cannot be counted on as automatically supportive of R2P missions. Regarding Libya, the same was even true of Germany.

In an ideal world, all R2P interventions should have the blessing of the UN in the form of a Security Council mandate. But that may become even more difficult than it is now if (as doubtless should be the case) some new permanent members of the Security Council are appointed, including Brazil, India, Japan and Germany. But even if there is UN support for a mission, the UN itself is not equipped to run most R2P operations or to provide blue-helmeted troops, unless these are on a relatively small scale. This means that often the Coalition of the Willing, to use a hackneyed phrase, is made up of the usual suspects, mainly the United States, Britain, France, Italy and a number of other NATO member states. It is not necessarily healthy

There is a strong case to argue that part of the reform needed at the UN should be the creation of a corps of military officers and possibly other ranks which would be available for deployment by the UN Secretary General

that NATO should be perceived as the world's policeman, however. It was a welcome innovation that Qatar and the UAE made a contribution (albeit small) to the operation in Libya. And it seems likely that Turkey (itself a NATO member, of course) will get more involved in future actions as it flexes its muscles as an emerging global power.

There are other worrying issues about the UN's record which also cast doubts over the global body's suitability as ultimate arbiter and enforcer in all situations. The most disconcerting is the frequency of accusations of violent malpractice by members of UN forces, in places as disparate as DR Congo and Haiti. These charges have often included rape (female and male), but other misdemeanours by UN troops (European and Latin American, as well as African) have meant that the UN has a tarnished reputation in some parts of the world. Indeed, in some places UN troops have come to be seen as an occupying force rather than a liberating or protecting one. Some critics have argued that shortcomings in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) in particular have actually made the situation there worse, not better.

Another problem is the fact that the UN does not have its own standing army and must instead rely on member states providing troops and equipment for use in any situation, even when the Security Council has authorised intervention. The bureaucracy involved, both in New York and in the Ministries of Defence of member states, means that it can take many months to get any sort of

viable UN operation going – which may be too slow to prevent mass killings or human rights violations. There is a strong case to argue (as has been suggested by LI Patron Richard Moore) that part of the reform needed at the UN should be the creation of a corps of military officers and possibly other ranks which would be available for deployment by the UN Secretary General when the Security Council has authorised an intervention under a R2P resolution.

Time for Regional Responsibility

The involvement of countries from the region in which the problem situation exists not only has logistical benefits, but it also helps to add legitimacy to any R2P operation. Europe should in general accept the prime responsibility for its own geographical area and immediate neighbourhood, just as South East Asia should in its area, sub-Saharan Africa the same, Latin America and so forth. However, so far there has not been a marked willingness in most of these regions to accept such a responsibility (Nigeria in West Africa being a notable exception). Indeed, in the case of Myanmar (Burma), even the more democratic fellow members of ASEAN have been reluctant to do more than give the military junta a slap on the wrist. And when the authorities in Bahrain tried to put down protests in Manama, killing people at the Pearl Roundabout, Saudi Arabia led a GCC intervention force which backed the government, not the protestors. But that does not mean that increased regional responsibility is inevitably doomed. It may offer the only long-term solution.

A Liberal Future for R2P?

Liberals are by nature in favour of peace rather than war, but Responsibility to Protect is proving to be a principle of International Law that is fundamentally in tune with Liberal values and therefore obliges Liberals to accept the consequences, even when in extreme cases this involves military action and therefore some loss of life. Particularly given the Liberal International's concern for human rights worldwide, Liberal parties cannot individually or collectively turn a blind eye to actual or impending humanitarian catastrophes in which some form of external intervention is needed. That by no means implies that military action is always the right answer. On the contrary, it should be the last resort after other diplomatic or economic methods have been tried, but not so long after that the human cost in the country concerned is too high.

The ICSS cited above set down some useful guidelines, most of which are valid today. LI member parties currently in government can usefully consider them when shaping their foreign policy. But it is not only parties in government that should consider the subject carefully. All parties can use the concepts and principles enshrined in R2P in parliamentary debates and in some instances work with sister parties in the country concerned, particularly in democratic capacity-building. As has been stressed, there is plenty of work to be done in accepting the implications of the responsibility to prevent as well as the responsibility to rebuild, not only the responsibility to react appropriately.

LI member parties could also usefully keep their members informed of R2P-related developments and share information available from sources such as the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (www.responsibilitytoprotect.org).

Jonathan Fryer

The writer, lecturer and broadcaster Jonathan Fryer is the Liberal Democrats' representative on the Executive of Liberal International and has reported on conflict situations around the world. He lectures part time at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).

Responsibility to Protect Conference

Tamara Dancheva

Liberal International hosted a Conference on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) which was co-organised by the Liberal Democrats Party (LibDems) and the Liberal International British Group (LIBG) and supported by ELDR and ALDE. The Conference was held on 15th of October in Central London and it was opened both to LI members and the wider public. The total number of attendees reached around 80 delegates representing various LI member parties.

The Conference on R2P was organised in the context of the recent developments in MENA and the liberal dimension of the Arab spring. Its objective was to discuss the concept as a liberal approach and to bring attention to several R2P issues which have arisen as a result of the UN-backed NATO mission in Libya. Jonathan Fryer, a member of the LibDems party and ELDR Council Member, who lectures at SOAS, presented a special report on R2P. In it, he discussed at length concepts such as liberal interventionism and precautionary intervention. There were 3 discussion panels each focusing on the different aspects of R2P. The first one addressed R2P as a concept. The second one went from a theoretical to a practical review of the concept. The last one was focused on the future and the challenges that come with implementing R2P. A few of the prominent speakers included LibDems Convenor in the House of Lords Lord Alderdice, Former ELDR Vice-President and Former Minister of EU and Integration Astrid Thors, Han Ten Broeke MP, Former Minister of Defence for Canada Art Eggleton, the Minister of Regional Integration for Zimbabwe Priscilla Mushonga as well as ELDR Vice President Louisewies van der Laan.

At the first panel chaired by Professor Ingemund Haag, the discussion formed around the fact that even though R2P has evolved as a concept it must also incorporate further dimensions such as the responsibility to intervene and to rebuild: two dimensions essential for the successful resolution of any humanitarian crisis. It was also pointed out that the use of force under the R2P concept should reflect a view of “sovereignty to protect”, which means that each state has a positive duty to protect its own citizens. Collective action must be taken only when “peaceful means are inadequate and national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.” In this sense, it was noted that the international community cannot act as a world’s policeman but it can certainly focus on building an economic capacity and democracy in fragile states as a first step to preventing mass atrocities.

Lord Alderdice provided five criteria for the legitimacy of an intervention when trying to implement R2P:

- The seriousness of the risk
- The real purpose of the intervention should be to avert risk and prevent harm
- Physical force should be used as a last resort
- The physical force used has to be proportional
- Balance of consequences

At the Q/A session afterwards participants raised the point that if there is no capacity or intention to intervene and prevent atrocities then a law on R2P does not matter.

At the second panel chaired by ELDR Vice-President Graham Watson, Kosovo, Iraq and Libya were discussed as examples where the responsibility to protect had evolved from a theoretical into a practical concept. It was agreed that Libya was probably the only case here there was a clear link between R2P and subsequent action. ELDR VP Watson discussed at length how important of an issue R2P is to liberals all over the world. He pointed out that “we need to keep pressuring for action not on grounds of “Realpolitik” but on grounds of “Moralpolitik”. The participants brought up a debate on the situation in other crisis countries like Syria and Bahrain.

At the third panel chaired by Former Minister of Integration Astrid Thors, ELDR Vice President Louisewies Van Der Laan spoke about the importance of international law in implementing R2P. She explained that even though the International Criminal Court is not a political institution which thus makes it more objective, there are still various limitations to its mandate. She pointed out that there are many atrocities which are very serious but because these are not labelled “crimes against humanity” they cannot be prosecuted by the ICC. The fact that only state leaders are held responsible for atrocities is very limiting as in general there are many other individuals who should be held accountable as well.

The concluding remarks of the Conference were given by LibDems Foreign Affairs Critique in the House of Lords Baroness Falkner. She put an emphasis on the concept of prevention since every conflict which has broken out or is ongoing is the recurrence of previous conflicts. She also noted that intervention should be longer lasting as pulling out too quickly might cause authoritarianism to return. Two schools of thought emerged towards the end: those who wished to see R2P applied more broadly to cases of autocracies and dictatorships and those who did not wish for it to be interpreted too legalistically. As a final note it was stressed that there is a certain moral relativism inherent in the West’s selectivity in intervening in one instance versus another.

Tamara Dancheva is Liberal International’s Human Rights Officer.

DIPLOMATIC RECEPTION

Next year’s Dips Do is on the 28th February 2012 6-8pm at the National Liberal Club. Tickets cost £25.00, cheques to LI(BG) sent to 1 Brook Gardens, London SW13 0LY. An increasingly interesting event now that the Lib Dems are in office, book early to save disappointment.

Wendy Kyrle-Pope

Report – 187th Executive Meeting of Liberal International, London

Adrian Trett

As a recent recruit to Liberal International British Group, this was the first Liberal International Executive Meeting that I have had the pleasure to attend.

Setting out for an early start of 9am on a Friday morning for the National Liberal Club - not something I make a habit of doing too often - the first session from 9-11am in the Lady Violet Room was on a workshop for a permanent Human Rights Committee which exceeded all expectations.

It was great to seeing leading politicians like Hans Van Baalen, MEP and President of LI and our very own LI Patron Richard Moore making very key decisive points in an open and consensual discussion on Human Rights, superbly well managed by the newly-appointed Chair of the Liberal International Human Rights Committee, Swedish MP Abir Al-Sahlani.

The Human Rights Committee will be re-invigorated with funding raised by member parties in order to employ a permanent Human Rights Officer for three years, Tamara Dancheva recently appointed will lead the work in this area. The main three areas which will be monitored by the Committee are: the Responsibility to Protect, a key issue for LI which formed the theme for a one-day conference the day after the Executive meeting; Women's rights; and LGBT discrimination. The decision to include the third item delighted me. Many countries are far behind our own country's attitudes and as Chair LGBT+ Liberal Democrats I am acutely aware that this is an area really needs to be highlighted at the international level, and which requires serious collaboration amongst Liberal thinking parties across the world.

It was also agreed that work would initially focus on four countries which would be studied in depth and follow developments on the ground for which we already have experts in place to monitor - Singapore, Ivory Coast, Nicaragua and Belarus.

From 11am, I then moved to the Lloyd George Room, where Andrew Duff was leading a concurrent meeting on the theme of Making European Elections "European" (See separate piece by Allan Siao Ming Witherick on p.....). However, my impression was of a very productive debate regarding electoral reforms to ensure European Elections having greater significance for the people and especially the media across Europe, which can be no bad thing, especially in the UK, where mis-understanding and misrepresentation of the European Union is all too common.

The afternoon session essentially revolved around administrative activities of Liberal International. For me, the most interesting part was the admission of new Liberal parties from across the globe. I was profoundly impressed at just how much these countries have struggled and fought to get to this point in their history. The Civil Will Party of Mongolia, represented by Oyun Sanjaasuren, and the eponymous Sam Rainsy Party of Cambodia, so-named to protect the name of their Party from government censorship, and represented in London by Rainsy himself, were both made full members. A new Italian Party, Alleanza per L'Italia, was given Observer Status,



and their representative Marco Cappa received very thorough questioning into his party's principles, leaving me impressed at the level of commitment to Liberalism which LI demands of its members.

The evening started with a much appreciated visit from our Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg MP, who spoke eloquently regarding how very difficult it is for liberal voices to be heard above the cacophony of fear mongering words and actions. The presence of Liberal Democrats in government in the UK means that fundamental human rights, and freedoms are not blurred in this country and values which belong to the Liberal family are being upheld at all costs.

Following his address, the Deputy Prime Minister spent some time with Hans Van Baalen MEP, President of Liberal International in a private meeting, and then a brief discussion with the Liberal International Bureau, and Liberal International British Group Officers who were present.

The day concluded with a reception hosted by LIBG President and Lib Dem Deputy Leader, Simon Hughes MP, and very generously sponsored by BTP Advisors. Simon thanked all those involved in organising the event from LI and LIBG, and concluded with a rousing and delightfully robust speech on how Liberal Democrats in government meant that human rights and freedoms was top of the agenda and that Liberal International must expand their Liberal network and ensure that the media are made aware and take note of these events. The formalities close with a special toast to the late Ronnie Fraser.

Liberal discussions continued well into the evening, as we all made new friends within the international Liberal family. Overall, I had a very enjoyable and enlightening day, and I would encourage those who did not attend especially any young International enthusiasts, to come and join Liberal International British Group and further the cause of Liberalism on a world stage.

By Adrian Trett, LIBG Membership Officer

Europe and The Arab Spring

Phil Bennion

Our fringe meeting on the Arab Awakening held jointly with LDEG produced a debate of the highest quality, with a first rate panel of speakers.

Liberal International Treasurer Robert Woodthorpe Browne was in contact with Arab Liberals, both political parties and individuals, long before the Arab Spring. He chaired the meeting in Marrakech in 2007 which launched the Network of Arab Liberals whose HQ is now in Cairo. Robert sketched out what Liberal International and the European political foundations have been doing since 2007 in fostering and encouraging nascent liberal political parties across the whole MENA region.

Robert was present when former German President Horst Koehler said that a Marshall Plan was needed to persuade Arabs in freed countries that economic development and democracy have parallel benefits. Meanwhile, an American polling organisation found that of Egyptians aged 19–34 only 4% found democracy a priority. 40% prioritised setting up their own businesses.

Professor Paul Reynolds, who advises governments and political parties across the developing world on governance and democracy, had just returned from Egypt, where he has been working with parties across the political divide. Paul agreed that democracy was not the main impetus behind the movement for change.

“For the populations of these countries the anger over the vast wealth and impunity of the ruling tribal families ran in parallel with economic stagnation for the mass of the population and rapidly falling per capita incomes amongst the expanding ranks of the under-35s. By contrast most of the countries showed 'on paper' headline economic growth, which helped induce military analysts in Washington DC to believe that the regimes were politically stable. Unlike in East Asia, in the Arab countries the poor cannot easily engage in small-scale business in order to scrape a living. Permissions and large bribes are needed from corrupt officials just for selling a few small items on the street. This is why the self-immolation of a small trader beaten by the police for selling a little bit of food on the street in Tunis had such resonance across the Arab world – the trigger for the uprisings.”

Prof Reynolds also criticised the US for its obsession with the “War on Terror” narrative that had led them into supporting corrupt dictatorships. Although Islamists are present, they are not the main driving force for change. The main forces are economic and related to hopelessness and disempowerment, particularly of a large under-employed youthful population.

Edward McMillan-Scott MEP has a long pedigree in campaigning for a move towards democracy in the Arab world and was actively involved in securing the release of liberal El Gadh party leader Ayman Nour from imprisonment by the Mubarak regime. He pointed out that the Liberal group within the European Parliament had been calling for a radical opening of markets to the newly reformed Arab countries and a package of measures to help them achieve their aims. He was highly critical of the initial European response. He highlighted the problem of an economic downturn in Egypt threatening the continued popularity of the reforms. He feared that the military government in Egypt (SCAF) could try and hold onto power if the economy collapsed. He praised the British

and French governments for their courage over Libya.

Finally our special guest from Egypt, Mohammed Nosseir, Chair of International Affairs for the Democratic Front, gave us some insights into the political situation on the ground. He said that the main groupings were the Islamists (Brotherhood and others), former ruling NDP, Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) and its allies, and the Liberals, including the Democratic Front and El Ghad.

He said that the prospects for Liberals were held back as they were not as well organised as the Islamists and were also struggling to attract support from the old elite of the NDP, where family ties were instrumental in deciding the outcome of elections. However, he did not think that anyone was strong enough to win a majority in forthcoming elections, all groups having strengths and weaknesses. The Islamists, for instance, were particularly weak on economic policy and experience.

The new constitution was going to be vitally important in determining the success of the revolution, particularly regarding the blocking of parties openly expounding religious intolerance, but it would take time so we should not expect a Presidential Election until early 2013. International relations were a concern, particularly with Israel, but his group were internationalists committed to free trade and playing a positive role in the world. He called on everyone to do what they could to support the Egyptian economy, such as taking a holiday there, as income from tourism had crashed since the revolution, leading many to hanker for the old regime.

Following questions indicated a consensus on the role of Europe in opening up to the Arab world, drawing it into the larger regional economy; support for military intervention in Libya did not extend to a similar adventure in Syria; that the regime in Bahrain is rapidly moving beyond the pale; support for UN membership for the Palestinians; and that meaningful reforms would hopefully be concluded in Morocco.

The event took place immediately after the International Reception and we were pleased to welcome a number of foreign diplomats in the audience.

Phil Bennion, who chaired the joint LIBG/LDEG fringe at this Autumn's Liberal Democrat Conference in Birmingham, is also chair of LDEG.

Christmas Reflections on the Situation in Syria

In a joint event with the Liberal Democrat Christian Forum, LIBG will host the Revd Nassim Nassar, the only Syrian priest in the Church of England for his reflections on the situation in his home country. Revd. Nassar is Director of the Awareness Foundation, an educational, ecumenical and international charity founded in 2003 in response to increased religious conflict and violence around the world. NLC 19th December at 7.00pm. Those wishing may join us for supper with the speaker in the Club afterwards (dress code applies).

LI and the Arab Awakening

Robert Woodthorpe Browne

I speak as Treasurer and a Bureau member of Liberal International. We recognised several years ago the quest for democracy and freedom in the Middle East and North Africa.

In 2007 the Network of Arab Liberals held its first meeting in Marrakesh during a LI Congress. Members included political parties from Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia and Lebanon. There were also politicians, parliamentarians and academics from Palestine, Syria, Kuwait, Jordan, Iraq and Algeria.

On the ground the German Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF) had and has offices in Cairo, Casablanca, Tunis, Algiers and Jerusalem, so when the Arab Awakening happened we at Liberal International were ready to act to help Democrats take control of their futures.

Being on the ground the FNF needed a strategy and my fellow Bureau colleague and FNF President Wolfgang Gerhardt, summoned their regional officers to a meeting in Berlin attended by former President Horst Koehler, the FDP Development Minister Dirk Kniebel, and several senior civil servants. I was invited to join them.

President Koehler articulated that which is fast becoming the mantra of EU and western policy. He called for a 'Marshall Plan' so that newly liberated peoples should feel economically better off in parallel with democratic progress.

A major American polling organisation found that of people



between 18 and 34 polled, only 4% considered democracy to be their priority. Overwhelmingly they wanted to set up their own businesses in their own countries, to improve their living standards, feed their families and give them hope.

At the beginning of March we invited all of the European foundations dealing with democracy, including our own Westminster Foundation, to a meeting at the LI HQ to coordinate our efforts. The foundations have received greatly expanded budgets for both party to party and multi-party work.

In Egypt and Tunisia there are a plethora of political parties – about 100 in little Tunisia alone! Many of them call themselves 'Liberal' and the FNF and LI are working to give them help to organise, work out policy and learn campaigning techniques.

Senior Liberals, including Guido Westerwelle, the German Foreign Minister, Guy Verhofstadt, the ALDE leader, and Hans van Baalen MEP, the LI President, as well, of course EP Vice President Edward MacMillan-Scott, have visited Egypt and other countries to show their commitment to a democratic future.

LI will continue to encourage viable new parties to work together as members of the Network of Arab Liberals and of LI. But even more important, European Liberals must insist that their governments allow Arab students to come to our countries, promote investment and tourism, and lift trade barriers to a new generation of entrepreneurs in our neighbourhood.

Robert Woodthorpe Browne is a member of the LI Bureau and has been heavily involved in LI-Arab liaison

Egypt's Revolutionary Momentum

Mohammed Nossier

Egyptians are celebrating their revolution on January 25th that is supposed to be a formal national day; however, this might not be the most accurate day for our celebration. The revolution began on January 25th with fifty thousand protestors gathering in Tahrir Square in a demonstration that is called now an incomplete revolution. Revolution could be better described as a process or momentum that requires more efforts to be placed to keep our revolution on the right track.

Apparently, the forces that want to hijack the revolution are stronger and better organized than those of the original revolts. The corrupted regime that used to rule Egypt for decades is not dismantled yet. Mubarak managed to build large number of corrupted organizations and institutions that were his main pillars of ruling Egypt. Mubarak stepped down last February but those pillars are still solid and active in defending their status.

We, as an Egyptian liberal and reformist force, are currently dealing with three powerful organizations that have managed to freeze

the momentum of the revolution:

The first force is the corrupted former members of the ruling party, NDP who have been quiet during the revolution and begin to be extremely active at the beginning of the parliament elections, most of the MP's that supported Mubarak during his era by approving his corrupted political and economic policies in past parliaments will be back in the coming parliament supported by SCAF's political structure and laws. They have the election experience, are popular in their districts through their financial support and highly aware of the election's rules of the game. I am expecting to have a parliament that will consist of at least two-thirds of those corrupted MP's who will endorse any plans produced by SCAF and eventually by our coming president.

The second force is the Muslim Brothers and other religious groups such as Salafi and the Islamic Jihad. Although Egypt constitution and the current declaration define that political parties can't be established on religion basis, the current government approved

more than ten parties with a clearly religion background. Most of these organizations have not participated at the revolution and some of them joined later after our big fight with the regime's state police.

These Islamic groups enjoy a great advantage that we can't copy: 1) capitalizing on Islam that is perceived as the highest value among Egyptians. Islam will obviously win over other ideologies that the majority of Egyptian don't understand; 2) having a disciplined organization that does not enable its members to be open for any kind of discussions or argument (loyalty & accepting orders policy).



However, the revolution managed to drive large number of Muslim Brothers' youths to split from the main organization and found its own party. Although, those youths are still abides with the principles of Islam as its value, they practice a high level of democracy and freedom of expression that they used to lack within the Muslim Brothers.

The third force is the Supreme Council of Armed of Forces (SCAF). Basically, we almost lost the momentum of the revolution because of SCAF that is prolonging the transitional period, don't

express any vision for Egypt, does not have a clear roadmap for the transitional period, does not issue good election laws, lacks real leadership and basic pillars of the State are not functioning. The combination of these issues is impacting the Egyptian revolution negatively. Rather than capitalizing on the spirit of the revolution and the energy of our youth, SCAF is essentially working on fading out the momentum of the revolution.

Nowadays, we are struggling in Egypt to build a democratic country that is based on the Rule of Law, abides with human rights standards, empowering institutions that will enable us to rebuild our country, then run a free and fair elections. In order to achieve real democracy, we need to regulate the Egyptian State media, establishing a truly independent judiciary system and restructure the Ministry of Interior. Running any kind of elections prior to the above will keep Egypt in the same corrupted trap, but with new rulers.

Egypt's transitional government is currently facing a number of challenges that threaten the State. Egypt used to disregard the Rule of Law during Mubarak era, and people were often afraid of the iron fist of Mubarak's state police. Now laws are not applied and the state police are not functioning. Business is struggling due to lack of economic vision, business people not sure yet of what Egypt will look like, thus are reluctant to expand their business and FDI is almost nil due to the current circumstances. These challenges might threaten the entire reform process that we are going through and encourage one of the above-mentioned forces to maintain authoritarian rule in Egypt.

As a politician I realized that we have a long way to go until we can build a New Egypt based on the demand of the Egyptian protestors: Justice, Dignity and Freedom. The challenge will remain for a while and genuine political forces need to team up to tackle these challenges.

Mohammed Nossier is Chair Secretariat of International Relations of Egypt's Democratic Front Party.

Lib Dems vote for Palestine Statehood

Two significant events concerning Palestine took place at the conference. Both show that the Liberal Democrat Party is increasingly moving towards backing recognition of the Palestinian State based on the 1949 armistice lines.

At a fringe meeting organised by the New Statesman and Medical Aid to the Palestinians in conjunction with the Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine, Sir Menzies Campbell MP and Simon Hughes MP both made powerful speeches supporting British recognition. In addition, John McHugo, the chairman of the Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine, explained the legal background to the question of Palestinian statehood, and how this was now a legal right for the Palestinians. Although a peace treaty needs to be negotiated between Israel and Palestine, this can only be done on the basis of each party recognising the legal rights of the other. Recognition of the Palestinian state and acknowledgement of its

territorial integrity are thus essential requirements for such negotiations to take place.

On the conference floor, John McHugo introduced an amendment to the motion supporting the Arab Awakening. This called for the rights of both Israel and Palestine in international law to be taken as the starting point for peace negotiations. As the people of the Occupied Palestinian Territory have the legal right to self-determination, and statehood is accordingly one of the options they may follow, Mr McHugo explained how the amendment implied support for a Palestinian state encompassing the whole of the Occupied Palestinian Territory as a right that Israel must accept if it is to negotiate peace. Baroness Ludford MEP, vice-chair of the Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel, supported the motion and did not contest this point. The amendment was passed without any votes against.

John McHugo Chair Lib Dem Friends of Palestine

The 187th Executive Committee of Liberal International 14th October 2011 in London



Abir Al-Sahlani & Tamara Dancheva, LI Human Rights Committee



Pia-Maria Hanhimaki, and delegates from Finland's Swedish People's Party meet Nick Clegg



Robert Woodthorpe Browne, Juli Minoves, Hans van Baalen, & Emil Kirjas



Hans van Baalen, Nick Clegg, Juli Minoves (Liberal Party of Andorra), Simon Hughes, Graham Watson & Robert Woodthorpe Browne.

Hans van Baalen

Hans van Baalen, Nick Clegg & Robert Woodthorpe Browne; Simon



Marco Cappa



Nick Clegg with Kiat Sitttheeamorn MP, Democrat Party, Thailand

Nick Clegg and Julie Smith

Hans van Baalen, Matthew Kalkman (Liberal Party of Canada) Nick Clegg

Jeremy Browne speaks for Lib Dem Friends of Israel

Matthew Harris

Jeremy Browne MP, Liberal Democrat Minister of State at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, spoke at Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel's (LDFI) fringe meeting at the Lib Dem Conference in Birmingham.

Picking up an LDFI leaflet, Mr Browne said: "It says 'The Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel are strongly committed to a two-state solution, with Israel living in secure borders, free from the threat of terrorism alongside an independent Palestinian state'. That articulates where the Liberal Democrats stand, and where the UK Government stands.

Understandably, Israel is often viewed through the prism of security. I want to move the debate on from that, to issues such as Israel's prosperity. We must think how we can use Israel as a strong example of a democratic and civil country in the Middle East."

The visiting Israeli speaker was Dr Alon Liel, a former Director-



Jeremy Browne MP (Minister of State, Foreign Office) and Gavin Stollar (Chair, LDFI) at the meeting.

General of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Dr Liel, a key figure behind the (non-governmental) Israeli Peace Initiative (IPI - <http://israelpeaceinitiative.com/>), warned of the consequences of what he called an ongoing "freeze" in the peace process. He said: "If we fail to create two states, we will end up with one state - a nightmare for Israelis, Zionists and Jews. With the help of the world community, the two sides must enter a room and moderate their positions."

Speaking for his government, Israeli Deputy Ambassador Alon Roth-Snir reiterated Israel's strong support for a negotiated two-state solution, explaining why Israel opposes a Palestinian unilateral

declaration of independence at the UN. He praised the UK's Coalition Government for pulling out of the UN's anti-Israel Durban III conference and for reforming the law on universal jurisdiction, thanking the Liberal Democrats for their role in both.

LDFI President Sir Alan Beith MP also addressed the meeting, praising Israel's vibrancy as a democracy. He praised the Lib Dems' key role in reforming the law on universal jurisdiction, which was taken through the Lords by Lib Dem ministers. Sarah Ludford (Lib Dem MEP for London and Vice-President of LDFI) chaired the meeting, which was opened by LDFI Chair Gavin Stollar.

LDFI Vice-Chair Matthew Harris said: "This was an excellent discussion of how Israel can achieve peace and security. We were particularly pleased by Jeremy Browne's clear and strong comments."

Also at Conference, a motion was passed on the Arab Awakening, including this amendment:

"The UK, EU and international community to continue their support for the fundamental human rights of both the Israeli and the Palestinian people, and to step up efforts to promote peaceful negotiation between Israel and the freely elected representatives of the Palestinian people which will lead to a comprehensive and final peace treaty between the two sides based on the legitimate entitlements of each in international law, including their right to live in peace and security"

LDFI was pleased to support the motion overall and the amendment, with Sarah Ludford MEP speaking in the debate. The only qualification of our support for this amendment would be to say that "freely elected representatives of the Palestinian people" can be taken as a reference to Hamas. Israel (and the UK Government) argues that it would be quite willing to negotiate with Hamas if Hamas recognised Israel's right to exist, renounced violence and agreed to abide by past agreements entered into by the Palestinian Authority. The door is open to Hamas if it does those three things, which it arguably ought to do before it is an acceptable negotiating partner (should the Palestinians re-elect Hamas, which they hopefully won't). That is the only qualification to LDFI's support for an amendment which eloquently expresses our party's consistent commitment to a negotiated two-state solution that would bring peace, justice and security to Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Belarus Forum

On 6th February 2012 LIGB and Liberal Youth will be co-hosting a forum event on Belarus at the National Liberal Club, London. Leading speakers on the issue will engage with the audience on the current situation of the country that faces serious economic and political problems.

The OSCE deemed Belarus' elections last year to fall massively

short of requirements for free and fair elections and Lukashenka's recent crackdown on pro-democracy campaigners there are real concerns for the wellbeing on the country. The regime have used violence to keep protesters away, at times beating presidential candidates whilst keeping the economy state owned despite bankruptcy.

With Belarus branded the "last dictatorship in Europe", this event is a must for those interested in human rights (especially of young protesters) and what action can be taken. The event starts at 6:30pm at The National Liberal Club (Whitehall Place, London, SW1A 2HE) where there will a bar.

Sam Fisk

THE ARAB AWAKENING:

Is The European Union seizing the opportunity?

Nick Hopkinson

The momentous 'Arab Awakening' in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has frequently been likened to the revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Former Soviet Union (FSU). As the scope and depth of the political transformation in the MENA region continues to unfold, comparing the role of a key external actor, the European Union (EU), in both historic processes can help give an idea of how the Arab Awakening might evolve.

As far back as 1994, the Corfu EU Summit recognised there was a greater risk of instability from the EU's southern rather than eastern neighbours. This is attributable to the demographic explosion, high unemployment, low educational standards, small and weak private sectors, weak civil societies, and the absence of democratic structures and governance in the MENA region. Yet the EU's goals, policy instruments and financial and human resources have been far more substantive for the EU's Eastern candidates and neighbours than its southern neighbours. The question then is whether the EU, most recently in its May 2011 Neighbourhood Policy Review, is doing enough to assist democratic transformations in a number of countries in the MENA region.

In spite of the apparent similarities of waves of uprisings against autocratic regimes in both regions, there are few similarities between the Arab Awakening and the 1989 uprisings in CEE. While the uprisings in CEE and subsequent collapse of Communist regimes appeared more like a set of dominos falling, the transformations in the MENA region appear more uncertain, patchy and lengthy. The key factors distinguishing the Arab Awakening from the collapse of Communism in CEE and the FSU are the absence of the carrot of EU membership, and that the EU was in an unique position to fill in the power vacuum left by the demise of Soviet hegemony in CEE.

Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union stipulates: "Any European State which respects the principles set out in Article 6 (1) may apply to become a member of the Union." 'European' has been interpreted by the Commission in strict geographic terms. So Morocco's application to join the EU in the late 1980s was quickly rejected. With Southern neighbours having no EU Membership perspective, the role that the EU can play in the future development of the MENA region is limited from the outset (leaving aside the British and French military intervention under the NATO umbrella in Libya being pivotal in ousting the Ghaddafi regime).

The Eastern enlargement of the EU is widely hailed as the EU's greatest foreign policy success. However, at the time, many CEE candidates regarded the accession process as falling far short of the

post-WW2 Marshall Plan. The circumstances though were different. The vast sums of the Marshall Plan were intended to generate economic growth in Western Europe and to stem the spread of Communism, whereas the EU accession process took place against a background of declining Soviet influence. Similar calls today have been made for a Marshall Plan in North Africa, but again the circumstances are different and the necessary funding unlikely. The widespread weakness of developing economies and democratic structures in MENA countries undergoing transition makes development and strengthening democratic institutions the key priorities.

Whilst most attention focuses on the dramatic fall of autocratic regimes and the prospect for elections in some MENA countries, the importance of establishing and continuously strengthening new democratic structures should not be underestimated. Helping new legislators become fully familiar with the conduct and procedures of democratic institutions is vital. Aid agencies, parliamentary organisations such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, and bodies and foundations associated with political parties in major Western countries continue to be instrumental in assisting transitions. Post-election seminars can help new legislators avoid mistakes made in other jurisdictions, learn best practice, and become familiar with the role of legislatures and mechanics of government. While parliamentary strengthening activities are crucial, alone they are not enough.

The prospect of EU accession increases aid, trade, lending and investment flows, and mirrors a gap in fortunes between candidates and neighbouring countries. For example, between 2007 and 2013, Poland is receiving £60 billion in structural funds, five times what Southern neighbours are receiving. After the accession of eight CEE countries in 2004, the EU did not want to create a new dividing line in Europe. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was launched in 2004 bringing together the 1995 Barcelona Euro-Med Framework for the EU, candidates and southern neighbours, and the six Eastern neighbours. The ENP, building upon existing agreements between the EU and partners, offers neighbours a privileged relationship building on mutual commitment to common values (democracy, human rights, rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development), and deeper economic integration, increased mobility and more people-to-people contacts.

In light of the Arab Awakening, and the widespread perception that EU assistance was not succeeding in promoting change in both southern and eastern (non-accession) neighbours, the EU was



obliged to rethink its neighbourhood policy. However, the current austerity in several Member States, widespread reluctance to increase spending at the EU level and the Eurozone crisis demonstrates the EU is not in a position to increase neighbourhood spending significantly.

The new neighbourhood policy announced on 25 May 2011 did however identify an additional £1.242 billion until 2013. The new “more funds for more reform” approach gives the EU greater flexibility to channel funds to countries progressing most with reform as funds are no longer pre-allocated to individual countries in advance.

“Increased EU support to its neighbours is conditional. It will depend on progress in building and consolidating democracy and respect for the rule of law. The more and the faster a country progresses in its internal reforms, the more support it will get from the EU.” The

Neighbourhood Review makes disbursement of funds conditional on progress on “strong and lasting commitment(s) from neighbour governments to free and fair elections; freedom of association, expression and assembly and a free press and media; the rule of law administered by an independent judiciary and right to a fair trial; fighting against corruption; security and law enforcement sector reform and establishment of democratic control over armed and security forces...” However, some still question the EU’s ability to deliver these goals: “new mechanisms to do this have not been defined in operationally meaningful terms, and the institutions seem unable to agree on what to do.”

There is mixed evidence in the May Review that more weight is given to Southern Neighbours. In the 2011–2013 period, the May 2011 Neighbourhood Review allocates £5.7 billion for EU neighbours with a third of the total earmarked for six Eastern neighbours (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine), and two thirds for the southern neighbours (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia). This amounts to per capita grants to Eastern neighbours of £33.47, more than double that received by Southern neighbours (£15.57). The Neighbourhood Review calls for additional lending from the European Investment Bank (EIB) and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), including an extension of the latter’s mandate to selected Southern partners starting with Egypt. The EBRD forecasts annual lending volumes (primarily to Small and Medium Sized Enterprises) could reach around £2.5 billion by 2013. The European Council agreed to increase EIB lending to the Southern



Mediterranean by £1 billion in the 2011–13 period.

The relatively low EU support for its Southern neighbours, the limited funds available in an era of austerity (especially with low growth and a Eurozone in crisis), the absence of a collapsed regional hegemonic power (whose role the EU can uniquely fill), and enlargement/neighbourhood fatigue in some EU Member States suggest the successful political and economic transformations, and ultimately accessions, in CEE are unlikely to be replicated in its Southern Neighbours. As a result, political and social instability in the MENA region could increase. Without the prospect of EU membership, and the incentives attached to it, and the intrusive conditionality of having to implement the *acquis communautaire*, the EU needs to bring the instruments and means of its Neighbourhood Policy closer to those of the successful eastern accession process. Although the EU is only one of many regional powers in the MENA region, if the EU does not become more visionary and generous in particular in North Africa, it may be confronted with the greater costs of uncontrolled migration and increased energy and commodity prices. A historical opportunity to advance democratic transformation in much of the EU’s Southern Neighbourhood risks being missed, and the EU will have to bear the likely concomitant economic, financial and social costs.

Nick Hopkinson is a writer on international policy issues and local councillor. He was a director at Wilton Park, the Foreign and Commonwealth’s policy forum, from 1987–2010.

e-mail: SusNickH@aol.com

The MENA region includes Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and Yemen.

CEE includes the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia (now the separate Czech and Slovak Republics), Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine and Estonia. Often included within CEEs are the successor states of the Former Yugoslavia, namely Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo (although not recognised by many states), and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).

The EU’s southern neighbours commonly refer to Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The six eastern neighbours are Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, and the three South Caucasus Republics of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. Article 49, (Lisbon) Treaty on European Union, 2010 (Brussels, European Council), www.ec-europa.eu

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Anti Human Trafficking Conference report

Miranda Whitehead

On Saturday October 15th, Catherine Bearder MEP and Women Liberal Democrats held a free conference on the theme of people trafficked into the UK. The non-political conference, aimed at men and women resident in the South East, attracted over 50 delegates to the Penta Hotel in Reading. The conference was held as near a possible to October 18th, which is UK anti slavery day, and EU anti trafficking day. These days aim to highlight a worldwide problem.

Catherine Bearder had decided when she was first elected that a key area of focus for her was to fight modern day slavery. The goal of our first anti trafficking event was to arm the group attending with the tools to raise awareness in their areas and to begin to tackle the problem. Just last month two men were convicted of trafficking girls for the sex trade in Oxford, and this had actually been happening on the neighbouring street to Catherine's. Two Community Against Trafficking groups (CATs) have been set up by Catherine, in her region, but the aim of the conference was to set up more. Police officers and charities stress the importance of active community engagement in the fight against trafficking.

Baroness Sally Hamwee talked to us about her work in the Lords on this issue, reminding us that someone is trafficked across a border every minute worldwide and that human trafficking was the third largest business in the world. She gave useful and moving case studies of people who have come to the UK full of hope only to find themselves trapped into a dreadful life of degradation and despair.

She was followed by a short thought provoking film "Behind the Smile" which asked the audience to consider why young Eastern European women might be working as prostitutes in their area.

Recently retired Superintendent Bernie Gravett from the Metropolitan Police then described Operation Golf, a joint investigation team founded by the EU. You may have seen the BBC programme on this subject and Bernie the following week. 26 Romanian gang members were charged in Romania with trafficking 181 children into the UK for forced criminality, (begging, thieving, shoplifting) and 120 gang members were arrested and prosecuted in the UK for organised crime offences including the trafficking of children. These children can be moved around Europe, uneducat-

ed and neglected, and often start their lives as babies, being props for begging "mothers"

Julia Immonen, the founder of Sport Against Trafficking, and Debbie Beadle youth programme coordinator for ECPAT UK (End Child Prostitution Pornography and Trafficking) talked about their work and described their proposed row across the Atlantic in an attempt to raise a million pounds for ECPAT.

Our breakout groups in the afternoon followed a checklist, which asked us to consider what communities could do. Stop The Traffik offered advice: writing a letter to your local paper could be the way to start a group for example, telling the police about concerns about local houses, writing to your MP. The Oxford trafficking ring was discovered and eventually broken because a user of prostitutes was concerned that when the girl he had rung for appeared she seemed terrified and underage. He sent her back and after a few days thought was brave enough to contact the police.

OXCAT the local anti trafficking group raised their profile on antislavery day by "selling" women in cages in the market place, which attracted a significant amount of media attention; and Catherine had a good interview on the Sunday politics show.

Miranda Whitehead is chair of Women Liberal Democrats

Following the conference Reading has begun to set up a CAT group and Catherine is keen to hear from more people who would be interested in helping fight this dreadful trade in their area.

Contact Catherine Bearder at catherine@bearder.eu

Other useful contacts are

Stop the Traffic www.stophetraffic.org Tel 0207 9214254

Anti-Slavery International www.antislavery.org Tel 0207 501 8920

ECPAT UK www.ecpat.org.uk

Eaves Poppy Project www.eaves4women.co.uk Tel 0207 735 2062

Women Liberal Democrats www.libdems.org.uk Tel 0207 227 1208

Thank you to all our speakers, to Penta Hotels Reading, and particular thanks go to Julia Bricknell, the office coordinator of Women Liberal Democrats, to Louisa Winnick WLD Volunteer, and to Mark Wheeler and Sally Barnard from Catherine Bearder's office for the organisation of such a successful and well-run event.

Liberals in Paraguay Win a Constitutional Referendum

In a response to a recent proposal by PLRA (LI Member), a referendum held in Paraguay on the 9th October approved a constitutional change allowing for approximately half a million Paraguayans living abroad to vote in the next general elections. At the time of the proposal PLRA was the only party in the country

advocating for such a change. The measure was approved by 80% of the voters despite a low turnout at the election polls at just 12.5%.

Federico Franco, the former chairman of PLRA and current Vice-President of Paraguay was on official visit to Taiwan on the day of the referendum. He commented on the occasion stating 'Today, 9th October, there is a referendum to change the constitution so that the Paraguayans living abroad would be allowed to vote. It's ironic that after defending this all my life, I am now in Taiwan with dozens of Paraguayans that can't vote.' The next general elections to be held in the country are scheduled for 2013.

African Women Leaders in successful visit to Liberal Democrat Conference

The delegates met with Party Leader and Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg MP, in addition to other senior figures from the party including Party President, Tim Farron MP, and former leader of the party in the House of Lords, Shirley Williams.

The delegation was led by Hon. Alice Nzomukunda; Africa Liberal Network Vice-President for Central Africa, Leader of ADR, and former Vice-President of Burundi. The delegation also included participants in previous ALN Gender Workshops, Hon. Regina Alcindor from the Seychelles National Party and Mrs Ashura Mustapha from Civic United Front, Tanzania. They were joined by Hon. Rachel Shebesh MP, representing the Orange Democratic Movement of Kenya, and Mrs Sophia Deressa, Vice-President of the Ethiopian Democratic Party.

Hon. Alice Nzomukunda addressed the conference delegates, speaking on a panel with former Party Leader, Paddy Ashdown, Chair of the International Affairs Committee, Martin Horwood MP, and Vice-Chair of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, Prof. Myles Wickstead. During her speech, she thanked the Liberal Democrats for their support for her party and drew attention to recent violence in Burundi.

In addition to attending policy debates and receiving briefings from senior Government Ministers, the delegates also met with and Chair of the International Development Select Committee, Malcolm Bruce MP, and William Wallace, Spokesperson for the

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which gave them the opportunity to discuss government policy toward their own countries.

In the margins of the conference, the delegates met with senior women from national, regional and local government including Minister for Equalities, Lynne Featherstone MP, Leader of the London Assembly Group, Caroline Pidgeon AM, and Birmingham Councillors Sue Anderson and Karen Hamilton. The delegates had an opportunity to learn how the Liberal Democrats are organised during a meeting with former CEO, Chris Rennard. Finally, the participants were able to discuss their integration in the Liberal family with Robert Woodthorpe-Browne, Chair of the International Relations Committee and Emil Kirjas Secretary-General of Liberal International, and Catherine Bearder MEP.

Following a meeting with the delegates, Don Foster MP, Liberal Democrat Governor on the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, commented: "I was delighted to meet with the delegates and to welcome them to our conference. I was particularly interested to hear the comparisons which they made with their own parties and countries. It is clear that such inward visits contribute to building capacity among women politicians in Africa, and we look forward to following-up this work through the Africa Liberal Network. I will take-up some of the issues which we discussed at the ALN General Assembly in Kinshasa this October which I am really looking forward to attending."

Divided and United by Water

Allan Siao Ming Witherick

Water is a wonderful thing, providing, hydration, food and an easier way to transport goods and people. Water is a dangerous thing, eroding even the hardest stone over time, flooding, freezing and yet at the same time too little leads to drought.

Coming from an island, water has protected us for generations, provided food and led to us once having a mighty navy both at war and at trade. But in today's world that same friend has shown its more negative face, keeping us physically and mentally apart from the world with all the effects that this has on our attitude to Europe and the continent. It is something that ferries, flights and tunnels cannot overcome.

So it was interesting to be an observer at an event supported by the think-tank ELF (European Liberal Forum) which pulled together multiple countries and multiple parties to look at an issue which affected them all, bound together by water. The Danube flows through many communities and its effects are diverse, with even non-bordering countries keen to be engaged because of the

economic effects and benefits. Whether this will be a symbiotic relationship is harder to define.

Water or air?

Listening to the initial introduction it was very telling to see that one of the first notes made by a colleague sat next to me was two simple words: "No funding".

It appeared that the emphasis was to try and access the funding streams which already exist out there, to engage people and show the value of the region, and that as one person stated: "This is not an excuse for the bureaucrats to make our worlds and life more difficult." Unfortunately, despite being invited, the local authorities and governments of Bulgaria and Romania had chosen not to attend. There was no clear answer as to why, whether this was due to members of the Liberal family who initiated the event being in opposition, or a lack of interest in the field.

The passion for the river though was almost tangible, with repre-

sentatives from politics, business, tourism and youth organisations all bringing their vibrancy and enthusiasm to the debate.

A border of water

The water though still maintains its age old role of separation at the same time as bringing people together. The Danube provides some 600 miles of border between Romania and Bulgaria with just a single crossing. Yes, there is a second crossing under construction, and as the former prime-minister and king of Bulgaria highlighted*, this represents an opportunity to not just improve transport links but also facilitate trade and utilities links across Europe for the 150 million inhabitants covered by the region. (*A Liberal king who helped to found NDSV- in English the National Movement for Stability and Prosperity.)

Watery Economics

That's the key though to the support for any dramatic change "What's in it for me?"

Although used historically to transport goods along its length it is still awakening to its other potentials. The river was discussed as a source of tourism, with many beautiful natural sites but at the same time hampered by its history. Old laws still restrict photography in some areas which used to be for military use for example. Meanwhile surveys in Germany have highlighted the lack of knowledge as to the extent of the river with many not knowing which countries the river touches upon further downstream. Thus the danger of some of the old Western prejudices seeping through with a historical fear of a politically unstable Balkan region.

Most of the current promotion of the Danube has been done at national levels, with extremely weak infrastructure in place and with relatively few if any venturing to try proper cruises the length of the Danube. It is these things which need to change first, before substantial actions can be effective.

Hope springs

Although squeezed time wise due to their position on the agenda (politicians do have a habit of making uninvited speeches), the young peoples intervention by members of an independent INGYO (international non-governmental youth organisation) highlighted the need to be practical. Their focus on the need for a local approach with concrete achievable projects also showed that although some bottom up pressure had raised the issue up to the national, and even international, agenda calling for action, the ability to actually do things had not been devolved back down. Despite many countries having parliamentary experts on the Danube, there appeared to be no real networking of these individuals and the only communication coming when there was an ecological crises and requirement to liaise together.

All water under the bridge

Of course, as highlighted at the start, all of this amounts to talk: Dreams and ideals about how we move forward to bring together people from both sides of a political and watery divide. There is an EU-Strategy for the Danube, there are these youth organisations trying to be transnational and active, and this conference proved there is a political interest.

But with 100 billion in European Union structural and regional funds of which barely 7% of the funds have been used as we hit the mid-term of the financial period, the longest river in Europe might represent a source of hope, but equally it might prove to be the missed opportunity for a generation, wherever in Europe you come from.

Allan Siao Ming Witherick is a member of the LI-BG Executive but attended the ELF supported event on behalf of LYMEC, European Liberal Youth

David Griffiths

8th November 1940 to 3rd November 2011

A tribute to David Griffiths FCA



The breadth and extent of David's service to Liberalism is breathtaking, especially as his many offices were often accompanied by hard graft in producing accounts, organising staff and deploying limited resources.

My own contact with David was outside the mainstream of party activity. In the early years of the welfare state, leading MPs of all

three parties collaborated to found the National Benevolent Fund for the Aged. Its initial purpose was to provide TV sets in poorer communities in the days when a 12" screen cost about a quarter as much as a small house. The sets were distributed on the understand-

ing that they would be shared with neighbours and friends. Over the years this purpose outlived itself and the NBFA switched its primary objective to providing seaside holidays for those who rarely, or ever, had holidays or even seen the sea. This good work has continued over many years and usually involves one or two coaches with deserving elderly folk supported by qualified volunteers going to a seaside resort just out of the usual commercial season. This has brought much enjoyment and satisfaction to hundreds of older people and is evidenced by the fact that a major source of the NBFA's revenue comes from the Wills of former holiday makers.

Despite his many other commitments, David served as Executive Treasurer of the NBFA for many years until some months before his untimely death. He was assiduous in overseeing the charity's administration, generous with his time and unfailingly good-humoured with colleagues both of his own party and other representatives of the Commons and the Lords.

As a matter of interest, I myself was invited to help with the

NBFA by Douglas Houghton in the early 1970s. Over the years Jeremy Thorpe, George Thomas and Winston Churchill have all been energetic and effective Chairmen. All in all, the NBFA has been an excellent example that common human interest can coalesce in a civilised, free society. It deserves to be recorded that David made a major contribution both to the work and the spirit of this good charity over many years.

Roger Pincham

Chairman of the Liberal Party, 1979-82

I was sorry to hear of David Griffiths' death. He shared my birthday – 8th Nov. but was 2 years younger! So the news of his death had quite an effect on me – anno domini etc. I also feel sad that his contribution was not fully recognised and wonder if this led to his decline.

He actually stood for a Welsh seat (De Clwyd – Clwyd South) for I think the 2001 election – he inveigled me + husband John (a totally apolitical animal except for an interest in international affairs) to help deliver, canvass etc. as it was in a part we loved and he put us up in a constituent's house we agreed. It was fun and while we were there he learned of the arrival of his first grandchild (a boy) and took the 2 of us out for dinner to celebrate. I worked with him for years staffing the L.I. stand – he was bossy and quite demanding (goes with the date – John's old boss Christian Barnard of heart transplant fame was also 8/11) but we did well while he and Sharon were organising everything.

Paddy Beck

David was 'parachuted' into Clwyd South in 2001 – probably after the election had been called. It was more or less derelict apart from one ward on the outskirts of Wrexham. David honourably went forth and came fourth... not the first, nor the last to be called upon to make such sacrifices.

I am reminded by Alex's and Roger's recollections that David requested that donations might be sent to the NBFA in his memory. Donations can be sent to

National Benevolent Fund for the Aged

32 Buckingham Palace Road

London, SW1W 0RE

They are registered charity number 243387. If you are a UK tax payer scribble a declaration 'I want NBFA to reclaim tax on this gift. I understand that I must pay income tax or capital gains tax equal to the tax reclaimed by the charity on the donation'. This not only boosts your donation, but also prevents HMGC wasting at least part of your tax on illegal foreign wars.



Nancy Seear looks in on an LIBG Forum



Sharon Bowles, David Griffiths & Paddy Beck staffing the LIBG stall in 2000

David was Honorary Treasurer at the National Benevolent Fund for the Aged (NBFA) since 1997, when he kindly took over from the late Guy Harper. The role of Treasurer is of course crucial to any organisation and David was involved through changing and sometimes challenging times for the NBFA, during which it moved premises, saw demand for its services exponentially increase and managed to keep a distinct identity in a vastly changed charity sector. He was a general source of support to the staff and volunteer team, through practical help like reviewing funding bids for signature, working through budgets and helping with fundraising events, but also simply through words of encouragement and by showing an interest. In addition, he was a committed and insightful Trustee and a support for his fellows. Most importantly of course, his hard work and long service made a difference to the lives of countless disadvantaged older people who rely on the NBFA for support and friendship.

Shortly before his passing, David stepped down as Treasurer but kindly agreed to continue on the Board. He is sadly missed by his fellow Trustees and the staff, volunteers and beneficiaries of the NBFA.

Alex Swallow

The National Benevolent Fund for the Aged (NBFA)

It's a strange thing when you find out about a person's "other life" and find it's so close to home.

With David Griffiths I knew him from my international travels, bumping in to him at ELDR Congress and various events. You could see the respect that he commanded and the honour that this brought to the UK delegations. Indeed he was highly regarded in a number of different settings with even the youth wing LYMEC (European Liberal Youth) singing their praises and respect.

What I hadn't realised though was that prior to this he had had a whole other life fighting the Liberal cause in local government in the area which I am now elected to. It was a strong and poignant reminder that no matter what we do out there in the wider world, the real work begins at home with the basics.

Allan Siao Ming Witherick

My abiding memory of David was his particular sense of humour and some of the very funny comments he came up with on the hoof- also perceptive. He could be guaranteed to constantly remind me not to keep talking only to women at diplomatic receptions!

He also had a fantastic internalised appreciation as to how the Liberal Democrats and Liberal party worked.

John Pindar

A close overseas' Liberal friend

I had the opportunity to share with David many Liberal International meetings over the years. He was, one of the more active Liberal Brit at LI events, sharing spokemanship with Robert Browne, Sharon Bowles and with a few other colleagues.

We, less politically sophisticated Mediterraneans, had always a lot to learn from David: his acute observations, his sharp and often humorous comments and replicas, his passionate way of defending liberal principles. I have to say that in the endless debates and friendly quarrels with more right wing liberals at LI, we the Catalans, very often took his more progressive side. When not, David's face always showed a slight but ironical disappoint-



David and Grigoriy Yavlinsky

ment.

David was my predecessor as LI Treasurer. He was "kind enough" to pass me his complete and huge archive of documents on files and cases. I still can see his relief for getting rid of LI finances and especially of that amount of papers. As a matter of fact, he was tremendously kind in helping me in the first weeks of my "mandate". Unfortunately, I would not be able to excuse myself for that Saturday afternoon when my repeated questions on "high LI finances" made David be late for his unmissable weekly soccer match.

We will miss David being around, as we will miss all those liberals like him, scarce these days, whose Liberalism is based on deep principles, on timeless values.

Josep Soler

*VicePresident in the Bureau, Liberal International
Barcelona, Catalunya, Spain*

David was a hard act to follow in many ways. When he and Sharon Bowles were in charge of LIBG, she was the one who, with her lawyer's brain, was the policy wonk. David was far more interested in the dark arts of corridor dealing with sister parties on elections to the Bureau of our and other friendly candidates. At Executives and Congresses, of which he attended a great many, he acted as co-ordinator - he would have preferred the word "whip", but LibDems react negatively to the idea of corporal punishment.

As his heir, I have to do both policy and the negotiating. David's legacy is that the other delegations court us and look for permanent alliances.

In Zagreb, he rejoiced when England was beaten by Croatia. Julie Smith and I bought him a Croatia shirt, which he wore with pride on many occasions.

Robert Woodthorpe Browne

Lib Dem International Relations Committee Chair LI

Treasurer (another of David's old jobs)

I first met David when I was writing the history of Liberal International in 1997. While I was discussing the project with the Secretary General, David would just potter in for a chat.

He subsequently encouraged me to join LIBG (I'd written the history as an academic project rather than an LI insider) and later to join the Executive. It was typical of David to support someone younger than himself; he recognised a need to rejuvenate LIBG and tried to encourage newcomers. My strongest memories though are of attending ELDR meetings with David where he was always an exuberant, larger-than-life presence, usually in the bar buying drinks for everyone whether he was on the waggon or off it.

Latterly, David was also my accountant, responsible annually for trying to get me to do my tax return before Christmas, and sometimes succeeding. This year there is no-one to nag me...and, no, it's not done yet! For this, and so many other reasons, I miss him very much.

Julie Smith/ Chairman LIBG

David probably never got the full recognition he deserved in the Liberal Democrats, though perhaps was more appreciated at the international level. Although some of us knew he had been unwell, none of us predicted an untimely death.

LIBG may well have suffered such a fate without him. I recall my first AGM, sometime in the 1990s. 'This organisation is dead' I thought. Within the next three months regrettably two members of the exec had met their demise. In those days David was locked in conflict with the 'old guard', and this was perhaps one of his shortcomings - he did enjoy a scrap. He later came to recognise, perhaps in the face of similar problems, that his apparent nemesis Tom Dale was actually struggling to hold things together in the face of indifference from many of the committee. LIBG in those days seemed to suffer from too many people who liked being on a committee for its own sake, and part of David's legacy is that we now have a working executive. Because of my involvement with Liberator, David co-opted me on to the exec to produce the newsletter, and you're reading it now.

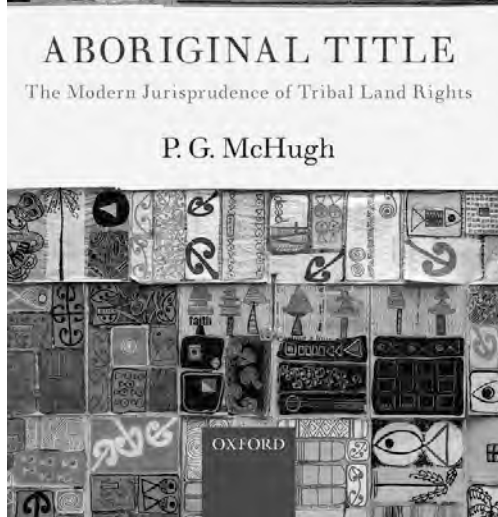
Stewart Rayment

Aboriginal Title: The Modern Jurisprudence of Tribal Land Rights,

by P.G. McHugh

Oxford University Press 2011 £70.00

What happens when a legal system where the only true ‘owner’ of land is the Crown is challenged by people who claim an indigenous entitlement to land since ‘time immemorial’? How can the courts of ‘settlers’ incorporate pre-settlement traditions? Must indigenous people reject modernisation if they wish to retain their traditional homelands? These are questions that have troubled the courts of many nations over the past 60 years, and McHugh, a Reader in Law at the University of Cambridge, does a fine job of examining the answers that the law has come up with in less than 350 pages.



Aboriginal Title is a comprehensive examination of rise of the doctrine of ‘aboriginal title’, whereby the courts of various Commonwealth countries have acknowledged an indigenous interest in land, which pre-existed the Crown’s claims of sovereignty, and was not extinguished by this claim.

McHugh takes us through the legal atmosphere which gave rise to the doctrine, analyses the key cases in Australia and Canada in particu-

lar, examines how the doctrine has been received internationally, and compares the legal perspective on aboriginal rights with those of anthropology and history. It is a lot to cover, with every strand complicated by political and personal dimensions, subjective view points, and the rich tapestry of peoples who have sought special ‘indigenous’ recognition. McHugh does this well and manages to create a coherent narrative, although sometimes the sheer number of examples he wishes to pay tribute to is overwhelming.

McHugh’s voice is strong throughout the book. He has been involved in this area of law for decades, and begins with an acknowledgement of the aboriginal struggle for recognition, and strongly supports the early breakthrough cases which ‘shook the national legal systems into a new era of dialogue and accomodation’.

There is repeated reference to the failure of various national governments to deal with the issue. However, this is not the self-congratulating success story of the victory of legal mechanisms over dithering politicians. McHugh is clear that the courts have struggled to fill in the details of what aboriginal title means, and have retreated from their original, enthusiastic position.

There are also worries that aboriginal people are now so ‘rights-laden’ that their story has turned into one of numerous court cases on technical points of law, and this ‘lawfare’ cannot advance their cause. McHugh also questions whether it is helpful for several jurisdictions to insist on proof of continuity of traditional practices on land before title is acknowledged, thus preserving the power hierarchy within indigenous tribes, preventing their modernisation, and denying them commercial rights over their lands. It is possible that we are at end of the road for the proprietary rights approach, and subsequent litigation should be based on human rights. And negotiation would be preferable to more litigation.

It is unsurprising that an attempt by one legal system to acknowledge the existence of a pre- and co-existing alternative has caused problems. McHugh believes that this acknowledgment was inevitable in the late 20th-century, given the rise of human rights and increasing judicial confidence to challenge governments. However, ‘white guilt’ has so far been unable to satisfactorily create a place for indigenous people within a modern nation. This book is a history of the early stages of aboriginal rights. We look with interest on what the next generation of lawyers and politicians can offer as they are confronted with the fallout from the colonial ambitions of their fathers.

Eleanor Healy Birt

UN General Assembly Fails to Act On Crimes Against Humanity In Burma

Burma Campaign UK has condemned the European Union for tabling a draft of this year’s UN General Assembly Resolution on Burma which fails to take any action to stop war crimes and crimes against humanity in the country. This is despite the fact that human rights abuses which may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity have significantly increased in the past year. The European Union has been under pressure to include the establishment of a UN Commission of Inquiry into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma in the Resolution. The establishment of such an Inquiry has been recommended by the UN’s own human rights expert on Burma.

The draft Resolution will be the 21st passed by the UN General Assembly. The General Assembly first called on the dictatorship in Burma to respect the Geneva Conventions in 1992. In total, General Assembly Resolutions on Burma have referred to 15 possible war crimes and crimes against humanity. This new Resolution will be the 19th time the General Assembly has called on the government of Burma to hold an investigation into human rights abuses in the country.

Women and girls are being brutally gang-raped and killed, villages mortar bombed and the number of people forced to flee their

homes because of attacks by the Burmese Army has doubled, but the response from the EU is more empty words,” said Mark Farmaner, Director of Burma Campaign UK. “Establishing a Commission of Inquiry would send a signal to the government of Burma that they cannot continue to break international law and get away with it. It could have saved lives. Instead, yet again, the EU failed to act. The EU has to explain why they think this nineteenth request for the government of Burma to investigate its own abuses will be acted upon when the previous eighteen requests have been ignored.”

Despite some small political reforms in Burma, human rights abuses have increased in the past year, as the government has broken ceasefire agreements with armed ethnic political parties. Around 150,000 people are internally displaced due to conflict, as the Burmese Army has deliberately targeted civilians in ethnic states. Of deep concern are the increasing reports of the use of gang-rape by the Burmese Army.

While we welcome this draft Resolution, which highlights the serious ongoing human rights abuses in Burma, it is extremely disappointing that no practical steps are being taken to prevent these abuses,” said Mark Farmaner. “It is also disappointing that the UK and other countries which expressed support for a UN Inquiry failed to turn words into action.”

Meanwhile, Bob Russell has asked Andrew Mitchell, the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment he has made of the humanitarian needs of displaced people in Kachin State, Burma; and if he will make a statement.

Mitchell’s reply, on 25th October was that the “Department for International Development (DFID) staff have been closely monitoring the humanitarian situation in Kachin State following the outbreak of conflict earlier this year. We are in contact with a number of organisations working in the affected areas, both from inside Burma and from across the border in China. We understand that as many as 20,000 people have been displaced by recent fighting, many without access to basic needs such as food, clean water and medicine. I have agreed that funding through the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and a humanitarian non-governmental organisation already working in the area may be used to assist displaced people in Kachin State”.

The draft UN resolution is available online at:
<http://www.un.org/en/ga/third/66/propolist.shtml>

A Burma Campaign UK briefing paper on UN General Assembly Resolution on Burma is available at:
<http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/index.php/news-and-reports/burma-briefing/title/the-united-nations-general-assembly-burma>

Ukraine must uphold law and principles of democracy

Former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko has been sentenced to seven years in prison for “criminally” exceeding her constitutional powers in 2009. “Without prejudice to any possible appeals process related to the case, we consider that in order to reaffirm Ukraine’s commitments to European values, Ukraine needs to demonstrate that it is upholding the basic principles of democracy and the rule of law”, said LI President Hans Van Baalen MEP, expressing

his strong dissatisfaction with the Ukrainian district court’s verdict. “... We support Baroness Ashton [EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs] in her call to reflect carefully on the implications this court ruling could have on the evolution of EU-Ukraine relations and expect her to participate in Parliament’s plenary session in Brussels this week to take stock of the situation.” An appeal for the respect of basic human rights and freedom in the Ukraine was made by LI and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation earlier this year and the matter was discussed at the LI Exec in London last month.

R E V I E W

The Muslim Brotherhood, the burden of tradition, by Alison Pargeter

Saqi, 2010

With the Arab Spring blossoming in the opening months of this year the last thing one suddenly wanted to review was a book on the Muslim Brotherhood. Yet the Ikhwan has been remarkably quiet in all these events, something confirmed by Egyptian Liberal colleagues. Of course they claim that they were there from day one and fully participated, but that was not the case. The feeling was that they didn’t want to alienate what degree of acceptance they had gained with Mubarak & Co., so were keeping their heads down until they saw what direction things were going in.

This is very much the impression that you get from Alison Pargeter’s book, though the reasons for such may differ from place to place. In Syria for instance the mauling they got from Assad père in Hamah had almost crushed that branch, leaving it fragmented. In some respects that might be seen as a pivotal moment for the movement (insofar as it can be spoken of as unified) as a whole. Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimeen starts life as a radical Conservatism in 1928; even then I think it is fair to say that its targets were more domestic politics than the Imperialist oppressor, though David Rebak was undoubtedly lucky to have been pulled inside a doorway as the mob passed. They contribute to liberation movements, but never dominate them and are in turn persecuted by the various elites who successively take over. Even from the days of Hassan al-Banna they were prone to pragmatism. Their (home) Egyptian branch produces one major ideologue, Sayyid Qutb, but his, more militant followers, become a party within the party, and progressively his banner is taken up by radical Muslims outside the Brotherhood. So the moment they come into the limelight in the west, in the wake of 9/11 they have largely outgrown their radical past and are just another conservative party. They do well in the false dawn, the elections following George Bush fills short burst of enthusiasm for democracy in the Arab world, indeed they are the reason he promptly forgets about it, and thus in Egypt itself are potentially a force, but the revolution has bypassed them.

Alison Pargeter thus presents us with a history of the Ikhwan to just before the Arab Spring; as such she explains their absence as a major force in those events but why they remain a player. Her book is valuable from that perspective and also for the development of radical conservatism within Islam.

Stewart Rayment

LDFI Chair Meets Israeli Opposition Leader

Gavin Stollar, Chair of Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel (LDFI) met Kadima Leader Tzipi Livni this morning (Thursday 6 October). Ms Livni was briefing a private meeting of Anglo-Jewish and pro-Israeli leaders before she went to meet

Foreign Secretary William Hague. Kadima is Israel's main opposition party, and is the largest single party in the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset.



Her visit to London was made easier by Parliament's recent passing of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act, which includes a reform to the law on universal jurisdiction. This reform was taken through the House of Lords by Liberal Democrat ministers, following Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg's pledge that the Coalition Government would do this.

Gavin Stollar said: "I am delighted that Ms Livni is here to discuss the peace process with the UK Government. If the UK is to support the peace process, then Israeli and Palestinian leaders must be able to come to London to meet ministers. I am proud that Liberal Democrats played such a key role in the Coalition Government's change to the law."

Greek liberal leader Bakoyannis impresses Dutch liberals

LI President Hans van Baalen MEP invited Greek liberal leader Dora Bakoyannis to address the Dutch Group of Liberal International. Bakoyannis was very clear: Greece must reform in order to earn money, to repay its debts and to kick-start economic growth. Bakoyannis started her own party, the Democratic Alliance, a liberal alternative for the socialist and state oriented PASOK and the conservative New Democracy.

In The Hague Bakoyannis met former EU Commissioner and former LI President Frits Bolkestein, the current VVD Floor Leader in the second Chamber of Parliament Stef Blok, State Secretary of the Treasury Frans Weekers and Prime Minister Mark Rutte.

Bakoyannis criticised the Papandreou government and the Troika of the European Commission, ECB and IMF for putting an extra tax burden on Small and Medium Size enterprise and working families, as well as for protecting government bureaucracy. In 2011, Greek political parties received a subsidy of 200 million euros from the government, a decidedly non-austere move. Western media tends to portray events in Greece negatively. The core problem is that the

Papandreou government has failed to tackle corruption, and that the burden of the debt crisis falls upon the poor whilst wealthier sectors of Greek society find exemptions. Dora Bakoyannis' clear answers undoubtedly impressed Dutch liberals and media. Hans van Baalen called her 'the Iron Lady Greece needs'. Mark Rutte sees in her vital partner in reform to protect the Euro.

R E V I E W

The Armenian Genocide: a complete history, by Raymond Kevorkian

I.B. Tauris 2011 | £49.50

When I visited Yerevan, the capital of present day Armenia, earlier this year, I didn't have time to visit the Genocide Museum. However two of my tour group did so, and we found them afterwards puffing hard on cigarettes at a cafe (you can still do that in Armenia), visibly shaken at what they had seen as evidence of the horrific sufferings of the Armenian people in the genocide of the late 19th and early 20th century.

Until my visit to Armenia, like most people I had heard only vaguely of this episode and if I had it was only as a half-remembered reference to Gladstone's final political speeches (referring to the early persecution of the Armenians by the Ottoman Turks in the 1890s). However any visitor to Armenia is soon fully informed about the peoples' tragic history; relations with Turkey are virtually non-existent, made all the more painful because Mount Ararat which the Armenians regard as an almost religious symbol of their country, and which looms out of the mist over Yerevan, is actually in modern Turkey.

Kevorkian's book sets out to be the definitive work on the genocide, and it probably is, but it is not an easy read – fans of 'popular history' should look elsewhere. It is challenging not only because of its length (800 pages without the notes) and its academic depth, but because the central chapters which are devoted to chronicling the details of all the massacres and deportations in the main genocide around 1915, are simply so grim, gruesome and depressing.

The first part of the book establishes the relationship between the ruling classes in the Ottoman Empire and the Armenian community in the years leading up to the First World War. In this period a group known as the 'Young Turks' rose to power. Kevorkian shows that although they apparently represented a modernising force against the regime of the Sultan, they nevertheless retained many of the prejudices of that regime in terms of distrust of the Armenians as alien, deceitful and disloyal. The Young Turks' objectives of transforming what remained of the Ottoman Empire into a more specifically modern quasi-nation state served to reinforce commitment towards 'Turkification', which increasingly implied the suppression of ethnic minorities, including their religion, by a process of Islamicisation. Paradoxically many of the Armenian leaders of the period initially shared a similar political outlook to the Young Turks in terms of a heightened sense of 'national' consciousness and a desire for more modern forms of government. As such the two groups were quite close to one another in the political and ruling classes of the Empire throughout the period – though in the

end of course that did not save the Armenian people. Apart from politico-ethnic considerations, the Armenians seem to have occupied the place in Ottoman society and economy analogous to that of the Jews in Europe – the traders and skilled artisans whose (relative) personal wealth made them attractive prey for those for whom religious bigotry and nationalistic sentiment did not provide sufficient grounds for persecuting them.

In detailing the massacres, kidnap/rape/forced marriages and forced deportations of the Armenian people, Kervorkian is seeking not only to document precisely each episode as a matter of record, but to establish the relationship between events at the micro-historic level and those at the macro, or state level. Thus he uses this detailed local evidence to support his argument that there was a deliberate policy of genocide, with the planning, knowledge, and approval of the highest authorities in the Ottoman/Turkish state. This is in order to challenge the official Turkish position that a) the massacres were in reality skirmishes between rebellious Armenians and Turkish troops, b) many of the deaths were attributable to disease, and c) there was no organised programme of extermination. The evidence he provides for the deaths is of course overwhelming; for the organised programme, it is more circumstantial – still convincing but as he says there is rarely in such cases a conveniently clear record of exactly who authorised what.

When the Turks were defeated in 1918, Britain and other victorious Allies made efforts to bring to justice those responsible for the atrocities. In practice the Turkish state was left to carry out the judicial process which, it is argued, not surprisingly failed to identify or punish adequately most of the main culprits. A few deputy heads rolled. In the longer run however the experiences of 1919 led, via work carried out by the League of Nations, to the adoption of the UN Genocide convention of 1948. In that sense some long term good came out of these shameful events.

Whilst obviously this book is something of a polemic written from the Armenian viewpoint, it is a reasoned one. It would be difficult indeed to contest its conclusions based on such depth of research and scholarship. The official Turkish position, which is denial of genocide and suppression of any publication of a contrary view, cannot be sustained indefinitely against the evidence. An admission of what happened and expression of regret, however difficult, would not only enable the Turks to move into the future (and the EU?) with integrity but also liberate the Armenians from the role of the perpetual victim which is equally as debilitating to national consciousness as guilt.

Gwyneth Deakins

R E V I E W

The Arabs, a history, by Eugene Rogan

Penguin 2011 £12.99

This year's Garden lecture, by Peter Hennessey, focussed on forecasting, and the great question is 'Why did nobody predict the Arab Spring?' Well Eugene Rogan might have done; in his introduction he cites the assassination of the journalist Samir Kassir on 2nd June 2005, in the wake of the Cedar Revolution which fol-

lowed the murder of Rafiq Hariri, prime minister of Lebanon by the Syrians. Kassir had written of the 'Arab malaise' of the 21st century – 'It's not pleasant being Arab these days... feelings of persecution for some, self-hatred for others; a deep disquiet pervades the Arab world.' The sense was that something had to change.

Since 9/11 the Islamic world, of which the Arab world is a major part, has impacted on western thinking – a rather couldn't be ignored any longer. Of course the interaction has gone on from the inception of Islam, and the boot hasn't always been in the western foot. But when it has been on the western foot, for the last couple of centuries at least, we have been bastards. Our actions have inevitably been motivated by greed and our own short-term interests. As Gardiner reminded us, the west have consistently favoured reactionary, usually military dictatorships, however they are dressed. If we look at the response the Arab Spring (where our governments can certainly be said to have been caught with their trousers down), how much more venomous towards Assad and Qadhafi in the radical corner than those on the conservative side – are either any better than the other?

Rogan starts his story in the 16th century and temptation to run straight to the present aside, it is worth going back this far to get a full perspective; not least the relationship of the Arab world to Turkei. Sadly, as the West becomes more engaged all one can say is 'what bastards we've been' and the worst of it, the USA learnt nothing from the mistakes of the British and French. Our cultural debt to the Arab world is incalculable, going back long before the period of this book. As there may now be a chance to address old ills a better understanding is called for, and Rogan's book is a good place to start.

Stewart Rayment

Al-Sahlani witnesses Cairo deadly clashes

During a visit to Cairo, Liberal International Vice-President on the Bureau Abir Al-Sahlani MP, personally witnessed last weekend's protests of the Coptic community, which turned violent leaving 24 casualties and hundreds of injured both among civilians and the military. In a statement issued from the appalling scenes in the Egyptian capital, Al-Sahlani said: "The killings of civilians and military are unacceptable. The rule of law must be the way forward in Egypt. It's very important that elections take place as soon as possible, creating a new arena for people to express their opinions rather than turning to demonstrations every time they have new demands. Stability and democracy do not need to be in conflict with each other." While in Cairo, she met a number of political, civil society and business actors, including representatives of the interim military government.

At a press conference she focused on Women's rights, the military government, young people's real influence in politics and the case of the political prisoner on hunger strike Maikel Nabil. IFRYL delegate Thomas Leys had raised Nabil's case during the LI Executive meeting in London, where it was also reported that Ahmed Hassan Helmy Said of the Free Egyptian Party had been injured in an earlier demonstration.

Before Cairo, Al-Sahlani visited Beirut and Damascus.



Ole Heil, International Officer, VVD, Pieter van de Staat, VVD & Robert Farla, D66, Nederland



Nick Clegg with Oyun Sanjaasuren & Ganbat Gongorjav, Civil Will Party of Mongolia



Nick Clegg with Priscilla Mishairabwi-Mushonga, MDC Zimbabwe.

Bureau



Roger Albinyan (Catalan Group of LI), Mohamed Tamaldou & Abdesslam Nihrane, Union Constitutionnelle, Morocco and Josep Soler

