



2014 no.8 £5.50 (free to members)

# INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



***BURMA***

***Kosovo***

***Euro Defence***

***Hong Kong Exec.***

# EVENTS

**12<sup>th</sup> January 2015** LIBG executive. NLC 7.00pm

**2<sup>nd</sup> March 2015** LIBG Forum on Immigration 6.30pm  
NLC speakers to be announced

**4<sup>th</sup> March** Annual Diplomatic Reception. 6.30-8.30pm  
NLC Tickets £25 from

LI(BG), 1 Brook Gardens, London SW13 0LY

**7<sup>th</sup> March 2015** Climate Change March

<http://www.campaigncc.org/7march>

**13<sup>th</sup>- 15<sup>th</sup> March** Liberal Democrats Spring Conference,  
Liverpool

**12<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> June** Liberal International Executive, Zurich

**29<sup>th</sup> June 2015** LIBG AGM. NLC 7.00pm

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

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

Underground: Embankment/Charing Cross

*email* [w.kyrle@virgin.net](mailto:w.kyrle@virgin.net)

Liberal International (British Group)

*Chair:* Wendy Kyrle-Pope, 1 Brook Gardens, Barnes,  
London SW13 0LY

*email* [w.kyrle@virgin.net](mailto:w.kyrle@virgin.net)

*InterLiB is published by the Liberal International  
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*Comments and articles can be sent to* Lockhart &  
Hastings, Creative Media Centre,  
45 Robertson Street, Hastings TN34 1HL,  
*email* [lockharthastings@btconnect.com](mailto:lockharthastings@btconnect.com)

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# As human rights slips down the global agenda, Burma suffers.

Zoya Phan

In dealing with Burma, the British government and much of the rest of the international community seems to have either been naive, or unprincipled. In the context of human rights moving down both the British government agenda and the global agenda, (and the two are not unconnected) I have come to the conclusion that unprincipled in the most likely of the two.

In recent weeks Aung San Suu Kyi, President Obama and the United Nations have all said that Burma's reform process is stalled, backsliding, or backtracking. Anyone with any detailed knowledge of Burma should not have been surprised by these developments.

Human rights activists in Burma and abroad watched in disbelief as the British and American governments, which had previously been the strongest supporters of Burma's democracy movement, rushed to endorse the so-called reform process which began in 2011.

The first major reform was a new Constitution, drafted by then General Thein Sein, now President, which gave the military power over every level of government, from guaranteeing the military seats in Parliament, seats in the Cabinet, dominance of a committee which is more powerful than both President and Parliament, and puts the military outside government control. The second step was a rigged election, which the pro-military party won.

The goal of the generals was not democratisation. It was modernisation. While the generals and business cronies were living lives of luxury, globally Burma was falling behind economically and politically. The army was becoming weaker, depending more on child soldiers, and using out of date equipment. This was a big worry for the generals.

With a new constitution and political system in place to protect them, they began a process of allowing more civil liberties, and made a lot of promises about future democratic reforms. The international community should have known better than to trust the new military-backed government. In fact, they did know better, which is why it is unlikely that it was naivety which led them to endorse this sham process. In 2012 then Foreign Secretary William Hague said the regime

should be judged on its actions, not its words. But he then did the exact opposite, prematurely lifting sanctions and praising President Thein Sein despite ongoing human rights abuses.

No fundamental changes were made. Almost all significant human rights reforms were in fact a top-down order from the President, not enshrined in law, and which could be revoked at any moment. Repressive laws remained in place. Even political prisoners who were released were only released conditionally, and still have a criminal record.



*Zoya Phan in Karen State 2008.*

The idea that President Thein Sein had suddenly transformed into a genuine democrat was always ridiculous. He is a lifelong soldier, spent 14 years at the top of the previous dictatorship, including serving as Prime Minister, and was very close to former dictator Than Shwe, and was trusted by him implicitly, especially in dealing with the international community. He has become a master at the tactic of dangling the prospect of change to alleviate international pressure, stretching this out as long as



possible, and then making last minute promises or small concessions when international patience finally runs out. This is why he was hand-picked by Than Shwe to become President. A critical part of the reform plan was to persuade the international community to drop sanctions and allow Burma back into the international community.

The UN has documented how in the 1990s Thein Sein ordered his soldiers in Shan State to commit human rights abuses. He ordered the illegal confiscation of land, and farmers ejected were then subject to extortion and forced labour. Shan human rights groups documented around 45 cases of rape by soldiers under

but again, only up to a point, and there is more political space for people to organise. In most countries even after these reforms this situation would be considered unacceptable. Similar laws and restrictions introduced in a European country would cause domestic and international outrage. But compared to how bad it was before in Burma, sadly these are improvements.

But in the past year even these limited reforms have gone into reverse. The number of political prisoners has doubled. Over a hundred more are awaiting trial. Hundreds of farmers have also been jailed for protesting against their land being confiscated. Newspapers have been shut down by the government, and journalists who



Rohingya IDPs, May 2013 Photo: Steve Gumaer

write articles the government doesn't like have been jailed or sued. Promised laws to improve human rights have not been passed. Instead the government is backing a new law, targeted mainly at Muslims, which will restrict the right of women to marry non-Buddhist men. This is part of a government strategy of whipping up nationalism to try to win public support.

I don't believe that the British government is so naive that it genuinely believed Thein Sein was a democratic reformer. I think the reason they backed Thein Sein and his fake reform

his command. His Headquarters in Shan State was ringed by incidents of rape.

It has been painful to watch as sanctions were lifted, preferential debt relief given, and trade and aid start to flow without any of the human rights benchmarks for their being lifted having been met. And once the sticks were all thrown away and the carrots all given, the obvious happened. Reform stalled and then went into reverse. The generals had got what they wanted.

So now, four years after reforms began in Burma, the country still has one of the worst human rights records in the world. Ethnic women are still being raped by the Burmese army, political activists are still being arrested, tortured and jailed, journalists are still being jailed, the Burmese Army is still attacking ethnic civilians and still recruiting child soldiers.

Undoubtedly there have been some positive steps taken in the past four years. In large parts of Burma more freedom of speech is allowed, as long as certain lines are not crossed. Media is more free than it was,

process is much worse. I think for them, Burma becoming a more 'normal' authoritarian regime is good enough. Trade, not human rights is their priority now, all over the world, not just in Burma. The fake reform process gave them the cover they needed to drop human rights and promote trade as the priority instead.

The timing of Burma's generals could not have been better. In 2010, just as they embarked on a rebranding of their regime, human rights was slipping down the global agenda. For President Obama human rights are simply not a priority. He saw human rights in Burma not only as a low priority, but also a hindrance to his goal of achieving an Asia pivot and countering Chinese influence.

The inconvenient truth about ongoing human rights abuses in Burma, including an increase in violations of international law, has put the British government in a difficult position in defending its new policy on Burma. Their solution has been as bad as the new policy itself. They have actively downplayed serious

human rights abuses, and talked up the increasingly fewer positives.

The British government's unprincipled decision to back Burma's sham reform process leaves it with a difficult dilemma today. With so many ongoing human rights abuses, which are now actually increasing, does it continue backing the Burmese government? Or does it admit the current policy is wrong, that the reform process is a sham, and that human rights violations are so serious it has to change policy back to prioritising human rights and apply international pressure. Sadly, human rights are unlikely to be the deciding factor in this decision either. It will depend on how much pressure they face over this policy. For the people of Burma this pressure and policy change can't come soon enough.

*Zoya Phan is Campaigns Manager at Burma Campaign UK. She fled Burma aged 14 when the Burmese Army attacked her village, and grew up in a refugee camp. Her autobiography, Little Daughter, is published by Simon and Schuster.*



***Sumedha & Dīpankara (Burma 1990)***

*Dīpankara Buddha recognised the Brahmin Sumedha as an earlier incarnation of the Gotama Buddha.*

'Pilgrims, healers and wizards, Buddhism and religious practices in Burma and Thailand' runs at the British Museum until 11th January 2015.

## **BURMA MISSION**

**10th-13th November 2014**

On the return journey from the LI Executive in Hong Kong, Kishwer Falkner, Iain Gill and I undertook a mission on behalf of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy to assess what assistance the National League for Democracy Party of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi might need that was not already being delivered by American, Dutch, Danish or German foundations.

Our meetings started, as is customary, with a briefing from the Deputy Ambassador and the local DfID head of mission, after which we got an USDP (Union Solidarity and Development Party, of President Thein Sein) take on the current political situation, as well as that of the International Republican institute who are forced to work on a cross party basis.

In essence, there are 4 people of importance in the Country, three of them being of military background. They are the President, the Speaker of Parliament, the Head of the Armed Forces, and the NLD Leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

The President, Thein Sein, wants to be re-elected by parliament at the end of 2015. The Speaker, Shwe Mann, pipped last time, wants his job. The Armed Forces Leader, Min Aung Hlaing, is probably being groomed for succession in 2020. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is prohibited from standing because of her foreign nationality sons.

Much talk of constitutional reform. The parliament has 26% of its members appointed by the military. The ruling party, the USDP, is closely linked to them. NLD is a much feared rump, having boycotted the 2010 elections while Daw Suu was under house arrest, but having won 43 out of 44 by-elections, mostly with 70% of the vote.

Justifiably terrified of annihilation in late 2015, USDP are looking to move from first past the post to a proportional system. This is the subject of current negotiations.

Armed with this, we were driven the 200 plus miles along a mostly concrete highway from Yangon (Rangoon) to the somewhat artificial capital of Nya Pyi Taw. In the huge parliamentary complex, designed and built by the Chinese without any concept of there being opposition MPs, we met the iconic NLD Leader. She berated the Western Countries for having rolled over and lifted sanctions at the first sign of democratic reform, with the result that the military, in or out of uniform, are doing everything possible to retrench their power, privileges, and corrupt dealings.

President Obama, due to visit 2 days later, clearly got the message as he published a magazine article saying just this.





**Kishwer Falkner, Iain Gill, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi & Robert Woodthorpe Browne**

Daw Suu was puzzled at the idea that parliamentary whips should offer inducements to MPs to vote on party lines. "If they want to vote differently, they should step down"

The sacrifices that opposition MPs have to make are shocking . While the Government-friendly USD party has a big HQ and apartments for its MPs, the NLD members live in the equivalent of servants's quarters. They are paid US\$ 350 per month. They pay for lodgings and food and end up with about US\$ 50 per month for their families.

Daw Suu does not seek revenge on the military who imprisoned - and worse - her and her followers. But she does want a South African style Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Back in Yangon, we met with one of the elderly Party leaders (know colloquially as the Uncles) and a delegation of women and youth leaders. It is with them that we will be called upon to work

The Party does have active Women's and Youth Wings, who each have periodic, regular meetings of their activists, and there is representation in the Central Committee of the Party, which meets in Yangon when Parliament is not in session and Daw Suu can be present.

It was a fascinating visit to a country embarking on

democracy, but with the military seeking to hold onto power, directly or indirectly. There is clearly a popular mood to be rid of the restrictions imposed during Myanmar's isolation. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is spoken of with reverence by all and would be an overwhelmingly popular leader. However, as the daughter of the General who liberated the Country, she is a real disciplinarian.

There is a role for us in promoting democracy in her party, as well as a more outward looking approach following decades of isolation.

***Robert Woodthorpe Browne***



# LI Executive Hong Kong

Because of the distance, there was a limited UK attendance at the LI Executive in Kowloon. Sir Graham Watson had a starring role as President of the ALDE Party. I attended as LIBG representative and Principal Treasurer, while Baroness Kishwer Falkner is a Vice President representing the Liberal Democrats. Iain Gill, the Party's international officer, organised the trip and the indefatigable ex MEP Phil Bennion, completed the Delegation.

The meeting coincided, deliberately, with the annual congress of the Council of Asian Liberal Democrats, CALD, with delegates from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mongolia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand and Indonesia. Observers from India and Australia gave us interesting insights into Liberalism in their countries.

and Juli gave a fulsome interview, later making a Presidential Statement, available on the LI website.

We were all impressed to meet 18 year old Joshua Wong, one of the 3 originators of the protest against China's insistence that they should vet a short list of 3 candidates to be the next Chief Executive of the Autonomous Region. Felt that we were in "the thick of it".

The slogans, post-it notes and amusing graffiti showed the true aspirations of the Hong Kong people. Democracy hero, the lawyer Martin Lee, an LI Prize for Freedom Laureate, is totally associated with the movement, and was warmly welcomed wherever he went. A truly great Liberal.

*Robert Woodthorpe Browne*



*Robert Woodthorpe Browne at Occupy*

Many joint meetings, including a seminar hosted by INLW on women's participation in political life.

Of particular interest was the ongoing Occupy Movement. In the first of two visits to LegCo - the first to meet Opposition MPs and the second to meet the President (Speaker), a Beijing loyalist - we had to walk around their barriers. They had taken over the LegCo car park too! Later LI President Juli Minoves Triquell led a delegation of most of the delegates to walk around the Admiralty area. Plenty of cameras

There was a fair degree of nervousness in the run up to the Liberal International Executive meeting in Hong Kong as our flights and hotels were all booked, but we feared that a last minute cancellation was always a possibility. The street occupations by democracy protestors continued and the Hong Kong Democrats were clearly implicated. Martin Lee at 76 years of age had been a victim of a tear gas attack when he had joined the protestors, although the protests are a grass roots movement not orchestrated by any political group.

Martin Lee and Chung-Kai Sin ensured that we had excellent opportunities to meet the protestors and we joined them on the streets in the Admiralty District. Kishwer

Falkner took a time out to visit them in the afternoon with Martin and reported back that the elder statesman had a "rock star" reception from the young protestors. That evening I accompanied LI President Juli Minoves, and bureau members Robert Woodthorpe Browne and Olle Schmidt with LegCo member for the Hong Kong Democrats Chung-Kau Sin. We talked with protestors including 18 year old Joshua Wong who had initially brought out the school pupils. We were told how the protests had been entirely peaceful, except for the ill-judged tear gas attack by the security



forces. The symbol of the movement is the umbrella, generally yellow, and I was presented one by the protestors. I could not resist the photo opportunity next to the cardboard cut-out of Xi Jin-Ping sporting his own yellow umbrella. I found myself stranded in this pose for 10 minutes as locals queued up to take my picture with President Xi.

The nub of the issue is that the people of Hong Kong were promised universal suffrage for the election of their next Chief Executive (roughly equivalent to PM) in 2017. The Chinese authorities have now clarified that they will be nominating all of the candidates. Quite rightly, the popular movement and our political allies in Hong Kong believe this to be unacceptable. Can European and other governments help? Yes, by encouraging the Chinese authorities to see the potential advantages of a political 'experiment' in



**Phil Bennion at Occupy**

Hong Kong, coherent with the doctrine of 'One Country, Two Systems'.

### **Islamic State**

In one of the key debates chaired by Lib Dem peer Kishwer Falkner we explored the possible actions, both military and socio-economic, that could be taken to counter Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, as well as what we could do to counter radicalisation at home. Although we came up with no clear blueprint, we did

pass a strong resolution supporting the military action thus far.

The battle for Kobani between IS and the Kurds is taking place on the border of Turkey, an EU candidate country. Also many Jihadis in Syria are young Moslems brought up inside the European Union. This is clearly an issue of major importance to Europe. So what strategy should Europeans be adopting? Many of our sister parties in Asia are from Moslem countries and others have Moslem minorities, so the Asian and European delegates were equally concerned.

Militarily, actions coherent with the Responsibility to Protect must be supported. IS have declared their wish to kill the Kurds, who they have described as allies of the 'Crusaders'. It is also important to deploy sufficient force to turn the tide and at the very least contain IS preventing any further advance. However the debate is now turning to whether the coalition fighting IS, including the US and a number of EU member states should come to an accommodation with Assad. Some delegates said that we should go after IS, then turn on Assad once IS are defeated. Others thought Assad was a necessary part of any coalition to defeat IS. From my own perspective, this could be a treacherous pact, considering the close contact the ALDE group in Europe has had with the Free Syrian Army in recent years. Any deal with Assad must at the very least be part of a broader alliance including moderate opponents of the Assad regime such as the FSA.

Turkey have been particularly disappointing in their response, allowing their own internal dispute with the Kurdish separatists to blind them to the bigger picture. An intervention by Turkey to save Kurdish lives in Kobani could be just what is required to establish the trust required for a political settlement within Turkey. Inaction has given some to suspect that President Erdogan's government has sympathies with IS, that are both unlikely and contradict Turkey's international responsibilities.

Longer term action at home should also not be forgotten. Proactive measures to engage young Moslems and counter radical ideology are important, and there is some merit in attempting to prevent potential militants reaching Syria and Iraq. However, barring re-entry to UK passport holders, as proposed by David Cameron, goes too far. We cannot simply wash our hands of UK nationals as they are our problem. In this instant we must face up to our responsibilities.

It is good to see that the talks with Iran on their nuclear programme have been extended, as Iran is



proving a useful ally against IS. Indeed the reintegration of Iran into the international global framework could be a by-product of the war against Islamic State.

## **Inequality**

An interesting debate on inequality was another highlight, as the perspective from the developing world is somewhat different from our Eurocentric position. The views of economist Thomas Piketty received much criticism from our Asian sister parties. Not dissimilar to the situation in the UK, most Asian economies are also seeing increasing inequality as the super-rich grow in wealth. However, our Asian colleagues are intensely aware that when the same data is analysed globally, we see that the world is becoming much more equal. Our Asian counterparts are very aware that they are catching up with the west in incomes, even if internal inequality is on the rise. Piketty was criticised for concentrating on inequality within countries and thereby missing the bigger picture. His theory that capital always increased in value faster than the increase in wages was also attacked by some of our colleagues as it assumes that we are not sitting on a worldwide property price bubble. However, it was very much agreed that we need better means to ensure that the rich pay their share towards public spending and that corporations cannot so easily transfer their profits to tax havens.



**Phil Bennion & D66 delegates.**

## **Migration**

On the final day we debated migration and freedom of movement. However we did not agree across the room that absolute global freedom of movement was feasible. The consensus was that migration controls would continue as long as significant global inequality was a factor. In a world of low cost airlines, it is

difficult to envisage the UK for instance, opening its borders to immigrants without restriction.

Liberal International meetings are always stimulating and the Congress, which takes place every 18 months is open to members of sister parties. I recommend them for those interested in getting a wider perspective on international affairs. I generally arrange our holiday to make LI Congress a part, making it a bit more affordable. Keep an eye on the LI website if you are interested in attending. The next will be in South America in autumn 2015.

*Phil Bennion*

## **LIBERALS PASS RESOLUTIONS ON SECURITY; PANEL DEBATES ON ECONOMIC PROSPERITY**

Parliamentarians and representatives of Liberal International's member parties assembled in Hong Kong last week for LI's 193rd Executive Committee (EC) meeting to discuss high-profile global developments and the EC theme 'promoting growth, reducing inequality'.

Starting with the debate 'Global Political Developments', LI Vice-President on the Bureau Baroness Kishwer Falkner chaired discussions on developments in Ukraine, Syria and Iraq, and the world's response on Ebola. These discussions informed the adoption of urgency resolutions by the Executive Committee on Crackdown on Civil Society in Azerbaijan, on Russia, on Peace in East & South China Sea and on Iraq and Syria.

The World Café on the Conference theme of 'Promoting Growth, Reducing Inequality', featured Albert Ho MP of LI partner Democratic Party of Hong Kong, Vice-President Louise van der Laan of the ALDE Party and Director Barun Mitra of the Liberty Institute from India, and engaged participants in discussions on grassroots campaigning, strategy and political communication. Participants of the EC were given an exclusive update on the political developments in Taiwan, Thailand and Hong Kong from Bi-khim

Hsiao MP of LI full member DPP, Taiwan; Vice-President on the Bureau Kasit Piromya of LI full member Democrat Party of Thailand; and James To MP of the Democratic Party of Hong Kong.

**Presidential Statement on  
Hong Kong Protests  
Sunday 9 November 2014**

In the fringes of the 193rd Executive Committee meeting of Liberal International, LI President, Dr Juli Minoves, has released a statement on the continuing pro-democracy demonstrations currently taking place in Hong Kong. The EC mandated the LI President to summarise the discussions in Hong Kong in a presidential statement on behalf of the International.

Liberal International (LI) admires and supports the peaceful demonstrations of the youth of Hong Kong in a truly grassroots movement for democracy and for the ability of the electorate to have a government of their choosing. We, the Executive Committee of LI, have witnessed the courage of human beings who bond together, in spite of obvious risks, to defend the idea of representative government and their future. It is not the World that is trying to influence Hong Kong: it is these amazing students gathered in Central Hong Kong that are helping to change the World. As liberal politicians from over eighty different nations we need to hear their message and make it ours.

LI has come to Hong Kong to witness the protests. As many times in the past, we are on the spot, in direct contact with all of the actors in a diverse open society such as Hong Kong. We lead an inclusive mission to Hong Kong and have met both businessmen and civil society representatives, both demonstrators and the authorities.

LI has seen first-hand that the protests are genuine. The protests have nothing to do with international intervention – they are a clear demonstration of Hong Kong people's desire for democracy. Liberal International sees nothing foreign in the demands of a people to select their own leaders without interference. A centralized power of one political colour can coexist with an elected local government of a different political outlook. We urge Beijing to respect the choices of the Hong Kong people.

As liberals we respect national boundaries. But, where we are active, we stand for and deliver democracy and devolution of power. This is how Hong Kong's quest for true democracy should be understood. The membership of Liberal International is strong proof that human rights and democracy are a universal concept. Democracy can flourish in Asia and deliver good results. We can see in Taiwan, the Philippines, and Indonesia, for example, that democracy is not a western concept – China can and should embrace it too.

In our meetings with the Beijing-backed authorities

and with demonstrators, we, representatives of Liberal International, learned of their commitment to their country, China. As in any other society, whenever there is a divergence of views, there is a necessity for open dialogue. The use of force will bring nothing good – not to Hong Kong, China, or the region. We reiterate and commend the peaceful character of the demonstrations and insist that no violence be used at any point.

For nearly 7 decades our message has been consistent: those who call for more freedom will always have the support of liberals.

**LI first international on the ground to support  
democracy in Hong Kong**

**Thursday 13 November 2014**

In the framework of its 193rd Executive Committee (EC), Liberal International has held a number of high-level meetings in Hong Kong with the government authorities and the umbrella movement, making it the first political international to engage in direct dialogue with both sides since the protests began in September this year.

Meeting with Secretary General Chen-wai On and Members of the Legislative Council, LI President Dr. Juli Minoves led a delegation of more than 100 liberals from over 35 political parties around the world to discuss the practical issues of negotiating with Beijing and to find a peaceful resolution to the protests. Dr. Minoves raised with the Members the importance of judicial independence in finding a lasting solution.

Having spoken with the Hong Kong authorities, the EC delegates then heard first-hand from the protesters. The LI President commended the peaceful nature of the Umbrella movement before speaking to a large number of journalists assembled in the centre of the site. Dr. Minoves told the media: “We are here to show our solidarity to these great [young people]. They're young, they're risking a lot... and it gives us a lot of courage to go back to our own countries... and be more courageous as politicians.”

Speaking to the press alongside the LI President, former Swedish Minister for European Union Affairs Birgitta Ohlsson MP, of Folkpartiet added: “It is important for us to meet these brave students. They are paving the way for freedom, for democracy, and for open society, not only in Hong Kong but for the rest of



# LAKSHMI

## John Pindar

At the beginning of November, the film 'Lakshmi' was shown at an LIBG Forum at the National Liberal Club. It had won the 2014 London Asian Film Festival and the British United Indian Liberal Democrats (BUILD) sponsored its showing at the NLC.



The film 'Lakshmi' has been described as 'heart-wrenching'. Another word would be horrifying. It shows how child-trafficking operates in India. A fourteen year old girl is sold by her father into prostitution. The people running the brothel in which this girl has been forced to 'work' are grotesque.

The courage of Lakshmi to survive is rewarded by a police investigation of the brothel providing her with the chance to give evidence against those who have imprisoned her, a chance she courageously accepts.

It is amazing so much of this compelling film has escaped censorship (but not all of it, and I assume the version shown at the National Liberal Club is the uncut version) given the preferences of the Indian film industry (warning here, I'm not an expert but I know India has produced heavyweight films like 'Bandit Queen'). Unrelentingly brutal, not sparing its audience's feelings, it convinces in the most unsettling way. The nauseating efforts of the guilty to escape justice are appropriately portrayed to produce feelings of outrage in the audience.

The star of the film, Monali Thakur, whose career ambition was to become a singer, shows the desperation of her position with astonishing sincerity, reacting to all the violence inflicted on her with convincing terror.

Equally remarkable is the performance of Nagesh Kukunoor, who also directed and produced the film plus wrote its script. By portraying the chief villain in the callous way he does (maybe causing a small part of this film's audience to feel they cannot take any more), his chilling performance demonstrates the evil of people like him. I felt he made sure he presented his character in the worst way possible to make his point.

He certainly succeeds. He has met the victims of child trafficking in real life, which no doubt has 'inspired' his performance.

There is an interesting portrayal of Indian courtroom procedures. It's difficult for me to comment on the accuracy and plausibility of the scenes in court. From a British perspective, it is hard to imagine the accused having such easy access to the chief accuser. From the viewpoint of the drama of the film, this needs to happen, so the vile characters can condemn themselves out of their own mouths, looking pathetic in the process.

Overall, an astonishing film, but not comfortable viewing. After it had finished, there was a panel discussion of the issues raised in the film led by LIBG President Sir Nick Harvey MP, Lord Raj Loomba and Nina Rathbone Pullen of the Poppy Project.

John Pindar

*Lakshmi (India, 104 mins, 2014, Hindi with English Subtitles, Director Nagesh Kukunoor)*



*Images from 'Tongues on Fire' - London Asian Film Festival.*

Tongues on Fire is a not-for-profit organisation with a goal of providing a platform for independent film and arts with a link to South Asia. Annually, Tongues on Fire host the popular London Asian Film Festival (LAFF) consisting of film screenings, live events and master classes to provide a platform for emerging talent and to offer networking occasions with industry leaders.

The dates for the upcoming 17th LAFF are from the 19th-29th March 2015 in a range of prestigious London venues. For details please visit their website at <http://www.tonguesonfire.com/> The theme this year is that of 'Women in Cinema' both onscreen and behind the camera.

# A Tale of Two Cities - Women Candidates in 2015 Elections. Dr Turhan Ozen

On 1 November the LibDem Friends of Turkey and Dr Turhan Ozen, LibDem parliamentary candidate for Tottenham, arranged a panel discussion in the House of Lords on Women and Democracy in Turkey and the UK. Leading Turkish-British women from Turkey and the UK took part in the discussions. Ozlem Zengin, leader of AK party's Istanbul women branch which has over 1 million members, Jane Kandur, vice president of the international affairs committee of the same organization, Elif Safak, best selling female Turkish author who has published 13 books which are translated into 40 languages and Baroness Meral Hussein Ece OBE, LibDem whip in the House of Lords.

Many interesting points were brought up, and the question and answer section was lively. Putting to one side the matters that were outside the bounds of the subject of women and democracy, I will attempt to make a summary of the similar, yet disparate situations in both countries.

Throughout the world women only got the vote about a century ago. Britain introduced universal franchise in 1928, with Turkey following in 1930. Turkey even had women in parliament at this date, and, like Britain in the 1980s, had a women prime minister in the 1990s. However, the number of women in parliament in Turkey has always been few, and until 2000 they were consistently from the upper classes, unconnected with the general population of the country. The changes in Turkey after 2000 have been profound. In 2002 there were 24 women in Parliament; today out of 549 members of parliament, 79 are women. This is still far below the desired level, one that is in keeping with the proportion of women who make up society. But it is fourfold the amount just 12 years ago. In Britain out of 650 MPs, 148 are women; the ratio is slightly better, but still from satisfactory. When examining these numbers it does not take long to realize that there are common problems, as well as common solutions to increasing women's representation in both countries.

The number of female members of AK Party in Istanbul alone is 1 million. This far outranks the membership for the Liberal Democrats. While this is a very positive aspect of democracy in Turkey, the

worry is that Turkish women are still new to the arena, and unlike British women are still unsure about their voices, and have difficulties in expressing themselves. While this is not true in Britain, for centuries politics has been an arena dominated by men, with a certain aggression and bullying attitude in debates. No matter how much this has toned down in recent years, there are other factors that limit women's participation. Debates that go into the night, evening meetings, weekend events all mean that a woman who is a mother finds it difficult to participate in political discussions; many women tend to enter the political arena later on in life, when their children are grown. This means that women all over the world are less inclined to participate in politics, and a number of measures have been introduced to encourage greater participation.

This is the crux of the matter...in particular in Turkey, where 65% of the women wear headscarves, and until this year have been excluded from the public arena; there is reluctance and a lack of practice in expressing opinions on matters of governance. What needs to be done more in Turkey is something that is being done in Britain and elsewhere with tailored training and mentoring schemes such as the Liberal Democrats' leadership program; women need to be encouraged to improve their debating and media skills. Such confidence building exercises will help them glide more easily into the public space, and speak up not only for women, but for the entire population. However in the UK, the problem may be laying in institutional barriers which require corrective action to be taken. Eight countries in Europe have adopted gender quotas which have improved representation significantly. In Scandinavian countries where quotas have been enforced since 1970s, women constitute %40 of the parliaments. It may be inevitable to take similar actions in future elections if leadership programmes alone do not deliver a better reflection of the population.

*Report of meeting of the Liberal Democrat Friends of Turkey held in Committee Room 4, House of Lords Monday, 3rd November 2014*





# The Kurds, Islam & ISIS

## Dr Turhan Ozen

I was a candidate in European elections in May. I am LibDem parliamentary candidate for Tottenham in general election next year. In fact, the only candidate from the Turkish speaking community across all parties.

I was born to a Kurdish family. Except for a couple of years in Germany I lived half of my life in Turkey then I migrated to the UK. I define myself as Liberal first then British, Muslim, Kurdish, Turkish equally and European. Every dimensions of our identity connects us with other people in a different way and we inherit the civilisation experiences through these connections.

Let me share my personal experience to explore some aspects of complex problems we are discussing today. What it is like to belong to an identity used to define a crime.

I am Kurdish. In Turkey terrorism perpetrated by some Kurds and reaction this receives it makes life very hard for most Kurds. Being Kurdish is a fact that cannot be altered after I was born. Resorting to terror is a choice. Belonging to Kurdish identity does not make you terrorist automatically.

Life is cruel. Everybody including people that we envy go through a lot of trouble. Robin Williams, Amy Winehouse are just two people that come to my mind whose tragic ends shocked and saddened the world. It is at times like this I believe we lose our young people to crimes such as terror.

I am grateful that I personally had a very happy life. However, while growing up, there were times that I felt hopeless, trapped and treated unfairly. Everybody goes through such times in their life and they think it is just them. I used to think it was just me too and due to my ethnicity.

Looking back now, I believe I coped with my troubles with the love I received from my family and the community around me. It is human to feel jealous, greedy, angry, vengeful..., as long as love is abundant, it will dilute these destructive emotions, heal wounds and fortify peace.

For over 30 years Turkey has been fighting with terrorism which has taken over 40000 lives. Almost

every village in the country has lost a young man to this fight. Investment in Kurdish majority areas is little due to lack of security which creates conditions that help find support and recruit militants.

However, majority of the Kurds do not support terrorism perpetrated by PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) a Marxist terror organisation which was originally based in and supported by Syria, and since 1998 it has moved its base to Northern Iraq.

There are up to 20 million Kurds in Turkey which is about quarter of the population. PKK has around 6000 militants which makes less than 0.03% of the Kurdish population. But still it is 6000 too many. Everyone of them has their own story and pathology. Financial inequality, social exclusion, lack of education or maybe some other tragic experience alienates them from the society and they fall into the hands or the terror organisation at a young and naive age. Once you are part of crime, it is impossible to abandon. It works like ruthless drug cartels.

In general elections, despite the intimidation and nationalist rhetoric of PKK, two thirds of the Kurds do not vote for its political wing.

Kurds do not have a uniform identity. They are divided due to variation in language, culture and religion. Most Kurds fear if PKK happens to establish an independent state, the painful memories of nation building after the first world war will be repeated. PKK's Marxist ideology will end up creating a Ba'as regime similar to Syria and Iraq. The differences among Kurds will be brutally crushed.

Nevertheless, the community relations in Turkey are poisoned with the presence of terror. Kurdish community as a whole suffers from fear, hate and questioned loyalty. Majority of media, politicians and security services fuel this atmosphere. General public does not understand that majority of the Kurds just want to get on with their lives. Hence the peaceful majority is forced into silence and expression of Kurdish identity is left to PKK alone. This creates a vicious circle that traps the silent majority between terror from PKK and a form of racism.

In the last 10 years there has been significant improvement. The current government has adopted a

very different approach and has been successful in establishing peace and mend community relations. This significant shift in the positive direction has a very simple explanation. Previous governments did not have a strong support from the public. They relied on military and other state institutions to reign over the country. The current government has received its mandate from the public including a strong support from the Kurdish population. This has resulted in 75 Kurdish MPs which is twice more than the PKK aligned Kurdish party. These pro-peace Kurdish MPs have been able to influence the government to develop policies that is improving the conditions for the peaceful Kurdish population majority. For the first time in Turkey's history state has taken constructive steps to solve this problem.

Giving a platform to all sections of the society where they can resolve their problems within democracy is the most effective solution in tackling terrorism. People are suffering in the hands of the brutal ruling classes in the Middle East. This is a bleeding wound that feeds terrorism. It is unfortunate that democratisation through Arab Spring was allowed to be brought to a premature end by the military cue in Egypt.

Another important point that I would like to reiterate is that we need to separate crime from the identity of the criminal. Starting from the media, in all the mediums where a crime is discussed, or reported, we need to prevent innocent people from being stigmatised by crimes done by few who share their identity. We should never use words that identify a community in referring to a crime. Kurd/Kurdish should never be used when talking about PKK terror or Muslim/Islam should never be used when referring to ISIS.

PKK and all other terror organisations have one common feature. They do not tolerate dissent. They do not just terrorise their target but also the people they are claim to be fighting for. They want to make life unbearable so that the community is pushed into their hands more. Nobody dare to speak against them. Wider public and institutions should not comply with this ploy.

### **CONDEMN ISIS**

Coming to ISIS, at the expense of stating the obvious, I want to say that I condemn their crimes. Categorically, without a shred of hesitation or doubt. They are a group of serial killers. There is nothing Islamic in their crimes. It is not possible to look at this flock of serial killers and derive conclusions about 1400 years of Muslim culture, history and wisdom.

Nothing can justify crime and they should be brought to justice. I say this as an Muslim, on behalf of the 2.8

million Muslims living in the UK, 1.6 billion Muslims of the World.

10000 ISIS militants is a minute minority. Yet it is 10000 too many. We need to rescue the Muslim population in Syria and Iraq trapped between terror of ISIS and brutal regimes that do not have a mandate from the people.

3000 of these militants are foreign fighters some have joined from UK. We should not allow our young people to be alienated from the society and fall into the hands of these crime networks. What makes people to foray schools and shoot their classmates, what makes young man join drug cartels in Mexico to receive military training, specialise in torture are common problems.

Society is like human body. No matter how small a problem in any part of the body, it disturbs the body as a whole. We can not turn a blind eye to such problems even if it seems far from us.

However, just like the human body, it is inevitable that society can catch illnesses. The medicine that we use should not harm the whole body while we try to kill the germs in one limb. We need to resort to rehabilitation first for those who have gone astray.

Isis and others who resort to terror have brought shame to Islam's name. Muslims denounce their path. Just like Kurds, Muslims just want to get on with their lives in peace and would do anything they can to end bloodshed.

### **PSYCHOLOGY of ISIS FOREIGN FIGHTERS**

Most people who have joined ISIS from different parts of the world are 2nd or 3rd generation immigrants who have been alienated from the society. They like warfare and get excited by military life. In fact, they could have joined US or another army but ended up in ISIS. ISIS is using social media effectively. They have websites in 11 languages, broadcast in 4 different languages on YouTube. Traditional media is helping them propagate their messages too. These young people perceive ISIS differently. Some of them are not even Muslim. They think they are fighting for a cause. We have seen similar cases even in European history.

In analysing the psychology of ISIS militants, religious motives are not necessarily as important as assumed. From studies done on culprits of previous terror attacks, we learn that they are not even practicing or religious. Their knowledge on religion is limited. In fact, a strong religious identity and good knowledge of religion protects people from violent radicalisation.



Two militants that joined ISIS from UK had bought books titled “Islam for Idiots” and “Quran for Idiots” before they set off. Halid Seyh Muhammad, one of the planners of the 9/11, and Remzi Yusuf, World Trade Center bomber in 1993, had active night life. The terrorists who carried out the 9/11 attacks had been to strip clubs before the attacks. Just because they use Islamic slogans, does not mean that Islam or devoutness is the source of their violence.

Not all Muslims are Islamist, not all Islamists are jihadist and not all jihadists are religious.

### **EDUCATION ARTS and CULTURE**

Unfortunately, the film and games industry glorifies these crimes which has resulted in many vulnerable people to be drawn into criminal activities. Tackling crime and the conditions that breed crime is the duty of legislators and security services. However, eradicating it is only possible through education and arts and culture. The lessons that a civilisation learns through painful experiences can only be passed on to new generations through education and art. Faltering in fulfilling this function can lead to loss of this inheritance and repetition of same mistakes. Film critics can encourage filmmakers think about the social impact of their work. There is a lot that can be done in literature and theatre too. Nothing can help us understand the terrorist and evils of terrorism better than a good book or a film. We will tackle this disease if we understand it better.

### **TWISTING SCRIPTURE**

Let me share with you a popular anecdote among Muslims. Hoja asks a Muslim why he doesn't do the five times daily prayers. The man says Quran asks us not to pray. Puzzled Hoja asks him to show where he read it. After reading, Hoja is surprised to see what man says is actually true. However, when he reads it again he realises that he has skipped half of the verse which reads as “do not perform the prayer under the influence of alcohol.” If we do not read the Quran, actually any text, in the context it was written and in totality, where we arrive with our interpretations may be in complete contrast with the teachings of the Quran.

Firstly, interpretations should not contradict the main theme of the text. For example a constitution is written to establish justice. Laws that cause injustice cannot comply with it. Secondly, we need to read everything in context. For example, Quran preaches tolerance, forcing people into accepting Islam is not allowed. However, there are verses about punishing people who desert the religion. This is a contradiction if you strip it out of context. The punishment is ordered in the context of switching sides during war.

### **TACKLING ROOT CAUSES**

What we witness in the form of ISIS is not a unique phenomenon peculiar in time, location, people or culture. The film industry has documented many examples of it. If there is one lesson that we can drive from past experiences is that when law and order prevails, conditions that breed them disappear and they cease to exist.

Internet is still an strange phenomenon, we do not know how to tackle the criminals abusing the technology. They are able to spread their propaganda. They distort religion and ideology and divide our communities through planting seeds of hate and instilling fear.

Let me share a quote from Rumi (13th century Persian poet) to explain why the liberal streak is the most important pillar of my identity.

“Come, come, whoever you are. Wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving. It doesn't matter. Ours is not a caravan of despair. Come, even if you have broken your vows a thousand times. Come, yet again, come.”

Belonging to minority groups all my life, I know, in order to have a happy society, the absolute necessity of welcoming and accepting everybody with their flows without prejudice. Rumi explains this fundamental teaching of Islam concisely in his poetry. Therefore, his teachings resonate deeply among Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

*Dr Turhan Ozen*

*Notes from a talk to Carshalton Liberal Democrats with Tom Brake on Saturday 2nd November 2014.*

### **Ronnie Fraser Award**

Liberal International in Scotland is launching a bursary award with money from a legacy by the late Ronnie Fraser, a longstanding Liberal activist who founded the LI branch north of the border.

Willis Pickard, chair of LI in Scotland, said: “Up to £500 will be available annually to a young person aged not more than 30 and normally resident in Scotland who professes and demonstrates Liberal and internationalist principles and who wishes to engage in a project with an international dimension. The money could be used, for example, to help offset travel or research costs.”

Applications for the first award should be made in writing to Willis Pickard, 13 Lockharton Gardens, Edinburgh EH14 1AU (email: [willis.pickard@btinternet.com](mailto:willis.pickard@btinternet.com)) by January 31 2015.

## WHEN ASYLUM SEEKERS COME TO TOWN

158 asylum seekers were suddenly sent to stay in two Bournemouth hotels in late September. This produced a variety of reactions.

The Home Office said they were sent to stay for a fortnight because of overcrowding at an hotel in Croydon. Local Conservative MP Conor Burns said Bournemouth was the “wrong place” for the refugees to stay because it could damage the town’s tourism economy. “We rely heavily on visitors coming to Bournemouth. Here we have....two hotels full of people who are not holiday makers and not coming to spend money in the town.” The two hotels are owned by a company not belonging to the main local hoteliers’ association which expressed similar reservations.

Some media reports said the refugees were having a holiday on the “sunshine coast” The Bournemouth Daily Echo carried factual reports including one that a group arriving by coach from Wigan at one of the hotels were displeased to see asylum seekers outside the building.

Red Cross refugee services coordinator Mark Cross wrote an article on the Red Cross website which was reproduced by the Echo. He said that after the arrival of the group “it took four days before anyone, including the local authority and the Red Cross found out....We were called in” when two asylum seekers presented themselves at A&E. One woman went without food as her dietary needs as a Muslim were not catered for. The Red Cross then provided basic materials and access to medical services. Local people made donations of clothes for the women.

Some of the refugees were upset when the English Defence League held a demonstration outside their hotel. An Afghan child asked his father “Is it the Taliban?”

Before arriving in Bournemouth some of the refugees suffered terrible journeys to Britain and once there suffered last minute accommodation moves.

Prior to the refugees arrival and unconnected with it trade unions organised a protest march attended by religious leaders in response to an English Democrat League march against immigration.

### **Lawrence Fullick**

*Lawrence Fullick is a past Chair of Bournemouth Liberal Democrats and the Liberal Democrat European Group and current Treasurer of Federal Union and the Wyndham Place Charlemagne Trust.*

## REJECT GAMBIA’S ANTI-GAY LAW

Chair of Liberal International’s Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) Rights Working Group, Frank Van Dalen, has condemned the Gambian government’s homophobic legislation, signed into law by President Yahya Jammeh, as “inconsistent with fundamental freedoms and human rights.” The bill penalizes anyone found guilty of “aggravated homosexuality” with a life-time prison sentence.

Explaining the new law, Frank said: “This bill is inconsistent with fundamental freedoms and human rights. Gambia’s President Jammah should learn from his continental counterparts who have clearly rejected the notion that being gay is somehow un-African. In the same week that Botswana’s High Court ruled that freedom of association, assembly, and expression cannot be restricted to a selected group of people-affirming the rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender and Inter-sex (LGBTI) people - President Jammah has dragged his country in the opposite direction, opting to codify discriminatory policies in blatant violation of Gambia’s international obligations under the Universal Declaration for Human Rights, and the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights.”

“The international community has a responsibility to hold to account all those who cherry-pick human rights. We need to remind President Jammah that striving towards a truly democratic society comes with clear responsibilities of respecting the fundamental rights of all groups in society including sexual minorities. As liberals and political leaders in the struggle for equality, non-discrimination and non-criminalization of LGBTIs around the world we share this responsibility. As a Chair of LI’s LGBTI Rights Working Group I will continue to extend support to LGBTI Communities on the ground and work towards the strengthening of the anti-discriminatory legal framework across Africa.”

To find out more about the LGBTI Rights Working Group activities please follow like the group's page on Facebook -

<https://www.facebook.com/LGBTLiberalInternational?ref=hl>

Gambia is currently outside of the Commonwealth since 2013, and President Jammah’s homophobia seems to be central to his withdrawal. However, our colleagues in Gambia hope that the situation will normalize as soon as possible. At the centre of the Ebola crisis, Gambia needs all the friends it can get.



# VISIT TO KOSOVO

11<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2014

Peter Price

A group of 15 former MEPs, drawn from Germany, France, UK, Netherlands and Finland, visited Kosovo to meet political leaders, top civil servants, senior officials of the various international organisations, and civil society representatives. We also crossed the dividing line in Mitrovica and visited the frontier with Serbia. On the first and last days, we saw the historical sites and learned about Kosovo's history.

**Overview:** Kosovo's status as an independent state is still not recognised by five EU member states or by Serbia. However, two other problems have a far greater impact on the daily lives of its people:

- (a) widespread corruption in government and in the poorly functioning legal system;
- (b) unemployment of around 40%, with young people especially affected.

Those two problems are closely linked, since the rule of law and relative freedom from corruption are crucial to investment.

**EU role:** International organisations (UN, NATO and EU) abound, fulfilling peacekeeping, advisory and even some executive roles. While some are reducing their scope and numbers, the EU plays a central role and aspirations towards the EU – visa free travel and then membership – are what hold this nation together. It illustrated how UK's role in Europe would become meaningless without EU membership.

The Head of the EU Representation, a highly competent Slovene former Foreign Minister, has huge influence in Kosovo. But the EU has limited means of curbing the corruption and making the legal system function so as to generate confidence in the rule of law. It quickly became clear that the government's annual work programme is almost entirely written by the European Commission (and largely in its Kosovo office), in the form of the Commission's annual 'progress report'.

The snags are that, while new laws are passed as required, implementation fails at several stages. Detailed subordinate legislation – required at state or local level – is often missing, enforcement is weak because of corruption and lack of capacity, and it is left to the EU to point to the next layer of failings in the following annual 'progress report'. Progress is made but all too slowly.

**US role:** The role of NATO - and especially of US and UK - in 1999, in intervening to protect the majority of Kosovo's population from Serbian aggression, is hugely appreciated. There are not many capital cities which have roads named after Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, but you can find them in Pristina! The US, especially through its ambassadors, has played an influential role alongside the EU but, since 2011, it has increasingly left matters more to the EU.

The US ambassador who left in 2011 encouraged the Kosovo government to build a motorway to the Albanian border (leading towards Tirana). In so doing, he took the transport minister to the US to meet political leaders and be impressed. That ambassador then retired and joined the Board of the giant US road building company contracted to build Kosovo's motorway. Locally, some say that even the US may be tainted by corruption! We used the motorway and observed very low traffic volumes. Now a motorway to Skopje is being built – again at a cost disproportionate to Kosovo's needs or resources.

**Ethnicity and demography:** About 90% of Kosovo's current population (estimated at 1.8 million) regard themselves as Albanian and speak the Albanian language, while only 5% are Serbs. Of the former Yugoslavia, only Slovenia and Kosovo had a language not of the Serbo-Croat linguistic family. As well as Serbs, minorities include Roma, Turkish and other groups. In the 120 seat Parliament, 10 seats are reserved for Serbs and another 10 split between the other ethnicities.

Family size tends to be large – 4 or 5 children being typical. This means an ideal demographic pyramid as compared with the UK and its aging population but the lack of jobs means a large and growing social problem. That, in turn, leads to emigration. As a result, despite a high birth rate, Kosovo's population has slightly declined in the past decade since the last bout of conflict.

**Migration:** The main destinations are Germany and German speaking Switzerland. Amazingly, there are about 400,000 Kosovans living in Switzerland. Swiss successes in Football's World Cup were attributed to literally half its team being Kosovans! France and Portugal were also mentioned as having some smaller

Kosovan communities, with only a few in the UK. As well as well-established legal migrants, there is a flourishing entry route used by traffickers via Serbia and Hungary.

The crucial factor about this diaspora is that the émigrés maintain close links with the homeland to which many plan to return. Many, perhaps even most, Kosovan families are kept afloat by remittances from relatives living elsewhere in Europe. New apartment blocks in Pristina owe their construction to such émigrés acquiring a local base. Even more striking are the vast number of imposing but incomplete houses seen in villages. Land and labour are cheap, so the émigrés put down a proud marker of their intention to return but do not go to the expense of actually plastering walls, installing windows and finishing the properties!



*The Prizren League*

**History:** From the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Slav people gradually moved into Kosovo and by the early Middle Ages were dominant. Around the 13<sup>th</sup> century, it was a Serbian stronghold, with an Albanian minority. However, under the Ottoman Empire, from 1455 to 1912, Albanians returned and gradually became the majority population.

In 1878, a meeting in Prizren (Kosovo) committed leaders of Albanian speaking (Ottoman) provinces to greater unity, initially accepting that it would be within the Ottoman Empire. It led to increasing assertion of Albanian identity and finally to victory over the Turks in 1912. However, international agreement assigned Kosovo to Serbia and then it became part of Yugoslavia. Following the war in 1999, Kosovo became effectively independent and that was recognised by most countries in 2008.

Today, the group of buildings where the Prizren League declaration was made remain and are used as a museum to commemorate the event. School parties visit, so keeping the memory alive. Greater Albania remains the dream of many Kosovans but most recognise that it would provoke further conflict and do not seek early fulfilment of the dream.

**Fundamentalism:** Almost all (Albanian-speaking) Kosovans are Muslims. However, it has a long history – especially as part of Yugoslavia – of secular government. Despite affirming adherence to that religion, about half the population rarely attend a mosque and many of those who do so are not strict in their observance. The main branch of Islam practised is Sufi and some say it is more tolerant. However, things may be changing.

A few days before we arrived, 30 arrests were made, including the Imam of a major mosque in central Pristina, for having urged young men to fight for IS in Syria. Those arrests came as a shock to most Kosovans. However, EU officials told us they had noticed increasing numbers of women wearing headscarves and some even full hijab. Around Pristina, they are a small minority but the trend is clear. We may wonder how far Western intervention in Iraq and elsewhere has produced this assertiveness.

Another factor may be proselytisation from the Middle East, perhaps Saudi or Gulf States. It was commonly alleged that women were being paid significant sums to wear the headscarf. If so, it is possible that

such money is also being used to further more extremist objectives.

**Current political situation:** Elections on 8 June have produced a constitutional deadlock. Two parties ruled in coalition (PDK and AKR), with token ethnic minority participation. However, the AKR failed to achieve the 5% threshold for parliamentary representation. So, although PDK increased its seats to 37 and topped the poll, thus claiming to have won the election, it could not form a majority government. A coalition was speedily assembled by three opposition parties (LDK - 30 seats, AAK – 11 seats and Civic Initiative – 6 seats) with support from a fourth (VV - 16 seats), together holding 63 seats. But the PDK clung to office, claiming the right to determine the next Speaker, since the constitution allows the ‘winning party’ to ‘nominate’ to that role. The oldest member (PDK) upheld that interpretation and will not allow a vote until other parties agree to



accept a PDK nominee. They do not trust a PDK Speaker to be independent and will not agree, so Parliament is not meeting.

The question has gone to the Constitutional Court, which gave a ruling leaving the Parliament no further forward. The PDK has the right to 'nominate' but what happens if Parliament votes against their nominee? On that, the Supreme Court was silent and the (non-partisan) President has no appetite for a further reference – which is a matter for her discretion. We pressed PDK and other political leaders for a solution – at least a compromise – but left with none in sight.

If no agreement can be reached, fresh elections may be held. But there are fears that the well-conducted June elections will not be repeated and problems from ballot-rigging to violence may ensue.

**Political spectrum:** PDK used to declare itself as left of centre but adopted 'centre-right' as its political self-description about 3-4 years ago. The LDK joined the EPP in 2012 and all the main parties seem to regard themselves as centre-right, with the possible exception of Vetevendosje (VV), which has sought some advice from German SPD Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

VV party stands apart, with distinctive good and bad features. Its title and aim is self determination, meaning the opportunity for Kosovo to become part of Albania. It is hard line in its attitude to Serbia and considers that country has been allowed to escape its responsibilities for compensating those who suffered loss in the 1999 war. However, it has many able young graduates who have been educated abroad and it seems to be the party most determined to root out corruption. In their role in the new coalition, its leaders told us they would not expect 'self-determination' in the short-term and were more concerned with corruption and effective governance.

**Economy and environment:** Kosovo was the poorest province of the former Yugoslavia. However, it has substantial reserves of lead, zinc, silver, nickel, cobalt, copper, iron and bauxite, as well as around 14 billion tonnes of lignite – fifth largest reserves in the world. It generates 97% of its electricity from such coal and wishes to do so in the long-term future.

The original plan to replace the most ancient and polluting of its two coal-fired power stations with one more than three times the capacity (to enable exports through power lines) has been scaled back, first to just

less than double and now to little more than like for like replacement and, even that, built in two equal phases.

Several years have passed in this process. A recent fire has halved output from the oldest station, leaving doubts about energy supply this winter, when Albania



*At the border - Kosovan (left) and Serbian (right) customs officials meet the delegation.*

no longer has spare capacity. The West European construction companies who expressed interest have given up and left the bidding to four companies – from Turkey or other points east of Kosovo. That sad story of public procurement is typical of the planning of capital projects.

To add to Kosovo's other major problems, it has high levels of pollution, including lead, in its rivers and elsewhere. Poor construction standards, failures of rubbish collection, and general lack of rules or enforcement all contribute to the pollution. Meeting EU environmental standards will be a huge challenge for many years.

**Relations with Serbia:** The only strong motivation for Serbia to work cooperatively with Kosovo is Serbia's ambition to join the EU. It has led to slow but steady progress over the last 10 years, since the last major incident of inter-ethnic violence. On that occasion, Kosovan media reported the deaths of three young boys allegedly chased into a river, where they drowned, by Serbian men with dogs. It led to mobs burning symbols of Serbia, such as an ancient monastery, and the flight of many ethnic Serbs. Gradually, registers of births and of land ownership are being transferred back to Kosovo, having been taken to Serbia in or before 1999. Some small payments of compensation have been paid by Serbia to Kosovans whose property was taken or destroyed. A

joint border/crossing post was established a few months ago, to replace a controversial Kosovan ‘frontier’ post which had been subject to arson attacks. After our visit to the new joint post, we were told that it was the first occasion when the officials had actually met such a party jointly. On similar occasions, they had always stood a few meters apart!

Such small steps of progress have advanced a considerable distance but tensions remain – and so do grievances on both sides. While we were there, Putin



***EULEX customs officials.***

visited Belgrade and seemed to be wooing the Serbs (potentially away from their EU affiliations). However, Russia has just decided to reduce gas supplies to Serbia, reportedly because Putin was ‘unhappy’ with the outcome of his visit to Belgrade.

**Latest news:** In the past few days, the Kosovan daily newspaper Koha ditore has been publishing reports accusing several senior EULEX officials of having taken bribes to protect some Kosovo politicians and associated individuals from prosecution for corruption or even murder. It now appears that the EU has been investigating such allegations for several months but has not yet reached any conclusion.

When Koha ditore started publishing the reports, EULEX suspended British prosecutor Maria Barnieh on suspicion of leaking secret information to media and threatened to criminally prosecute the daily’s

journalists. Barnieh has announced that she is ready to publicise a series of documents that would expose corruption within EULEX in a WikiLeaks-type revelation unless she is returned to work.

These events will seriously damage the EU’s key institution which has its own investigators, prosecutors and judges specifically to counter corruption in the equivalent Kosovo institutions.

**Future:** There are two main sources of hope. The first is Kosovo’s young people. A high proportion of them attend university. We met two groups of students for Q & A sessions. They aspire to end corruption and build a better country. However, they are impatient with the EU – the long period of waiting even for visa-free access and thereafter membership. The second is the opposition coalition formed to take over government. Their nominee for PM and the participation of VV offer real hope of better governance – but they have an uphill task in difficult economic conditions.

***Peter Price***

3rd November 2014

peterprice@btinternet.com

Peter aside, the visiting group included several continental Liberals: Jean-Marie Beaupuy (*Union pour la Démocratie Française*), Jan-Willem Bertens (D66), Henrik Lax (*Svenska folkpartiet i Finland*) and Bob van den Bos (D66). All are former MEPs and the trip was organised by the Former Members [MEPs] Association. Peter Price was MEP for Lancashire West (1979-84) & London South East (1984-94.)

**Update:** The political deadlock was broken on 20th November, when the opposition coalition fell apart. The LDK agreed to enter government with PDK. The EULEX allegations have been the subject of much controversy but remain unresolved.



***Photos of missing persons (alleged held or killed by Serbs).***



## ALDE Congress in Lisbon - Reclaiming Liberalism

The fact that we were meeting in Lisbon was significant in itself as the European Parliament had ALDE representatives from Portugal for the first time since the party of Manuel Barroso jumped ship to the EPP some 20 years ago. The success of the Earth Party gave them the chance to host an enjoyable and successful Congress in agreeable surroundings.

Two new Vice Presidents were elected in Lisbon, Angelika Mlina of NEOS, our new sister party from Austria and Hans van Baalen, former President of LI. The unsuccessful candidate Tim Dooley from Fianna Fáil made an impressive presentation to our group and received strong support, so we wish him well if he tries again next year.

Policy resolutions focused on climate change and the bio economy, the digital economy and human rights. There was an interesting resolution calling for equal rights of men and women for parental leave, along similar lines to the new UK move to allow the leave to be shared between both parents.

The working group dealing with International Relations started with ten resolutions but ended with just one. Most of the offerings were on Russia and Ukraine, so it made sense to amalgamate. The Bureau had done a good job in drafting the compromise so we overwhelmingly voted to replace all of the rest. The Congress took a tough line on Russia and rejected all of the amendments which might have softened the tone. As usual there were numerous amendments calling for a single European Defence Force, but whereas in previous years the Congress had split 50/50 on this idea, this year any such notions were soundly defeated. The reality of conflict in



Europe has crystallised the realisation that EU structures are not designed for the speed of decision required in conflict situations. With a real fear of Russian intervention in some states, there was a clear support for NATO and Member States looking after defence matters.

There were some good speeches, notably by Graham Watson on the main theme of Reclaiming Liberalism, and Guy Verhofstadt who was concerned about the need to give the European economy a boost. It has been a difficult few years for Liberals as Populists have made ground across Europe. It was noted that many liberal ideas are actually popular with the public and we need to do more to take ownership of them.

*Phil Bennion*

## International Abstracts

Paul Krugman: In Defense of Obama. Rolling Stone 8th October 2010.

*Krugman has been a critic of Obama, but presents a very well balanced assessment of the President's career.*

<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/in-defense-of-obama-20141008>

The Democratic Panic - Alison Lundergan Grimes, Kay Hagan and Other Candidates Avoid Obama. (Editorial Opinion) New York Times 21<sup>st</sup> October 2014

*The NYT's Opinion Pages picks up on Democrat Senatorial candidates distancing themselves from Obama – they should have read Krugman above... but on the homefront, are Liberal Democrats shouting their achievements in the Coalition loudly enough?*

[http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/22/opinion/alison-lundergan-grimes-kay-hagan-and-other-candidates-avoid-obama.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&module=c-column-top-span-region@ion=c-column-top-span-region&WT.nav=c-column-top-span-region&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/22/opinion/alison-lundergan-grimes-kay-hagan-and-other-candidates-avoid-obama.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&module=c-column-top-span-region@ion=c-column-top-span-region&WT.nav=c-column-top-span-region&_r=0)

Simon Hebditch: To Fight or Not? Liberator 368 How the Iraq war has complicated how & when intervention should take place under the Responsibility to Protect (R2P).



## ALN General Assembly

*The Africa Liberal Network is already more effective than the Arab Alliance for Democracy, CALD and Relial. We are now playing catch up with ALDE* said Iain Gill, Liberal Democrats International Officer and Director Westminster Foundation for Democracy sister party programmes.

The Africa Liberal Network, whose secretariat is based in Cape Town but as part of the LibDems International Office and funded by WFD, held its 11th Annual General Assembly in Marrakech from 26-29 November.

Over 100 delegates attended, as well as LI President Juli Minoves Triquell, LI Treasurer and LIBG Vice President Robert Woodthorpe Browne, members of LI Secretariat William Townsend and Human Rights Officer Tamara Dancheva. Jonathan Moakes of the South African Democratic Alliance Party played a major role together with WFD Governor Sir Andrew Stunell MP. They introduced the idea of MP surgeries to member parties.

The chief organisers were Iain Gill and the equally efficient Aimee Franklin, who runs the Secretariat.

Plenty of break out and training sessions. The Assembly adopted an updated Constitution, passed resolutions on the woes of anti-democratic activities in too many African countries, and, of huge importance, agreed a human rights framework for adoption by all African Liberal Parties who will be closely monitored by their regional Vice Presidents, elected in a session chaired by myself. President Olivier Kamitatu (DRC) was re-elected unopposed, as was Treasurer Bryan Julie (Seychelles). Others were - East Africa: Rosemary Kariuki-Machua from ODM Kenya; North Africa: Hakima El Haite (Moroccan Environment Minister); West Africa: William Tucker from PMDC Sierra Leone; Central Africa: Medard Mulangala Lwakabwanga from UMR of DRC; and South Africa: Stevens Mokgalapa of the DA of RSA.

Several new parties presented their case for membership, and the Network now totals 36 member parties and 9 observer parties.

A joint meeting was held with the Arab Alliance for Democracy and plans were agreed for a much closer working relationship between both sister organisations.

Juli Minoves made a moving speech, well received by the delegates, delighted to be taken so seriously by a man who in the last month has attended CALD

(Hong Kong), Relial (Panama) and ALDE (Lisbon), interspersed with lecturing duties in Los Angeles!

As an interested observer, I was struck by the truly fraternal feeling of delegates from all over the Continent. The ALN is a force for good in Africa.

**Robert Woodthorpe Browne**

## CONGRESS ADVISORY COUNCIL: OPEN CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Liberal International has opened a new call for nominations to the Congress Advisory Council (CAC) ahead of the 60th LI Congress, which is due to take place in Latin America in the autumn of 2015. The CAC offers representatives from LI member parties the chance to shape the outcome of LI's biggest statutory event by discussing and implementing new ways for LI to better engage the needs of our global membership.

Through the Congress Advisory Council, Liberal International seeks to build on the positive experience of the first CAC, set up ahead of the 59th Congress in Rotterdam. Using a series of teleconferences, member parties can put forward fresh initiatives and become more involved in the build up to a seminal event in the calendar of the longest standing global federation of political parties.

The CAC aims to strengthen existing involvement and explore new ways to enrich LI Congresses for liberals worldwide.

The call for nominations is open to International Officers, who must submit a CV and nomination letter signed by the president, secretary general, or recognised officer of the party, until 10th December 2014. After this date, the LI Bureau will announce the final make-up of the Council.

Please address all applications to Secretary General, Emil Kirjas, and submit to: [office@liberal-international.org](mailto:office@liberal-international.org)

# A BRITISH PERSPECTIVE ON DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPEAN DEFENCE SIR NICK HARVEY MP

It is a great honour and pleasure to address this august gathering today, and to offer a British perspective on developments in European Defence. I do so at a febrile moment in British politics, with our election just five months away, with our electorate more volatile than ever before, and with the outcome more difficult to read than any election for many decades.

But what I can say with absolute certainty is that whatever colour or stripe of government emerges next May, it will have to continue to grapple painfully with our unsustainably large deficit in public finances. And as part of that challenge, it will have to conduct a Strategic Defence and Security Review next summer – as all our political parties have committed to follow the practice agreed in 2010.

The idea of committing incoming governments to post-election Reviews is to encourage parties to use the pre-election period to educate the British public about our underlying national interests, and about the values that British foreign policy should seek to protect and promote.

So far that hope has failed. The popular debate on Britain's place in the world, our friends, partners and enemies, has hardly moved forward in the 25 years since the end of the cold war, although the global economy, and the threats to regional and global order, have been transformed.

Promotion of our national values has become subordinated to the absurd defence of UK sovereignty against embarrassing rulings from international courts. Populist nationalism and the right-wing media still promote a nostalgic myth of Anglo-Saxon identity, threatened by a hostile continent.

Foolish promises of an early referendum on UK membership of the EU have pushed out wider and longer-term issues. The promise of a referendum is no substitute for a foreign policy.

## ***Threats and opportunities***

The most striking aspect of our 2010 Defence Review was the emphasis it placed on non-military threats:

global epidemics, cyber warfare, terrorism, natural disasters, organised crime, the spill over from failing states, and civil conflict in terms of surges of refugees and the rise of radical movements.

Five years later, these threats are far more evident. There are NO direct military threats to the UK. But indirect threats, shared with our neighbours and other open societies, continue to proliferate. Most of us would add – as the European Security Strategy does – climate change and energy security to the list of long-term threats facing Britain, its allies and neighbours. So, protecting our security now demands resources far wider than those traditionally assigned to defence: police and intelligence capabilities, energy conservation, biomedical research, capacity to assist in international emergencies, conflict prevention, state-building, and supporting social and economic development in other states.

Above all, it requires cooperation with other states: those who share our values and our commitment to an open and peaceful international order. We do not face international challenges alone; so it makes no sense for anyone to talk as if we can meet them on our own. Security and prosperity go together. The global shift of economic and financial power means that the UK is now building economic links with the Gulf States, with India and with China.

But it's important to place this shift in context. We have doubled our exports to China over the past 5 years; they now amount to almost 3% of the total, our 10th largest market. India has risen to be our 15th largest market, with 2% of the total, just ahead of Canada and Australia. Our most important foreign market, the world's largest single market, remains the European Union, taking around half of our exports in 2013.

## ***Partnership or parochialism: what is Britain's place in the world?***

The choices the next British government will face about defence policy are as much about the UK's sense of its place in the world – and our appetite for fulfilling our international responsibilities – as they are about the threats we face.

UK armed forces have suffered severe cuts over the last decade. But it is not clear that the expectations of our public, media – or indeed politicians – have kept pace. The public will expect and sometimes demand that the armed forces intervene overseas if British citizens overseas (of whom there are 5.5 million) are at risk.

A scenario could all too realistically occur where a government feels it must send UK forces into action, even when available forces are not adequate to the task.

In short, UK ambition significantly outstrips the resources being made available; or put another way, the UK's sense of its place in the world may need to be scaled back to reflect more realistically the resources at our disposal.

### *Working with allies*

So we have to work with partners who share our interests and values. That requires a broader rethinking of the UK's international place in the world, as the starting point for shaping and scaling our future defence.

Of course NATO remains a key military partnership for as far into the future as I can see, but equally we must take heed of America's "rebalancing" of effort towards its Pacific seaboard and away from the Atlantic. The countries of Europe simply cannot depend on the US to guarantee our collective security in the next 50 years to the same extent as we have for the last 50 years. Europe must do more, and the data prepared for this conference by our French colleagues shows only too clearly that the European effort by comparison to the Americans' is pathetic.

Progress will come about predominantly through bilateral and multilateral working and not through the EU, which necessarily proceeds at the speed of the slowest, and can only resolve a common defence policy when pursuing a common foreign policy – and that requires unanimity. When unanimity is achieved, the EU has proved its mettle – as in Bosnia, North Africa, Somalia and the counter-piracy work off the Somali coast. We should be proud of what has been achieved under the EU flag.

My impression is that industry is well ahead of governments in rising to the challenge of European defence co-operation, though I applaud our developing partnership with the French forces. I am sure I am not alone in lamenting the failure of the Airbus-BAE merger, which I strongly believe could

have been a great success and have built a huge and credible European player in the global market. European tax payers need to see far greater value for money; and closer co-operation in defence research & development, in procurement, and in common specifications can achieve that without unacceptable loss of national sovereignty or independence.

Another of the papers to this conference observes that across Europe and its shrinking defence budgets we have 25 types of frigate while the US Navy has only 3; 13 different types of guns for naval artillery; 9 types of submarines, built in 8 different dockyards. We must be ambitious but we must also be realistic. As that paper said, as a global common our oceans are – and will continue to be – the bedrock of the politico-economic system. So maritime co-operation is a no-brainer. But in the air too, we saw in Libya how dependent we were on the US for surveillance and for air-to-air refuelling. So co-operation in the air is also crucial. I echo the calls for a European fleet of tankers but also a possible European Command for Maritime Patrol Aircraft. We heard earlier about joint work in ground-based air defences and in missile defence. We patrol Europe's civilian airspace together, so why not its military airspace?

### *Practical considerations*

Where unanimity can be achieved we must work through the EU's CSDP. But in many other cases bilateral partnerships – and small clusters of member states – will be most effective: Franco-British, Benelux and Nordic partnerships are cases in point. Such deals can be structured across industrial development, building capabilities and preparing for operations.

Sovereignty and autonomy need not always be a barrier. And the further back from the front line you are, the less of an issue it is. In industry, in training, in sharing facilities, the aim should be to maximise compatibility. Our emerging Franco-British partnership aims to maximise our scale of operational capability, and through that to maximise our influence on the international stage. This is the objective of our Combined Joint Expeditionary Force and our plan to co-ordinate carrier groups. But above all else the goal should be to align strategic culture more closely. Britain and France are aligning our capabilities for high intensity expeditionary operations. The Dutch and Belgian navies are closely aligned to work together. And yet this morning the German Foreign Ministry (unlike the Ministry of Defence) depicted military effort simply as the 'last resort'. Others have more appetite.



In my spare time I am an avid football enthusiast. And in football it is not the best way to defend your goal to put all your eleven players on your own goal line. To keep danger away from your goal, some of your players must show more spirit of adventure and head up-field to take the battle into your opponents' half and keep the ball at that end of the pitch.

And, for as far into the future as I can see, it will no more be acceptable to try and stop those European states who have the appetite for adventure from undertaking it, than it will be to try and force those who don't wish it, to participate.

Sheer complexity can be a barrier to alignment; bringing two forces together can be difficult – let alone 28! Having compatible equipment can be a game-changer, and compatible training too.

fractured politics. Putin's Russia rejects Western-formulated rules for state behaviour. China pursues mercantile policies, and seeks to re-establish its historical regional dominance. Disorder across the Middle East and Africa is more likely to grow than to diminish.

We now face an illiberal world, in which the majority of state regimes do not share our values, and we will have to work closely with the partners we *can* find to maintain and reinforce the institutions which support global order.

I was struck to learn that an analysis of UN voting showed that between 1992 and 2008 the UK and France had voted together in the UN General Assembly on 95% of resolutions, whereas the US had voted together with the UK only 65% of the time – slightly more than China, but less



than Russia. The US and the UK, as this suggests, have different priorities and interests, even though we share underlying values. We share the widest range of interests and values with our neighbours in Europe.

### *Status, sovereignty and security*

In 1961, the year I was born, British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan published a pamphlet on Britain's decision to join the European Economic Community. Calling it 'perhaps the most fateful and forward-looking policy decision in our peacetime

history', he reminded his sceptics that 'we in Britain are Europeans' and that 'practically every nation, including our own, has already been forced by the pressures of the modern world to abandon large areas of sovereignty and to realise that we are now all inter-dependent.'

But in lower-tech areas, small isn't always beautiful: European Air Transport Command is a success and the UK should join up. France can withdraw assets if needed, and so could we.

### *Maintaining a Liberal international order*

We have lived through several decades in which the structures of international order grew stronger, under Western leadership: promoting an open world economy, widening networks of international law and regulation, negotiating and working to implement higher standards of human rights.

But we are now facing active challenges to the liberal order which we have enjoyed through most of our lifetimes. The United States is losing the capacity to provide global leadership, suffering from deeply

If only his successors had been equally courageous in spelling out the realities of Britain's position to their parties and their public.

### *Conclusion*

Which – in conclusion – brings me back, inevitably, to the question of money. If British ministers in the 2010 Defence Review thought we were making painfully ghastly decisions – and we did – these may be but

nothing compared to those which will have to be made over the next ten years or so.

Between roughly 2017-30, I can see a grim battle between a wide range of vast defence projects competing for very limited funds: the new aircraft carriers need Joint Strike Fighter planes; our new class of frigate is to be built; the British Army's equipment crisis must be resolved; a new generation of remotely piloted aircraft, new amphibious shipping, more helicopters, and new generation of enhanced satellite, ISTAR and cyber security assets are all needed. All of this will be made even more difficult if our prevailing orthodoxy on the nuclear question remains unchallenged, and a huge procurement goes ahead to replace our deterrent on the same scale we calibrated at the height of the cold war, and we continue to patrol the high seas 24/7 at full alert despite our own security assessment concluding that we currently have no nuclear adversary.

Motivations for full-scale renewal of the UK nuclear deterrent force have mixed sober assessment of the Soviet nuclear threat – long since gone – with sentiments about Britain's status as a great power, concerns about standing in Washington, and rivalry with the French.

If we continue to aspire to a global role; if we want to protect our global interests in commerce, culture, science, education, development aid and many other areas; if we take seriously our responsibilities as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, then we must do two vital things:

Firstly, guarantee not to let our defence budget fall below the 2% NATO "entry level" for basic club membership – which we are set to do within the next two years;

And secondly, we must work much more closely with our European neighbours, and be candid with our public that this is both a necessary and desirable thing to do – and that we have no alternative. I am sure that all of you will wish us well in this endeavour – but we have a mountain to climb.

***Sir Nick Harvey MP***

*Address to the EuroDefence Conference, Berlin – 2nd December 2014*

EuroDefence is a pan-European NGO. Sir Nick Harvey MP was Minister for the Armed Forces 2010-12

# ISRAEL

The past year has been a difficult one for anyone involved in Israel advocacy. At times over the summer it felt like the world was against us, that no one could see what we saw. Israel was under hostile attack by a proscribed terrorist organisation and suddenly everyone was an expert and stated firmly and clearly that Israel shouldn't retaliate or defend herself against guerrilla and hostile missile attacks.

The idea of a 'proportionate' response in the context of pre-warnings of air strikes via text messages and phone calls on neighbourhoods and districts within Gaza where missile fire had originated left many supporters of Israel wondering was this 'legitimate' criticism, or was something else at play?

LDFI understands that our Parliamentarians, supporters and wider membership look to us for informed and insightful updates and analysis through the year, but crucially at times of high crisis. I would like to think we 'stepped up to the plate' in this regard. Throughout Operation Protective Edge we emailed a daily update to all Parliamentarians and Party advisers, explaining the issues of the day with analysis, whilst including a filtered selection of interesting relevant articles from the overwhelming media reporting and commentary.

In a quirk of timing, I was actually out in Israel leading an LDFI delegation of Parliamentary Candidates and advisers in June/July this year. We arrived in the midst of the three religious boys having been kidnapped. During our time in Israel, the boys' bodies were tragically discovered and the horrific revenge attack on a Palestinian boy also took place. Heartache, shame and bewilderment were all emotions I, and I'm sure every Israeli, felt during those dark days, which ultimately led to the conflict that ensued.

Taking colleagues from across the Party out to the Middle East is something LDFI is privileged to be able to do. Giving opinion formers and decision makers the opportunity to get a sanitised view of Israel free from media bias, as well as exposure to the safe parts of the West Bank and moderate voices from Fatah, are part of the invaluable work LDFI does for our party. The feedback we get from delegates recent and past reassures me that our work continues to be essential towards helping explain complex geo-political issues to key people in our Party.

The emergency motion supporting 'recognition' of a Palestinian State passed at conference in Glasgow

recognised the long held position of LDFI. We, like the passed conference motion stated, agree with the creation of a: "... *State of Palestine within pre-1967 borders and with land swaps agreed by the Israeli and Palestinian authorities through peace negotiations in good faith on the basis of each side's entitlements under international law.*" *The crucial words in this motion, clearly, are "through peace negotiations in good faith..."*.

To be clear, and here lets deal with the elephant in the room, it is LDFI's view that we do need Prime Minister Netanyahu to stop expanding settlement building. Similarly, we need President Abbas to come to the negotiating table without pre-conditions. To suggest one side or the other is more to blame demonstrates a real lack of understanding of the issues at play. We all know that settlement expansion cannot in anyway be helpful to move us towards a negotiated peace. It is however also very clear that without security no government in the world can be expected to blindly allow hostile attacks to proliferate without response.

Following hot on the heels of the Lib Dem conference motion recognising the need for a Palestinian State to be achieved through a negotiated peace, a backbench motion of Parliament went, what in LDFI's view was, a step too far, calling for the UK Government to unilaterally recognise the State of Palestine. Perhaps this move was simply symptomatic of the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign's ability to write thousands of letters to MPs. I hope that those who took part and voted in support of that motion don't genuinely believe that unilateral recognition of Palestine would actively encourage the Israelis to forgo their security concerns and that a peace agreement will be reached sooner as a result. To think this shows a spectacular lack of appreciation for the Israeli public's attitude, which after 66 years of hostilities instigated by most of their neighbours will, I fear, push public opinion further into the hands of the Israeli right wing.

As we scan the horizon, the general election looms large. LDFI will ensure our parliamentary candidates are properly briefed on Israel/Palestine as well as UK domestic Jewish community issues as well as do whatever we can to support of the Party retain and win as many seats as possible.

**Gavin Stollar**

*Chair of Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel (LDFI)*

## SIMON TITLEY

27<sup>th</sup> May 1957 – 31<sup>st</sup> August 2014

Simon Titley's death from a brain tumour comes as a great loss to Liberalism in these dark days. His powers of analysis will be much missed. Other obituaries have been published, most notably in *Liberator* 368, the magazine that he was associated with for a good 30 years, and I commend these to you and will focus on Simon's international career. I ostensibly brought Simon into the Collective, editing a review that he had submitted to fit in a picture of a cat – I've always been with Alice on that matter... *what is the use of a book without pictures or conversations* - Simon was great on the conversations.

I first met Simon when he was active in the Liberal Students in the mid-1975s, but particularly got to know him through the Liberal Palestine Group. I had been to Jordan, Palestine & Israel with a group of councillors led by Chris Winchelsea in 1986. The first Intifada broke out days after we left and Simon would go with a group including Penny Jessel and Michael Meadowcroft the following year, at its height. Simon was working for the Liberal group on the Greater London Council at the time and our report *Palestine Before & During Intifada* was largely put together in his office. He had previously been part of a Young Liberal delegation to Lebanon, visiting Palestinian refugee camps, so had a wider knowledge of the situation.

The most notable thing about Simon's trip was a lengthy interrogation by Mossad agents before he was eventually allowed to board the plain – somewhat exposing their presence on British soil. Amongst the report's conclusions thus, was '*The British Government must put an end to the actions of Israeli Intelligence officers at British airports which are not confined to purely airline security, such as frequent political interrogation of British subjects on British soil.*'

Simon fought Grantham & Spalding in the 1983 general election and was part of Des Wilson's team in the 1989 election. Des recommended Simon to Burson Marsteller after the election, starting a long career in public relations. In 1997 he moved to their Brussels office, finding life there very congenial – meetin youn whippersnappers like Nick Clegg. I supplied him with bacon, having discovered Sillfield Farm, for which he reciprocated with chocolate spreads – music, food & beer were great things in Simon's life and it is a great shame we shall never enjoy the reviews on Palestinian cuisine I had commissioned from him shortly before his death.

**Stewart Rayment**



## George Grimes Watson

13<sup>th</sup> October 1927 – 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2013

George Watson, who was a member of the British Group died after a fall in August 2013. Although I never met him, his book *The English Ideology*, influenced my Liberalism profoundly. In the book Watson argues that although the doyens of the Victorian novel – Dickens, etc., were predominantly Tory in their thinking, they could not escape the general background of liberalism that prevailed in English culture and was in turn nurtured by their own reformist agendas. This in turn sets up the dialogue between Liberalism and Conservatism in English culture and politics, which was muted for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to our considerable loss.

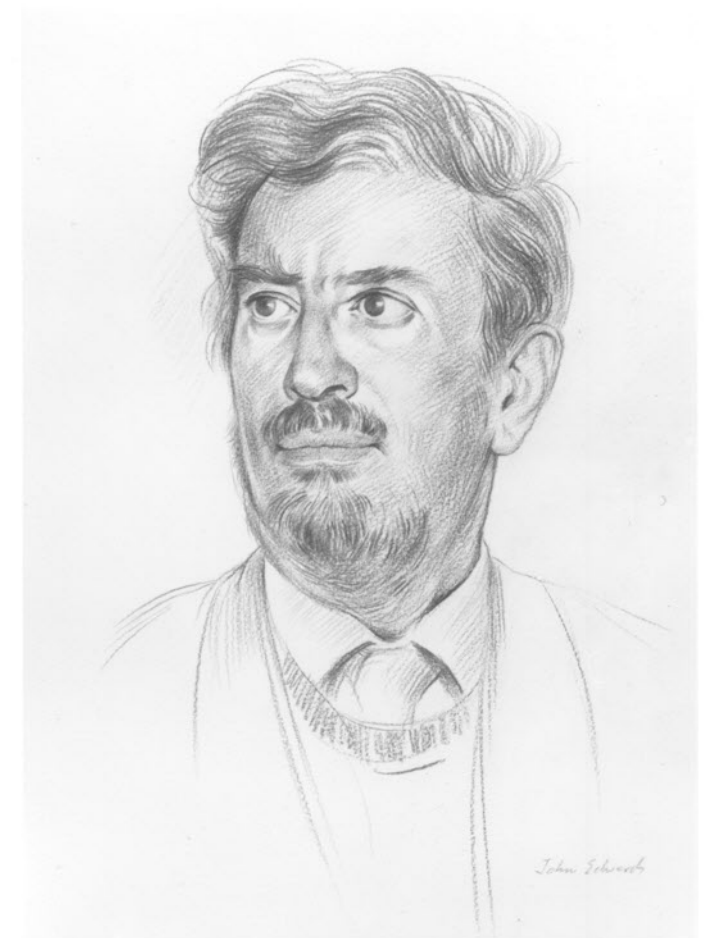
In 1957 Watson edited *The Unservile State: Essays in Liberty & Welfare*. The Unservile State Group was very much the think tank of Grimond Liberalism and the book was described as 'the first full-scale study of the attitudes and policies of contemporary British Liberalism since the famous Yellow Book published under Lloyd George's inspiration in 1928.' Elliott Dodds, then Vice-President of the Liberal party, wrote in the book that it would contribute to the reestablishment of Liberals 'in their natural position as acknowledged leaders of the Left'. Well, it provided a brains trust for other parties to ransack for policies over many years, but the Left remains sorely in need of such leadership. In 1967 (restated in 1972) Watson's critique would develop this in 'Is Socialism Left?' – with an emphatic 'No'. I think this pamphlet in particular drew my attention to the parallels between socialism and fascism. His *Lost literature of socialism* (1998, 2002, 2010) goes into this in much greater detail.

Watson fought Cheltenham in 1959, polling 8,428 votes (19.5%), which was commendable for the time. The seat had last been contested by the Liberals under Frank Raffety in 1929. Raffety became the Chairman of the Industrial Co-Partnership Association, giving another parallel with George who was a member of Liberal Party co-ownership committee from 1951-57 (I wonder where those inspiring policies have vanished to with the Liberal Democrats?). Although Cheltenham was not fought in 1966, when the party was in a poor financial state, with two general elections in short succession, Watson may be said to have helped lay the foundations to Nigel Jones winning the seat in 1992. Liberal Democrat MP for Cambridge Julian Huppert, paying tribute to George, said 'His 1959 campaign literature shows how little has changed, with one section saying 'Liberals made

them get rid of identity-cards – but the State still has far too much power in our lives', 'The Home Secretary thinks the police ought to tap private phone-calls' and 'We need the European Common Market – Tory policy closes the door of Europe in our faces.' In 1979 Watson fought the Leicestershire Euro-constituency, again coming third, with 17,027 votes (20.4%).

George Watson was born in Queensland, Australia, taking his first degree at the university there, before going on to Trinity, Oxford, where he studied under C.S.Lewis. He then worked for the European Commission as an interpreter, before settling for an academic life. In 1961 he became a Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, and understandably, remained there for the rest of his life. Amongst his achievements there must count his editorship of the *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* (1969-77). Watson was also a regular contributor to *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, noted for his wit. George Watson was a life-long Liberal, whose contributions to political thought deserve an on-going appreciation.

### Stewart Rayment



Drawing by John Edwards, reproduced by permission of the Master and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge.

# REVIEWS

**Mothers of Conservatism,  
by Michelle Nickerson.  
Princeton University Press 2014  
isbn 9781400842209**

When Sarah Palin burst onto the American national stage at the 2008 Republican National Convention, the photogenic brunette introduced as John McCain's VP candidate brought the crowd to its feet with a masterful speech. She sounded the "dog whistles" certain to excite her conservative hearers. Previously bored delegates shouted their approval of her sarcastic dismissal of Democrats, the taxers and spenders, the do-gooders and community organizers. They cheered when she put her own experience as mayor of Wasilla above that of Barack Obama: "a small-town mayor is sort of like a community organizer except that you have actual responsibilities." Later she was to make some people, including McCain, less comfortable when she described Obama as "palling around with terrorists," but her first appearance was more than the conservative base had hoped for. (We met the alleged terrorist, William Ayers, last year. A mild-mannered professor at the University of Illinois, he is more focused on child education than anything else).

We later learned that although she couldn't name a single periodical she'd read, or mention any Supreme Court decision of moment, Sarah felt ready to be a heartbeat from the Presidency and take a hand in foreign policy, telling a reporter "You can actually see Russia from land here in Alaska." Preparing to debate Joe Biden, she was reported as having answered a question about Britain by noting cheerily that the U.S. has always had great relations with the Queen.

None of this mattered to her core constituency, the American Right, many of its most fervent members women who related to her in ways most people can't understand.

Michelle Nickerson's *Mothers of Conservatism: Women and the Postwar Right* provides a useful guide to American grassroots conservatism from before World War I to the present. *Mothers* details the historic roots of the movement, with examples of conservatism on the local level in Los Angeles after World War II, activism in public schools, campaigns against bills in the legislature, founding of conservative bookstores, etc.

In the early 1900s conservative women fought against women's suffrage, believing that it would destabilize the family. In 1920 the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution, giving women the vote, passed despite them. Similarly they continue to fight for the reversal of *Rowe versus Wade*, the Supreme Court case that gave the right to abortion. Last year the Texas legislature passed a law requiring abortion clinics to follow the same strict standards as hospitals, a measure that closed many clinics and was only recently overturned by the Supreme Court.

Nickerson details the battle against government interference of many of these conservative groups. Going against Big Government was unpopular during the Depression when government help in the form of WPA and other projects became crucial to increasing employment. Later the conservatives' opposition to Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal" sometimes took the form of anti-Semitism, with it being referred to as the "Jew Deal," and influential Americans like Charles Lindbergh leading the opposition to that and to entry into World War II.

If *Mothers of Conservatism* has a fault, it stems from the effort to cram too much into too little space while neglecting major factors in the development of American conservatism: Ayn Rand's influential novel, *The Fountainhead*, is dismissed in one sentence. Her *Atlas Shrugged* is not mentioned at all, yet Paul Ryan (Mitt Romney's running mate in 2012) finds Rand so convincing that he made her books required reading for his office staff. Wisconsin senator Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee frightened many 1950s Americans into thinking that communists had infiltrated the highest reaches of the American government, but the HUAC's influence in creating a climate of opinion where extremism would flourish is not explored.

The *Reader's Digest* rates only passing reference, yet this magazine was a staple of American households in the 1950s: its steady formula of articles attacking communism and upholding Mom and the flag did more for the conservative cause than anything else up to the appearance of a movie actor who won his best role when he moved into the White House in 1981.

A 174-page study that spans the 20<sup>th</sup> century with special focus on women in California can't get down to the colourful details that might engage the reader. The narrative gains speed with mention of Marjorie Jensen, Jane Crosby, Jane Koenig, all residents of the L.A. area. The first two founded a right-wing newsletter and a John Birch society chapter respectively, and Koenig fought for school textbook

ensorship. Yet there is little here that explains what motivated each woman.

Conservative women have long ignored the contradictions in their positions: the same movement that in the early 1940s battled FDR and fought Lend-Lease and entry into W.W. II would in scarcely more than 20 years oppose the antiwar movement seeking withdrawal from Vietnam. Nickerson notes that they attacked feminism yet benefited from it. (Sarah Palin credited the Title IX program requiring girls' sports in high schools with boosting her self-confidence, yet she continued to oppose federal programs). In the early 1900s conservative women fought women's suffrage; more recently they worked to stop the Equal Rights Amendment and abortion rights. The latest manifestation of housewife populism has been the Tea Party, most of its members women, which is still very influential in U.S. politics. Nickerson notes the cognitive dissonance in these positions, what we might view as among the absurdities which make the American political scene confusing at times but endlessly entertaining.

*Christine Graf*

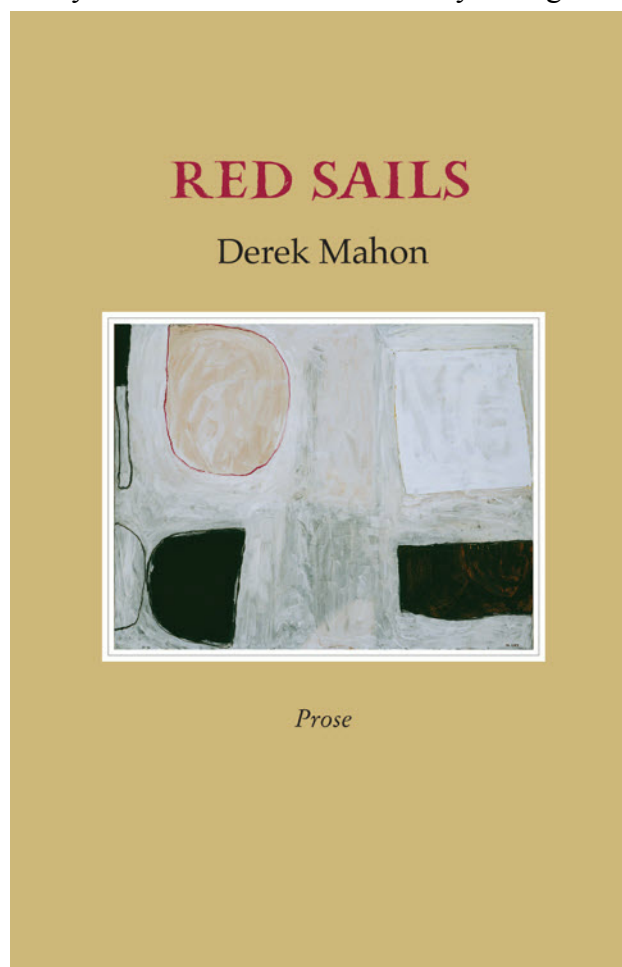
**Red Sails, by Derek Mahon**  
**The Gallery Press 2014**  
**isbn 9781852356149**

Mahon opens this collection of essays commenting that he had once read an abandoned copy of Arthur Hailey's *Airport* and had recently 'picked up an old Hodder paperback, much thumbed, of Jack Higgins's *East of Desolation*'. He goes on to conclude 'It's not 'Literature''. I ask myself, is the man, who published a collection with the title *Journalism* (Gallery, 1996) an imp? What is 'Literature'? Are the inverted commas important? The essay, *Seaplanes*, clearly is literature, and does have inverted commas as such. I haven't read either of the two titles mentioned, but have on occasion picked up a title by Jack Higgins. They are easy to read, formulaic, and Mahon comes to their defence as literature (I presume) even if they don't warrant literature with inverted commas to define that.

One of things that brought me into politics, or so I attribute, was a sense of injustice in my last year at primary school. One of the teachers was off sick, so his class was merged with ours – three to a desk. 'Kenny' was seated between 'Keith' and myself, and it was reading. It soon became evident to us that Kenny couldn't read, so we tried to teach him. This, of

course, meant that Keith & I hadn't completed the prescribed amount of reading and we were severely chastised. Kenny, what ever standard of literacy he had achieved when he left school at 16, became a dustman. He later headed the workers' buy-out when the council privatised the refuse contract. I could, alas, give other examples, mainly sad, but for those whose reading abilities have a lower horizon, Jack Higgins is there for them.

*Seaplanes* on the other hand, is an elegant example of that under-rated literary form, the list, of which Coleridge was a champion, who 'ere precedes him. I wondered where it was going, more so where it had been, though it seems to be a first publication. Having chanced upon Harbour Flights (Ireland) Ltd, of Mountshannon, I thought perhaps the travel pages of a weekend *Irish Independent*, but it seems not so. But I commend you to find out where the essay does go.



Derek Mahon hails from Belfast, from somewhat more humble origins than the merchant bankers who share his name. He went to Trinity, the Sorbonne and travelled widely (sometimes unwisely, as is revealed – such is youth). His essays reflect on commonplaces so as to lift them out of the ordinary – much as his poetry, you might say. An ideal anthology for those times and places for a short read.

*Stewart Rayment*



**Equal Recognition: The Moral Foundations of  
Minority Rights by Alan Patten**  
Princeton University Press 2014 \$45.00  
isbn 9780691159379  
eBook isbn 9781400850433

In this book, Patten, a politics professor at Princeton University, seeks to establish a new argument for liberal multiculturalism. Justifications for minority protection have often been vague or conflicting. The theory of equal recognition is a single and coherent claim that all liberal societies must protect minority rights in certain circumstances.

Patten is clear that there are some things he cannot justify. The most important is the right to cultural preservation. He finds flaws in the two principal arguments for this right. First, there is the idea that members of the minority culture do not have access to an adequate range of options if, for example, they cannot speak the majority language. However, this may in fact be a persuasive reason to encourage integration and end discrimination by not recognising minority rights. Second, it is argued people feel a subjective attachment to their culture and so are harmed when it disappears. As Patten points out, it is not clear that people whose culture is eroded have a right to complain if such erosion happens by other people legitimately exercising their rights. Therefore, he contents himself with a theory that argues for the background framework within which a minority culture may be preserved, but, if its members do not take advantage of the recognition offered by the state, the culture may die.

The theory of recognition is reached by examining the basic principles of a liberal state. We know that this state should not favour one conception of the good over others. To be truly neutral, Patten argues, a state must give the same benefits and disadvantages to all concepts of the good, be they majority or minority. In the case of minority cultural rights, this neutrality may sometimes only be realised through special protection.

Clearly, the state cannot literally treat every aspect of citizens' concept of the good equally as they are too numerous. It seems sensible that it should prioritise those rights that are central to someone's concept, which are not negotiable, or when they are required to ensure respect for the individual. These conditions for a strong interest are usually fulfilled by cultural claims. This is why a liberal state must act neutrally towards different cultures.

This theory will require a state to make decisions about which minority rights to protect and how it

should do this. The book contains some discussion of these debates, such as competing claims of national and immigrant minorities, particularly when the latter is more numerous than the former. These are thorny issues which many states have long tried to avoid. This book argues that no liberal state can shirk its duty to recognize minority rights, and it challenges governments to make the difficult but necessary decisions for their protection.

***Eleanor Healy Birt***

**Grayson Perry 'Who Are You?'  
National Portrait Gallery, London.**

The fourteen portraits – mostly ceramic, that came out of Grayson Perry's Channel 4 documentary *Who Are You?* are now on display in the National Portrait Gallery in London. Of most immediate interest to Liberals would probably be *The Huhne Vase*, but it has to be said that Perry's empathy with his subjects is an object lesson in the respect for the individual, which is central to our philosophy, for all of us. Of particular strength is his treatment of *The Deaf*, of Alzheimer's Disease (*Memory Jar*) and of a young transsexual (*I Am A Man*).

Chris Huhne proved the most difficult subject to depict. In the television programme he came over as cocky, without remorse; the only chink in his armour – he wouldn't show Perry his security tag. In happier times, at the National Liberal Club hustings with Clegg in the 2007 leadership election both were asked what sort of portrait they would want to be commemorated by in the NLC. Huhne replied "an abstract".



The Vase is typically Grecian, and repeats a series of images – Huhne's face (presumably from a newspaper photo – somewhat miffed at being caught out), phallic symbols, mobile phones and prison bars. To complete the portrait, Perry smashed the vase – I think I'd have left it at that, but Perry is too kind for such a gesture, and put it back together again, gilding the cracks.

As it is, I'm immensely more impressed with some of the other work. The arguments articulated in *The Deaf* for instance – not a disability, just a different way of experiencing and communicating, is something we should all take on board.

At the foot of the stairs to the galleries where the works are displayed Perry has placed *A Map of Days*; one could study it for hours, but in a corner is the sin of Hubris. Huhne would do well to reflect on it as he goes forward in his new life. Grayson Perry meanwhile, continues his excellent work in making Art more accessible. I hope the TV programme comes out on DVD.

### **Stewart Rayment**

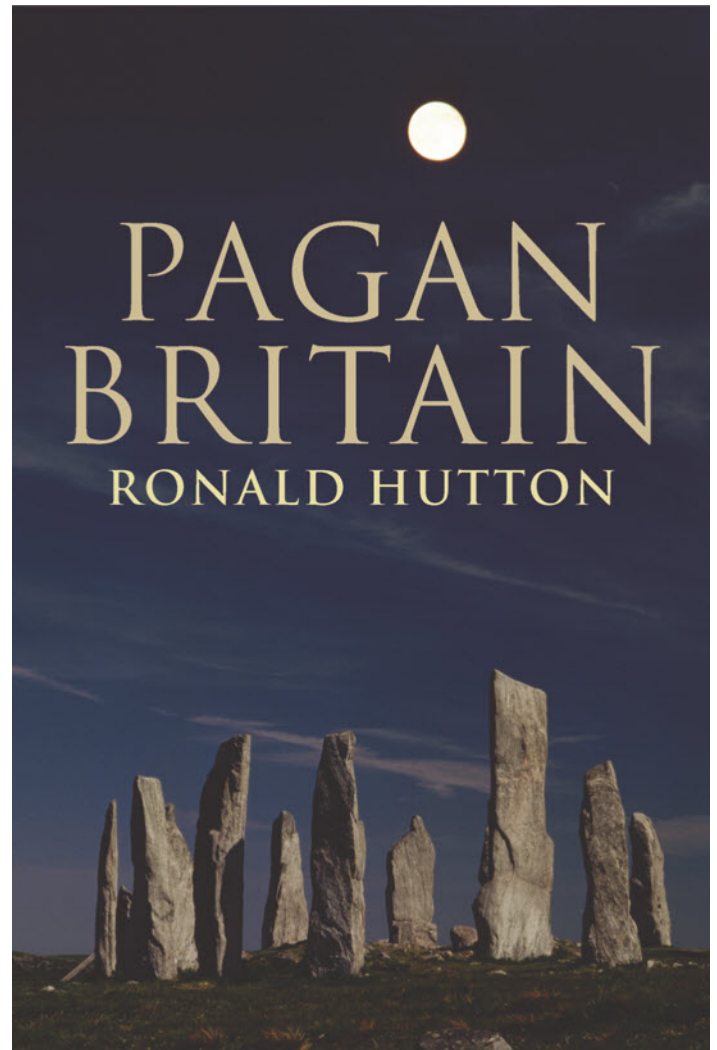
*Grayson Perry 'Who Are You?' is at the National Portrait Gallery, London until 15<sup>th</sup> March 2015*

### **Pagan Britain, by Ronald Hutton Yale University Press 2014**

One of my favourite lyrics in David Bowie's *The Bewlay Brothers* is *We were so turned on by your lack of conclusions*. The same could equally apply to much of Ronald Hutton's work, which might broadly be summed up as the study of British paganism, its continuity or the absence of the same. Hutton first addressed this in 1991 and a series of books on specific aspects have appeared since, most usefully *The Stations of the Sun, a history of the ritual year in Britain*, in 1996 (Oxford UP). Hutton's modus operandi is to look at the evidence and views on his subject in the context of their time – which invariably tells us more about that time, than the subject. Essentially, the evidence is scant and although recent decades have boosted our archeological knowledge, artifacts remain open to interpretation.

Hutton is always a good read; even those whose romantic yearnings would prefer continuity in British paganism generally respect his findings (& of course, use them selectively in their own arguments). Furthermore *Pagan Britain* provides a useful synopsis of archeological research over recent decades and that is important for those of us who sit on planning committees or are otherwise actively involved in the planning process. Hutton has been able to draw heavily on the outcome of recent digs, but a lot of this will have been rescue excavation in the wake of some new road or other development. The machinery that we now use in such projects & their scale is far more destructive than anything in previous millennia, as can also be said for our industrialized agriculture. Whereas we might revisit the excavations of anything

up to World War II, the record of the site under a new out-of-town shopping mall is likely to be lost forever.



Hutton is pragmatic – whilst academia should behave itself, let the warlock or witch in the street make what they like, it does little harm, probably a great deal of good – the Jack in the Green festival in Hastings brings thousands of people to the town over the May Day weekend, kick-starting the seaside economy as well as providing a jolly good time.

### **Stewart Rayment**

*As we go to press, news of the death of Jeremy Thorpe, Leader of the Liberal party from 1967 to 1976 and a great Internationalist has broken. Our thoughts are with his family and friends.*

*The funeral will be at 12.30 on December 17th at St Margaret's, Westminster. Please let Steve Atack know you are attending, especially if you wish to come to the reception after. [steveatack@aol.com](mailto:steveatack@aol.com)*