

2025-05 September



INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



Liberal Democrat conference briefings

Hong Kong - Sudan

Canada - Somalia - Turkey

EVENTS

20-23 September 2025 Liberal Democrats Autumn Conference, Bournemouth

6 October LIBG Forum: The Arctic & European Security. With LI Vice Presidents Astrid Thors of Finland and Henrik Bach Mortensen of Denmark. Zoom details to follow.

10-12 October Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru/Welsh Liberal Democrats Conference, Wrexham.

18 October 2025 Scottish Liberal Democrats Conference, Radisson Blu, Glasgow.

25 October 2025 Isaiah Berlin Lecture: Prof. John Gray on Liberalism, Populism and the Sense of Reality. National Liberal Club & online

21-23 November 2025, 209th LI Executive Committee, The Hague, The Netherlands

For bookings & other information please contact LIBG at Liberal International British Group. 1 Brook Gardens, Barnes, London SW13 0LY

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Comments and articles can be sent to Lockhart & Hastings, Intellectual Properties Consultants, 29 St Helen's Crescent, Hastings TN34 2EN, email lockhart.hastings@outlook.com

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Images and photographs: Waging Peace, Subjects of the photographs and Ludi Simpson

Cover image: Waging Peace, From children's drawings collected by Anna Schmitt during a fact finding mission amongst Dafari refugees & displaced Chadians in Chad, 2007 showing an attack on a village in the area of Aishbarra, Darfur, in 2003 by the Sudanese Government forces and Janjaweed militia.





LIBG at Bournemouth



"On the Brink; Wake up and smell the Cordite"

The object of the meeting is to dispel any doubts delegates might have about how dangerous and unstable the world is, and the real threat to the long peace we in mainland Britain have enjoyed.

Speakers; Calum Miller MP, Edward Lucas (on Russia), Rebecca Tinsley (on USA). Defence spokesperson Helen Maguire and former defence minister Sir Nick Harvey have been invited to contribute.

**Saturday 20th September,
1.00pm – 2.30pm
BIC Bayview Suite 2**

LIBG will be at stall 62 of the Exhibition

Watson's World View

The age of western liberal democracy which has shaped today's Liberal Democrats appears to be ending. President Trump of the USA is not merely in office but clearly in power; and in some instances the democratic checks and balances designed to restrain his arbitrary abuse of power are failing. In Europe, one in five of the Council of Europe's 46 member states - committed to promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law - no longer honour the Council's principles.

In Latin America, Africa and Asia there are now fewer democracies than at the turn of this century. The world's most populous country, India, has shown considerably less respect for the courtesies of democracy under Narendra Modi; and China has moved to restrict further the freedoms of its people under its current leadership.



In the democracies which remain, populist anti-democratic forces are growing in strength. While the EU continues to uphold Liberal values, following recent elections to the federal parliament of its most populous member state, Germany, its traditional Liberal party is no longer represented; and it is by no means inconceivable that the United Kingdom and France will soon be led by populist autocrats elected by popular suffrage.

Moreover, the world's most egregious conflicts - in Ukraine, Palestine and East Africa - seem unlikely to be resolved without significant further death and destruction and could yet escalate into wider regional conflicts.

Liberal democratic values appear no longer to enjoy the support of a majority of citizens in what are commonly described as 'free' countries. Even the idea of a 'silent majority' determined to vote for parties committed to such values is highly questionable. Why is this? And where will it lead? Has democracy failed so badly that people view alternatives as preferable?

The Liberal International - the world union of liberal parties - makes valiant efforts to promote Liberal values and to defend the victims of those who trash them. Together with forces of the moderate right and left, it works across borders and within supranational institutions to uphold the principles of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Yet these principles are honoured too often in the breach: in some cases - regarding migration notably - increasingly.

It is therefore a relief to see that the UK Liberal Democrats' federal conference programme this year has so many debates on its agenda about global issues. There are at least six motions for resolution, covering Ukraine, Sudan, Kong Kong, Womens Rights, Climate Change and UK-EU relations, which deal directly with them; many others treat international issues tangentially. The British Group of Liberal International (BGLI) will do its bit at the conference in hosting a fringe meeting - on 20 September at 1pm in the Bayview Suite of the Bournemouth International Conference Centre - on the increasing tensions between the world's superpowers. Speakers include the Party's foreign affairs team leader Calum Miller MP, Edward Lucas and Rebecca Tinsley.

One area of particular concern to the UK and to the wider security of western Europe is the Arctic. Superpower ambitions for military superiority and access to rare earths are causing its tectonic plates to grind more audibly. LIBG therefore welcomes to an online conference on the evening of 6 October LI Vice Presidents Astrid Thors of Finland and Henrik Bach Mortensen of Denmark to discuss the challenges this poses to Liberals. Please join us if you can.

Graham Watson,
Chair LIBG.

The Liberal Democrats Federal Conference always has an active international fringe but this the conference itself is packed with motions, Hong Kong, Sudan and Ukraine stand alone alongside broader issues of Climate Change and Women's Rights. Briefings on the issues follow, those that don't arrive in time for the print edition will be found online at www.libg.uk alongside the full international agenda.

HONG KONG

LD conference motion F34 Monday 22nd 14.10

How the Labour Government's "soft" approach to Challenging Regimes Allowed Transnational Repression from the Chinese government

How had the Rules-based International Order ('RBIO') influenced UK-China affairs on Hong Kong? A good example would The Handover. Britain transferred sovereignty to the People's Republic of China ('PRC') under the Sino-British declaration 1984 which promised a high autonomy to Hong Kongers with ever progressive democracy in Hong Kong. The transfer of sovereignty occurred as promised regardless of the human rights turmoil between the signing of the treaty and the TianAnMen massacre.

Yet, do challenging regimes like China followed international treaties to the letter? No. First, China under the Chinese Communist Party ('CCP') imposed Chinese laws into Hong Kong and threw out the promise of high autonomy. Then, the CCP imposed its will through transnational repression in total contempt of UK law.

Even the Conservatives recognised China's flagrant breach of the Joint Declaration and dusted out rescue plans for Hong Kongers – the BN(O) visa scheme. Yet the Labour Government seems to be soft on China. And in the case of the Chinese Embassy Complex development plan, they tried turning a blind eye. A firm China strategy is urgently needed if we are to halt China's movement in destroying the RBIO.

Transnational Repression of the Chinese Government

Chinese authorities are sending secret police to the UK carrying out acts of harassment and intimidation over pro-democracy campaigners. The 2023 Intelligence and Security Committee's ('ISC') report on China highlighted that the remits of China's Intelligence Services ('ChiS') are far larger in the UK. More worryingly, ChiS practices, including kidnappings, have far greater remits compared with the intelligence operations of many other countries. Moreover, the reports of China's action against our parliamentary democracy and secret Chinese police operations are mentioned by the ISC investigation.

The role of the ChiS is our fundamental opposition to a new mega Chinese Embassy at the Old Royal Mint.

Former Minister of State for Security Tom Hugendhat once criticised the Chinese government as follows:

*'The Chinese authorities regularly criticise others for what they see as interference in their internal affairs. Yet, they felt able to open unattributed sites without consulting the UK Government. It is alleged that this was a pattern repeated around the world.'*¹

China's transnational repression extended to Hong Kongers living in the United Kingdom. For example, the Hong Kong authority issued bounties for information provided on the dissidents with view on kidnapping them to the Chinese embassy. Some pro-Beijing Hong Kongers, such as Innes Tang, established a network to report on pro-democracy activists within Hong Kong. It led to the political arrests of over 100 people. Tang openly planned to establish a similar network overseas.² A prominent repression was the arrest warrant issued against Carmen Lau, the pro-democracy activist who fled to the UK in 2021.³

Chinese consulate staff in the UK also had a history of ignoring UK laws. In October 2022, Chinese diplomats dragged a protester into its consulate in Manchester and assaulted him.⁴

Yet Labour ignored the warnings signs. The Chinese Embassy Complex development plan shows Labour would focus on trade talks; more promises made by promise-breaker Beijing.

The shortcomings of Labour's (lack of) China Strategy

The mega Chinese embassy plans had been on ice through political ambiguity under the Conservatives. Then, Starmer decided to “call in” China’s application during trade talks which claims to have secured £600 million in Chinese investment commitments. Further, Foreign Secretary David Lammy and Home Secretary Yvette Cooper had also expressed support for the embassy plan and sent a favourable joint letter to the Planning Inspectorate.⁵

The proposed complex was gigantic: The 20,000 m² site included a large basement with unclear purposes (Redacted area). China could also design parts of the building to optimise for intelligence collection, such as multi-storey buildings optimised for line-of-sight signals intelligence (SIGINT) collection. It could house additional floors, including sensitive communications and collection equipment.⁶

CHiS apparatus and branches like the secretive Chinese Overseas Police Force will be facilitated by the size of the diplomatic mission. The redacted area of this mega Chinese embassy complex could provide the Chinese overseas police and secret agents a base of operations with little oversight available to British authorities although entirely within the UK.

Indeed, Beijing refused to provide further explanations on these redacted areas. On 6th August 2025, after facing strong opposition, Rayner issued a statement by giving China 14 days to explain why Chinese building plans were redacted and ‘why requests from Home Secretary Yvette Cooper and Foreign Secretary David Lammy had been ignored’. About 2 weeks after, Labour decided to delay the planning decision from 5th September to 21st October due to public pressure.⁷

Unfortunately, the plan was only once again postponed. Politicians who see a China-shaped hole of broken promises and yet are not determined on a China Strategy are major shortcomings in facilitating China’s will to breach the RBIO.

Liberals must fill the void in political shortcomings

Building on Paddy Ashdown’s foundation⁸ on protecting the right of Hong Kongers has become ever more important. With new dealings with China, we are once again at the crossroads of an urgent need for a firm China Strategy.

In the autumn conference this year, we the Liberal Democrats Friends of Hong Kong will table a policy motion on Hong Kong (F34), which will cover the area of tackling transnational repression of China, and call for rejecting the Chinese Embassy Complex. Please join us at 14:10 pm on 22nd September for the debate!

Larry Ngan

(For the full version of the article, please refer to the online edition, pages 25-31)

‘Update on Chinese ‘Overseas Police Service Stations’ - Statement made on 6 June 2023’, *House of Parliament*, 6th June 2023.

² Bridget Wing & Georgina Lam, ‘Hong Kong pro-China informer: ‘Why I’ve reported dozens of people to police’, *BBC News*, 9th May 2025.

³ Damian Grammaticas, ‘Hackers, secret cables and security fears: The explosive fight over China’s new embassy in the UK’, *BBC News*, 4th August 2025.

⁴ Lok Lee and Elsa Maishman, ‘Hong Kong protester dragged into Manchester Chinese consulate grounds and beaten up’, *BBC News*, 17th October 2022.

⁵ Aosheng Pusztaszeri, ‘Is China’s New London “Super Embassy” a Risk to National Security?’, *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 13th June 2025

⁶ Aosheng Pusztaszeri, ‘Is China’s New London “Super Embassy” a Risk to National Security?’, *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 13th June 2025

⁷ Sammy Gecsoyler, ‘Ministers delay planning decision on Chinese ‘super-embassy’ in London, *Guardian*, 23rd August 2025

⁸ Kris Cheng, ‘Give Hong Kong’s BN(O) passport holders right of abode in the UK if situation worsens, says Lord Ashdown’, *Hong Kong Free Press*, 29th November 2017.

SUDAN

LD conference motion F43 Tuesday September 23rd 10.45am

War has raged in Sudan since April 2023. Despite suffering and destruction on a massive scale, it commands little media or diplomatic attention. However, the fighting between the two rival militias should concern UK politicians because the conflict is creating massive waves of migration. Sudanese refugees favour the UK thanks to Britain's colonial links and because many Sudanese learn English in school. MSF estimates 60% of the migrants waiting in Calais are from Sudan.

The “war without end,” as Sudanese describe it, should also concern Britain because Russia will be awarded a Red Sea naval base by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) who are likely to end up holding the east of the country. Putin could create havoc by threatening access to the Suez Canal. The SAF are also being supported by Iran, their ideological brothers who want a bridgehead in Africa.

No one doubts Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, and the Africa minister, Lord Collins, regret the conflict in which the Army is fighting the Rapid Support Forces/Janjaweed for control of the Sudan's resources. Yet, action does not follow Labour's platitudes about urging all parties to abide by international humanitarian law, etc. It matters a great deal to Britain's large Sudanese Diaspora that the Lib Dems are discussing the conflict at Bournemouth.

Background: Sudan has been ruled by increasingly Islamist military juntas since independence. The elite self-identify as Arab and Muslim, weaponising ethnic and religious differences to impose an Arab and Muslim culture on a highly diverse society. In the process, they concentrated wealth and power in Khartoum, marginalising and persecuting the Black African populations in the south and west. At least two and a half million Black Africans have been killed, prompting the creation of South Sudan, which is largely Black African and non-Muslim.

In 2018-9 a popular revolution overthrew Field Marshall Bashir's Islamist regime. It was replaced by a technocratic civilian transitional government which promised a secular, pluralist democracy, an end to the Islamists' eye-watering corruption, and justice for the survivors of decades of human rights abuses. The SAF and RSF/Janjaweed together overthrew the civilian government in 2021, but then in April 2023 they turned on each other, fighting for control of Sudan's lucrative gold, gum Arabic and livestock.

The motion before LD conference acknowledges the diplomatic neglect of Sudan's devastating conflict despite the massive scale of the suffering: 14 million displaced out of a population of 45m; 7 million facing catastrophic food shortages; an epidemic of rape; cholera sweeping the IDP and refugee camps; both warring militias deliberately targeting civil society efforts to provide humanitarian aid; the failure of international efforts to stop outside countries from interfering in the war and profiting from gold smuggling; and the impact of UK and US aid cuts.

The motion urges the UK to push for a diplomatic path to peace, particularly as the UK is UN penholder on Sudan. It calls for the UN Darfur arms embargo to be widened to cover all of Sudan – a move which is resisted by Russia (which is on the side of the Sudanese Army) and China (which objects in principle to “interfering” in the internal politics of member states because of the precedent it would set).

The motion emphasises the importance of withholding legitimacy from either of the militias fighting for control of Sudan, or more accurately, its resources, since both sides have demonstrated that they are indifferent to the suffering of its people. Both the Sudanese Armed Forces (comprised of Islamist retreads from the regime of Field Marshall Bashir, indicted for genocide by the ICC) and the Rapid Support Forces (the former Janjaweed responsible for the Darfur genocide 2003-6) have no interest in forming a government that would be responsible for the welfare of its people. Their track records prove the opposite. Hence Liberal Democrats are clear that only civil leadership in a future government is acceptable.

The motion emphasises applying pressure to ensure unfettered international humanitarian access to Sudan's starving civilians. It suggests that the FCDO should back the conventional aid route through a DEC appeal for funds for the big international aid groups. However, Sudanese would argue that a much more effective method of reaching civilians in need is by sending support directly to the remarkable network of hundreds of Emergency Response Rooms, run by brave volunteers across the country. The

UK government has held back from doing this, since they tend to choose the most conservative (small 'c') approach to aid.

Sudanese diaspora is also disappointed that the Liberal Democrats are not calling for the UK to apply pressure on the countries – Egypt, the Saudis, the UAE and Turkiye - supplying weapons to both sides in Sudan, thereby prolonging the fighting. The Labour government avoids sanctioning them because the City of London launders money for wealthy individuals in the UAE and Saudi, and both countries have significant assets in the UK. Despite President Trump's fondness for Gulf dictators, his administration has taken a much stronger line on Sudan, sanctioning individuals on both sides and using the word genocide to describe what is happening in Darfur. Labour continues the Conservative traditional of avoiding a determination of genocide for fear that there might be a moral obligation to do more than offer platitudes about upholding international humanitarian law.

Rebecca Tinsley,

Rebecca Tinsley is founder of www.WagingPeace.info



The boy who drew this was 9 when his village in the area of Aishbarra, Darfur, was attacked in 2003 by the Sudanese Government forces and Janjaweed militia. The drawing shows houses burning, villagers being shot and limbs being amputated.

The villagers that are attacked are coloured in black, while the attackers have lighter (orange) skin – showing the ethnic character of the attacks (ie: Arabs attacking 'black Africans' – in this case Massalit).

In the bottom right of the drawing are two young men, attached by the neck, led away by a Janjaweed fighter. These boys could be taken into slavery or may become child soldiers.

[The Childrens Drawings - Waging Peace](http://www.WagingPeace.info)

Canada Forum

Following Canada's general election on 28 April 2025, the Liberal Party were returned to power for a fourth successive term with a new leader in Mark Carney. LIBG hosted a panel event to look at the impacts. Chaired by Sir Graham Watson, speakers included: Mario Canseco, Vancouver based President of Research Co; Emerson Csorba, an Albertan based in Montréal and Board Member of Canadian Ditchley; and Dr Christine Cheng, Senior Lecturer in War Studies at King's College London.

The Election

A key dynamic of the election was the resurgence of the Liberal Party under Mark Carney's leadership. In the first week of January, before Justin Trudeau announced he was stepping down, support for the Conservatives was enormous. They were going to get majority of votes and seats, including in places like Ontario and British Columbia, and dominating in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba as usual. Many thought it barely possible the Liberals would be re-elected, even as a minority government.

This turnaround was heavily predicated on the response to the election of President Trump. The election was fought on local issues too - 18- to 34-year-olds were concerned about housing, and the over 55s about healthcare etc. - but the question of Canada US relations became the number one concern, something that had rarely been registering at 1%. A key element was Canadian identity and not wanting to be American, with Carney being seen as the 'most capable candidate to protect [them]'.

Politically the Liberals and Tories used to fight for the centre ground with the NDP to the left; but the Liberals sat in the centre, with the Conservatives definitely on the right. The Conservatives now need to get away from culture wars and bring in a small 'c' conservative leader who can appeal to Canadians. Poilievre may have 'hit his ceiling'.



Mario Canseco



Emerson Csorba



Dr Christine Cheng

State of the Nation

Despite the US and foreign policy being the focus of the election, it could be internal issues that swamp the government, particularly given that the team around Carney remain similar. Delivery rather than rhetoric will be key. If there isn't much delivery, Canadians in a year or two may start to say there's not much difference between the Trudeau Liberals and the Carney Liberals.

Key issues will be trade, including addressing barriers between the provinces, where there is good momentum. There is also energy and the environment, where climate may not as important as it used to be to the PM, with geopolitics coming before climate. And it will be vital to move with pace on critical infrastructure projects.

Then there's the issue of Alberta, and maybe Quebec. Albertans are unhappy about the state of the country and there is a rise in calls for separation. A referendum could be a lot like Brexit - if underestimated the same thing could happen. If there is an Alberta referendum, there could then be another in Quebec. However, the Clarity Act means that even in the face of a clear majority for secession, there would also then have to be Federal negotiation.

Canada in the World

As we enter a dog-eat-dog world, national security has become a bigger focus. Canadians are not dog eat dog people, but Canada could be internationally more relevant if they are more assertive while still being conveners focused on peace. That's going to require more investment in international security. Everybody is scrambling for new dance partners. PM Carney could have a good relationship with Trump because Trump likes aristocrats, and Carney has that kind of background. He will also want Canada to maintain a strong relationship with the US, while diversifying trade with China and other countries like Saudi Arabia; and there seems to be interest with Japan and Korea as potential trading partners in defence.

But the US's slide into authoritarianism means we have to ask which country should serve as the leader of the liberal democracies? That's also going to have a blow back effect, with people wanting to migrate to Canada. The level of admissions from American students for Bachelor's degrees, Masters' degrees, and Doctorates [in one leading Canadian University] has skyrocketed.

However, uncertainty about the US's commitment to NATO and the international rules-based order are creating potential for a renewed cooperation between Canada and western Europe, including enhanced defence and security partnership and common support for Ukraine. There has been much talk of Canada applying to join the European Union. Canada is looking for others with which to work closely, and the natural partners would be those with whom they already have an existing strong relationship, and who share Canadian values.

Rupert Potter

CAHDI Party proposes caretaker government and oversight body to restore legitimacy in Somalia

LI full member CAHDI Party has escalated its response to Somalia's constitutional crisis, building on the concerns it first raised in May 2025. At that time, CAHDI and Liberal International warned of mounting constitutional violations and democratic backsliding. Four months later, the situation has further deteriorated, prompting CAHDI to set out an urgent roadmap for national salvation.

Declaring that the current regime has "forfeited all legitimacy," the CAHDI Party now calls for the formation of a caretaker government to oversee transparent and contestable elections.

The resolution introduces two major new proposals:

A permanent independent oversight body to investigate constitutional violations and issue binding directives, with officials found guilty facing impeachment or removal from office.

A recalibrated counter-terrorism strategy that links security to public trust, de-radicalisation, and federal cooperation, rejecting partisan manipulation of national forces.

Recognising widespread distrust in Mogadishu, CAHDI also urges that future national dialogue forums be held outside the capital to ensure neutral ground for inclusive political engagement.

"Our people deserve security and democracy built on trust in the rule of law," said Prof. Abdirahman Abdiqani Ibrahim, CAHDI Party Leader and 2026 Presidential Candidate. "This resolution is a roadmap for national salvation."

By moving beyond warnings to concrete measures, CAHDI reinforces its leadership in the struggle to restore Somalia's constitutional order, strengthen accountability, and protect the country's democratic future.

05/09/2025

Turkey: an aeroplane without the landing gear.

A. Kurt

When you look at it from outside especially from Europe, Turkey looks sort of nice, with sandy beaches, historical cities, cradle for numerous civilisations and exotic food. The reality is far more different than this. People are hungry, jobless, angry and hopeless. Obviously, there is a small minority which is enjoying the wealth transfer and state contacts, that is jobs given by the state. They enjoy the life by driving big four-by-fours, living in the secure residences which are sold at more than London prices. Well, this list goes on forever.

On the other hand, the latest scandals are listed below: hundreds of fake university degrees which were created by a gang but approved by state! A gang of lawyers, attorneys and judges allegedly letting the criminals go when paid enough money. University exam questions stolen and sold and others which are totally obscure to any person who lives in the civilised world. Basically, if you have enough money, you never do jail time in Turkey, even for murder. If you have enough money, you could buy the best fake degree (funnily enough those are certified by state!). How this has happened nobody knows... in fact everybody knows but if you say something which would incriminate the real criminals then you find yourself in jail faster than Concorde).

In the meantime, a lot of opposition party local mayors are in jail. There is no indictment, for example Istanbul mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, also the Republican People's Party's (CHP) presidential candidate, has been in the jail since 19th March this year. There are others waiting the indictment for longer times. Another gang operates who are talking to the mayoral detainees and saying to them "incriminate İmamoğlu and pay us two million dollars then you go free". The process of jailing without indictment is something Erdoğan uses as a stick, holding people in jail indefinitely like a pendulum above their head. The order, the system (even it was somewhat shaky) had been working but now it seems it collapsing with increasing speed. Turkey was ranks 117th among 142 countries in the Rule of Law Index of the World Justice Project (WJP) published in October 2023¹.

Things are going bad in foreign affairs for Tayyip Erdoğan. Since Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) took over the Syria, Turkey was very happy with the prospects of developments and future opportunities in Syria. He was hoping the Syrian Democratic Forces (Kurds) was going to inject itself into al-Shaara, the Syrian president's government and would eventually cease to be threat to Turkey. Syria is one of the most complex countries in the world in the sense of ethnicity, religion and its foreign relations with neighbouring countries. So, the simple plan of Erdoğan seems not to be working at the moment,

In the mid-August Hakan Fidan, Turkey's foreign minister (an ex- intelligence chief) started talking about an armed response to Kurdish areas in Syria. He demands that Kurds should disarm themselves. Obviously, that is not going to happen, Early in September, Rear Admiral Zeki Aktürk, spokesperson for the Turkish Ministry of Defense, and Devlet Bahçeli, leader of the far-right Nationalist Movement (MHP) were threatening an incursion or supporting a Syrian attack. Damascus is probably more interested in coming to terms with the Kurds, who were heavily marginalised under Assad; a ceasefire was signed in May but there is a long way to go before there is trust on both sides. Armed intrusion to Kobane and other Kurdish areas is very difficult to achieve, first of all the American entity in the area. Secondly since the last invasion, the Kurds are more heavily armed. especially with anti-aircraft weapons, so an attack might cause a lot of unexpected casualties on Turkish side, which is the last thing Tayyip Erdoğan wants at the moment.

In the wider international field, Erdoğan has a closer relationship with Trump than he does with American policy makers generally. He likes to play free with America, China and Russia, and Turkey is in a key position as a middle power, particularly in the context of the Ukraine war. But Erdoğan wants to bet on both horses, both of which will want him to be their man. Turkish involvement in the Azerbaijan-Nagorno Karabakh conflict and Armenia's subsequent threats to withdraw from Russia's

Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) are strains with Putin, Muslim solidarity over Gaza & Israeli genocide conflicts with Trump. Turkey has been a major source of humanitarian aid to Palestine.

Don't forget, all of these places, including Crimea and the Black Sea coast were part of the Ottoman Empire, when the rest of Ukraine was mostly part of the Polish Lithuanian state before the Napoleonic wars. But none of the international scene is of much interest to us Turks struggling with inflation and political repression; we all know the highest bidder will win.

Sadly, there is a failed state in the horizon. I would like to write more about it but there is no point really. Everything that creates a state which some sort of glue holds the order and keep things sort of sensible way has evaporated, disappeared or crushed maybe even destroyed by AKP and its mercenaries. What is happening here is cosmetically different from Nazi Germany, some similarities to the Trump regime, also a lot of similarities to the Putin regime. They never talk about these similarities or numbers are in jail here when they make shiny analyst papers about Erdoğan regime. they keep talking about opposition they never touch the dangerous subject of. I think most of the European governments, almost all of them, want to see nobody but Erdoğan in power. It's kind of like the case of Netanyahu. That is why the country is like a plane without a landing gear and as we all know every plane eventually comes down one way or another.

A.Kurt

¹ <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/global/2023/Turkiye/>

Young Liberals set new party precedent by calling out “Genocidal” Israeli activity in Gaza, and urge the UK government to take urgent steps to promote a just and lasting resolution.

At their Summer Conference 2025, the Young Liberals overwhelmingly passed a motion calling on the UK government to take urgent and concrete steps to confront Israel's genocide in Gaza, end the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories, and support a just, secure and liberal future for both states.

The motion highlights the immense suffering caused by Israel's military assault on Gaza and deliberate blockade of humanitarian aid to the Strip. It notes the International Court of Justice's January 2024 ruling that there are plausible grounds to believe Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, condemns its refusal to comply with the binding measures ordered by the Court, and affirms that it is now right to plainly describe Israel's actions as genocidal. The motion has fired a starting gun on a new conversation within the party regarding the use of the term genocide, only weeks before the national Annual Conference takes places in Bournemouth.

The motion warns that the failure to justly resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict has eroded democracy and civil society on both sides, leaving Palestinians and Israeli civilians trapped in cycles of violence and insecurity, and affirms that only a negotiated political settlement can deliver a just and lasting peace that respects the right to dignity, freedom and security for both peoples.

The Young Liberals urged the UK Government to uphold international law and end its complicity by:

- suspending all military and security cooperation with Israel;
- banning all trade with illegal settlements;
- prosecuting British citizens credibly accused of committing war crimes in Gaza; and
- launching a public inquiry into UK involvement in the conflict.

The motion further calls for:

- targeted sanctions against Israeli officials complicit in unlawful acts;
- suspension of the UK-Israel trade and partnership agreement;
- urgent steps to promote a permanent ceasefire, unrestricted humanitarian aid access; and
- a durable political settlement rooted in peace, justice and democracy.

In his summation the motion, Rowan Fitton, Young Liberals Co-International Officer, said:

“It is not enough to only recognise the state of Palestine as a member of the international community. Whilst a welcome and necessary step, the UK must also take concrete steps to support the long process of reconciliation [between Israelis and Palestinians], invest in the fair and Palestinian-led rebuilding of Gaza, and account for the role played by the UK.”

Anne-Marie Simpson, Chair of Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine, said:

“We warmly welcome this motion, which rightly condemns Israel’s genocidal assault on Gaza and decades-long suppression of the right of the Palestinian people to peace, dignity, justice, and self-determination.

“For too long our government has paid lip service to international law while supplying arms, military support, and diplomatic cover to a state committing some of the worst crimes known to humanity. The UK must stop enabling Israel’s atrocities and end its complicity once and for all.”

The YL’s press release doesn’t say whether Liberal Democrats For Peace in the Middle East or Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel were consulted.

Bournemouth Beyond the BIC

Visit the final graves of Mary Woolstonecraft and William Godwin, moved by her daughter, Mary Shelley, before the railway line blazed through St Pancras Old Cemetery. They are all buried in the grounds of St. Peters Church – the spire over the town shopping centre.

The Russell-Cotes Gallery has exhibitions of the work of May Morris, daughter of William, and of an international tone, Recovering by the Sea, The Indian Army in Bournemouth, 1914-1915. when Indian soldier came the former Mount Dore Hotel, requisitioned as a hospital, to recuperate from injuries on the Western Front.

How much of May Morris’s work do we casually attribute to her father? I think of her honeysuckle le textile and wallpaper design amongst others.

May founded the Women's Guild of Artists With Mary Turner in 1907 because women could not join the Art Workers Guild; so much for socialist equality. The exhibition May Morris, Art and advocacy, focuses on her embroidery and her encouragement of women artists and craft workers. She was active in the creation over the Royal School of Art Needlework And lectured at the late lamented Central School of Art, long gone through the snobbery of British academia..

The Westover gallery has a new collection by British Pop artist JJ Adams, drawing on familiar icons like the work of Beatrix Potter and characters Like Delboy , you will laugh. They also have new glassware by Kosta Boda.

Watch out for the Art & Makers Market on Saturdays, 11.00-5.00pm in Westover Gardens.next to the Aviary – now over 60 years old.

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Can Sunflowers Just Stop Oil?

Ludi Simpson

If you don't have time to read this article, but would consider contributing to our Sunflowers II Legal Fund, it's here and thank you so much: <https://chuffed.org/project/sunflowers-need-your-support>.

If you do have time to read the article, then I've done the same as before: responded to questions people ask, to bring you up to date with my experience of Just Stop Oil and the ongoing legal trials. As ever, if you don't want to receive these, tell me and I'll remove you, no questions asked. The Sunflowers court case is scheduled at Southwark Crown Court for January 5th next year, and the rest of that week.

So Just Stop Oil is 'hanging up the hi-vis'? What do you feel about that?!

Oh dear, yes. Late in March Just Stop Oil announced that it had won an end to new oil licenses and would be taking time out to consider what comes next. I wasn't convinced about the win, but I wanted a chance to learn more of what was going on. To be honest I'd heard someone 'on the inside' saying a year ago that the new crimes targeting exactly what JSO was doing well (slow marching, locking on, ...), coupled with judicial rulings to restrict the right to protest, were making it harder to recruit people to actions. So perhaps this kind of action was bound to grind to a halt. But yes, it was a shock to me that the announcement came without being accompanied by a new direction.

I guess there were too many of the national core team in jail or tired out or lacking ideas for feasible actions in this new legal environment. And Labour had changed nothing in the routine jailing of climate direct action whistleblowers. So, I might regret that those national leaders hadn't planned a response to this somewhat predictable situation, but this is where we all are. Oh, and it hasn't left me high and dry! There is a commitment to supporting all those who took direct action, by publicity, attending court and friendly support.

Maybe 'hanging up the hi-vis' simply recognises that it is now significantly harder to protest openly outside the usual channels. Those usual channels like voting and petitions and lobbying ministers haven't brought the serious climate action that the UN, scientists, and the majority of the UK population say is needed. So do we have to expect more covert action in the future, the kind of direct sabotage encouraged by Swedish climate ecologist and activist Andreas Malm? I don't know. But the community that brought XR to direct action, and produced Insulate Britain and then Just Stop Oil, has not disappeared. And it is not alone in searching for a more effective people-priority politics in the UK.

Surely the Labour government is going to quietly let you all go now?

Well, my Labour MP, Anna Dixon (Shipley) points to a promised review of protest laws, why can't she point to any government intention to remove those laws. It was Keir Starmer who said climate activists would "face the full force of the law" including Suella Braverman's. It's still possible that the Labour government will change its authoritarian approach and end its co-dependence with corporate business. But is there any evidence for it doing so? There seems to more evidence that those Labour politicians who call for such changes are sidelined and damage their political career. Recent Home Office guidance¹ further restricts protests. So, I've little hope in the Labour direction. Hmm, I agree that there's not much fun thinking about politics unless you've got built-in optimism.

Didn't the February appeals reduce the sentences you're likely to get for soup-throwing in the National Gallery?

The headlines said that the Court of Appeal judges 'reduced excessive sentences'. But only 6 of 16 appealed sentences were reduced, by small amounts, with hardly any change in the guidance to interpreting the anti-protest laws. Specifically, for me and Mollie and Phil's National Gallery Sunflowers II case, Anna and Phoebe's appeal against their 2-year sentences for the same action a year before was wholly unsuccessful. We will work with our solicitors Hodge Jones Allen to convince the jury that we should not be found guilty of criminal damage. We didn't damage the painting (we knew it was covered by glass) so the potential damage was to the frame only. We did succeed in getting a lot attention on fossil fuels as the major culprit for climate collapse.

But if the judge limits what we can say, and we can't persuade the jury, we can expect the judge to implement the Court of Appeal precedent of two years imprisonment. With no spanners in the works that would mean 6 months inside, 6 months with a night curfew tag at one address, and then a year on parole with limited movement.

So what about this fundraiser?

We have legal aid for the Sunflowers II case, which we will use to prepare the best defence and the best strategy to convince jury that we were climate whistle-blowers who should not be convicted. But the rules are that you pay contributions towards your legal fees amounting to all your 'disposable' income over several months, calculated by the government as all your income after housing costs and a living allowance. That means we are looking to raise £15,000 to cover our foreseeable legal fees. Anything small or large would be very helpful and Phil, Mollie and I would be very grateful. In the unlikely event that more was raised, it would go to CASP, the charity giving non-professional advice to protesters in the UK at every stage of engaging with the legal system. They really have been invaluable to thousands. Thank you in advance if you can contribute to not criminalising climate protesters. Here's the link again: <https://chuffed.org/project/sunflowers-need-your-support>

Haven't you done enough now to earn some rest?

Ooh, that's such a good question! I get far too much rest, I'm retired! I'm loving my front and back yards with plums and figs for the first time, and raspberry-and-redcurrant jam ripening nicely right now. I've been on a two-week holiday with Sue, and I love the successes of Commoners Choir and friends in the Bradford climate movements. I'm also liking the ways that so many different organisations are asking themselves just how to change a world where democratic politics give us governments that don't provide solutions for people, decade after decade.

"All that protesting has made things worse for democracy after these new laws"

I've given a couple more Q&A sessions and this came up. It seems that it's easy to blame the victim when the perpetrator has authority. Direct action is just one way to tackle this situation. The government is likely to respond with aggression until such time that it's clear that it can't. By the way, I managed to record the last Q&A session and am half way through the laborious task of editing an automatic transcription. If anyone has a way of promoting it, please get in touch.

What about your Gatwick Airport trial?

It was on 11th June! The eight of us who sat in front of the Gatwick South departure gate to get climate publicity during last summer's international Airport Actions, were all found not guilty. At Horsham Magistrates Court, Judge Amanda Kelly ended the trial after hearing the prosecution's case. The prosecution's case. The prosecution had not convinced her there was a case to answer, so she had no need to hear any more. For your information, in case it's ever useful, it is impossible



to cause major disruption by sitting in front of a departure gate. The removable barriers open up multiple alternative routes!

The prosecution were disorganised before the trial and lacklustre at the trial, we were well prepared, and the judge was willing to uphold a right to protest when there was no major disruption. It might also have helped that I managed to borrow some trousers, after forgetting to bring a replacement for my hot-day shorts...

We were very happy after the trial, with a dozen who turned up to support by being in the public gallery. The penalty I risked was a fine or community service, small compared to the risk in the sunflowers trial coming up. But any conviction also affects loans, visas, insurance and more. So, I'm happy to keep my legal good character as long as possible. There is a JSO press release about our Not Guilty verdict².

Hidden Disabilities, Sunflowers and Gatwick Airport

Here's a funny coincidence. While at the trial I noticed for the first time the Hidden Disabilities sunflower scheme. Anyone can wear a green lanyard with sunflowers to indicate a hidden disability. The idea is that shops or officials know to give you space to express your needs. The scheme was started at Gatwick Airport. I'm wondering whether I should wear one to the Crown Court in January to indicate the cards stacked against climate and other protesters, and the space we need to explain ourselves to the jury.

Thanks, that's it, and I hope you're all enjoying life and able to contribute to make this badly managed world a little bit better.

Ludi Simpson

Oh, here's that fundraiser again. <https://chuffed.org/project/sunflowers-need-your-support>

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cwyg0jyjnwxwo>

² <https://juststopoil.org/2025/06/12/gatwick-airport-8-acquitted-after-judge-rules-insufficient-evidence-of-serious-disruption/>

Challenging Labour's attacks on the right to peaceful protest

Following on from the spirit of Ludi Simpson's article, an emergency motion has been submitted following the astonishing assaults by Labour on protest which seem to be targeted on protests against the Gaza genocide [which we understand will be the subject of a separate motion]. Quite frankly, Labour is making fools of the police, using them for their own shabby political ends. Full details of the motion - Challenging Labour's attacks on the right to peaceful protest, can be found in the online edition of interLib, but the summation is:

Conference calls for:

- The Government to reverse the proscription of Palestine Action
- Clear instructions to be issued to UK police forces that the right to peaceful protest is an irreducible human right which is respected throughout the United Kingdom, following the overturning of the Public Order Act 1986 (Serious Disruption to the Life of the Community) Regulations 2023 in the Court of Appeal
- Liberal Democrats at all levels to challenge and oppose further attempts to curtail the inalienable right of citizens to protest peacefully.



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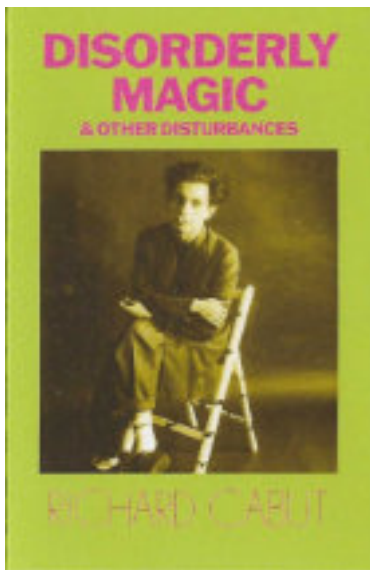
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Reviews

Disorderly Magic and Other Disturbances, audio release by Richard Cabut.

Many years ago, I made a mental note not to review poetry, why make a bigger fool of myself? The Fool is of course a transitional archetype. When asked to review the cassette of Richard Cabut's *Disorderly Magic* I should have resisted; I don't even have a working cassette player - that could be resolved. A punk poet, most of my collection of punk rock was on cassette, much of it badly recorded at concerts, unplayable by the time I left London more than a decade ago. That somebody was still using the cassette as a medium was enticing in itself. Of course, I did not have the book, could not locate it in any of the small independent book shops close by me. But perhaps that's the point; poetry is an aural medium. Listen to it; take it for its word.



Richard Cabut's *Disorderly Magic* immediately became a best seller; the cassette is the chosen medium. Although I read a lot of poetry, aloud, fleeting references can elude you. Without the reference of the printed word, it is best to dwell on the familiar and see where that takes you.

Cabut opens reflecting on a screening of Andy Warhol's *Chelsea Girls* in the Scala cinema, King's Cross. Was this some kind of golden age for the punk imagination; Lou Reed, Nico, the Factory and all that. The Chelsea Hotel, 222 West 23rd Street, Manhattan, had seen better days by the time of Warhol's film. Dylan Thomas to Bob Dylan, what would become a glittering literati passed through and with them, as urban decay set in, drug use, prostitution and who knows what else? It now only exists in name and memory; each in conflict with the other. At 3½ hours and each screening unique as the dark and light of the twin projections don't quite synchronise, years on, I can't recall how closely Cabut follows the dialogue, but his poetry takes on the proportions of the works of Blake or Swinburne. He cannot linger between the frames of the film. Soon we are out in the

frames of the film. Soon we are out in the streets, not just King's Cross, his Chelsea Girls roam the metropolis, the punk femmes of his youth. The Portobello Hotel was not the Chelsea Hotel, though it might have liked to have been – neither are what they once were; London is not New York. One can recall his Chelsea Girls, more alive than Warhol could make them out to be. They say *there is no poetry to be extracted from my life*, yet here we are, in print somewhere and on cassette, *poetry revealing personality disorder*. Cabut used the term 'Disorderly Magic' in his memoir of Jordan¹, what better example could there be?

Cabut's urban landscapes seem to revel in squalor; the Aylesbury and White City Estates are iconic, I always sought to make the best of them, though not a journey I ever took, many of the streets betwixt are familiar and full of wonders if you really look. Can the flaneur travel by taxi?

Sans text, does Cabut stray from 'angel' to the Polish 'anioł' in his account of his mother's journey? It sounds like it (I later discover this was the case, reciprocating). She was one of two million Poles deported to Siberia on 10th February 1940 when Russia invaded eastern Poland as part of its pact with Nazi Germany; Socialism in action, trust nobody who thinks they have the solution. Her village is now within Ukraine. Poland was part of the Soviet empire from 1944 to 1993 when the last troops withdrew. After a despairing journey Cabut's mother eventually settled in Dunstable, Bedfordshire, where his journey (almost) ends in *Ghost Music*, his family predeceasing him, personal resurrection apart. Yet the room of his first memory cannot contain him, he is off to Godard's *Alphaville*, down paths traced by Borges and Éluard, a poet first. Cabut's poetry is best when it is most personal.

So, we have travelled down streets of alienation, *people living in cities to be alone*; in presenting his work through the spoken word does Cabut's poetry seek to escape or celebrate this? What would I say to the poet? Be concise; even as performance poetry your pieces are generally too long; were I to read them, would they hold my attention? Yes, I think, where they are most personal, but would the poem's free verse hold me where it digresses?

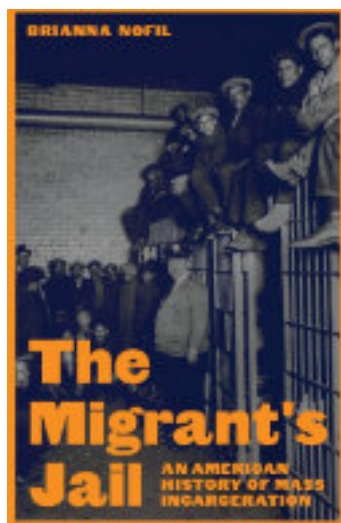
Cabut's voice is underlaid by a continuo of 'ambient dark jazz sonic landscapes', chosen himself and carefully mixed to enhance, not over-power (the hand of Fritz Catlin?). Paul T Kirk (Akatombo) provides the backing to *Chelsea Girls*; Necessary Animals to *Disorderly Magic*, which was previously known as *Unkempt Magic*; Simon Beesley, of June Brides, *In The City*; Deptford's Band Of Holy Joy, *10th Floor*; Keith Rodway, *Aniol*; and AKA (Anthony Moore, Keith Rodway & Amanda Thompson) to *Ghost Music*. A veritable cast. If you are like Colin from *Froth on the Daydream*, you'll be needing this... at least once.

How do you acquire this gem? Putting the question to Google, Dash the Henge, in Brixton came up <https://dashthehengestore.com/> - the Disorderly Magic cassette was launched there on 22nd May... you probably need to visit the store anyway. Otherwise Far West Press is the main distributor - they ship worldwide from NY.

The book, incidentally, is published by Far West Press, isbn 979898506755 – many more poems than on the cassette, but Chelsea Girls are greedy and take up a lot of space. You don't have to use bibliomancy to know that pataphysics is the only science.

Stewart Rayment

¹ International Times, 9.4.2022 – Pamela Rooke, aka Jordan (23 June 1955 – 3 April 2022)



The Migrant's Jail: An American History of Mass Incarceration,
by Brianna Nofil
Princeton University Press, 2024 £28.00
isbn 9780691237039

This is a book about the history of migrant detention in the United States, from the early 20th century to today. It is well-researched, setting out both the wider political context and individual migrants' stories. However, it fails to put forward an alternative approach to enforcing immigration law, which is desperately needed on both sides of the Atlantic.

Nofil's key point is that the US federal government uses a network of local jails (usually at the county level) to detain immigrants, which she argues leads to a range of problems, such as: (i) a dispersed and ever-changing network of detention centres so it is difficult for anyone to understand what is happening; (ii) blurring of lines between those detained for alleged breaches of criminal

law, and immigrants; (iii) financial incentives for counties to make money whilst providing minimum service, with limited federal oversight of detention conditions. Nofil also discusses time periods when federal detention centres or privately-run institutions were more popular, but these arrangements did not appear to mean better conditions. She makes a compelling case that many immigrants have suffered in detention, subject to the whims of politicians, police and judges.

A lot of the book is clearly US-centric, and stems from particular characteristics in that country, such as the division of powers between agencies and levels of government. However, some of the broader points are worthy of being considered elsewhere. For example, a common theme is the extent to which immigration policy is decided by political changes which are beyond any immigrant's control. Someone's experience of the system, including whether they are detained at all, is often arbitrarily determined by these political moods. At the beginning of the book, she describes how fear of the 'Chinese Problem' led to the Chinese Exclusion Act, and many Chinese people being detained in the early 1900s. In the 1960 and 1970s, attention turned to detaining people from Haiti, as the US decided to support the Haitian government and so would not recognise people fleeing the Caribbean country as refugees.

Although the exact time periods and affected nationalities will vary, many modern countries, such as the UK, will have adopted similar approaches of favouring or fearing different source countries over time. We would expect similar stories of an arbitrary increased risk of detention or deportation for nationals from certain countries as they fell out of favour with their country of destination.

However, the easy conclusion of innocent immigrants vs. a cruel and bureaucratic government misses the nuances. In the opening chapter, when she describes the detention of Chinese people under the Chinese Exclusion Act, Nofil explains that it was common practice for Chinese nationals to claim that they were US citizens, although they did not have any papers to prove this. As the US authorities could often not disprove their claim, after some time in detention, the Chinese migrants were usually released. Nofil does not explain

how else the US government should have dealt with people who (as seems generally acknowledged) were fraudulently claiming to be US citizens and did not have any legitimate claim to be in the country.

Leaving aside the obviously racist motivation for the Chinese Exclusion Act, there is a basic question to be answered of how a government should enforce its immigration laws. But Nofil does not set out any solution to the issues she has identified. There are some suggestions that she does not support any form of detention for immigrants, such as when she criticizes migrants for being treated in the same way as criminals. However, it is unclear what measures she does consider the federal government should use to enforce immigration law - or if she thinks that it should be enforced at all.

Some of this book seems defeatist and the reader may be left with the impression that enforcing immigration law in a fair and compassionate way is impossible, so there is no point trying. If Nofil is advocating for completely open borders, it would be an oversight not to make that radical position express in the book. So, we are therefore left with the unsatisfactory conclusion that all attempts in the US to date to enforce immigration law are flawed (and many of the problems probably also exist elsewhere), but there is nothing better on the horizon. Avoiding the debate entirely is not a tenable position in a world where stricter immigration enforcement is on the rise. Leaving it in the hands of only those who care little for the humane treatment of immigrants does not seem to be outcome that Nofil would want.

Eleanor Healy-Birt

**The Mission: The CIA in the 21st Century, by Tim Weiner,
William Collins 2025**



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Donald Trump isn't the first US president to ignore his intelligence agencies. Reading this disturbing chronicle of American missteps reminds us of the ignorance of the G W Bush White House (on all aspects of Iraq), the naivety of Obama (on Russian cyberattacks), and the arrogance of Biden (the withdrawal from Afghanistan).

In the months before 9/11, the CIA warned repeatedly that a profoundly serious Al Qaeda attack was in the works, but their intel was dismissed by Condi Rice, the National Security Advisor, because the administration was obsessed by Iraq.

The fraudster Ahmed Chalabi contradicted CIA doubts about WMD, conning the US taxpayers out of hundreds of millions of dollars to support his plans to foment an uprising against Saddam. America was clueless about Iraq because Saddam had killed any opponent who might pass information to the States. And the CIA knew little about Al Qaeda because the institution had been hollowed out by politicians after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The CIA lacked the language skills to interrogate the detainees they tortured so brutally, or the context to understand what they were told.

For all their arrogance, the Americans emerge as gullible, with Pakistan playing Washington for decades, while actively supporting the Taliban and Al Qaeda. In one episode, Pakistani leader Musharraf persuaded Vice-President Dick Cheney to evacuate hundreds of ISI (Pakistani intelligence) officers from Kunduz, north of Kabul, "to save Pakistani dignity" as the Taliban closed in. The "ISI officers" were Musharraf's friends in the Taliban and Al Qaeda who the USA duly ferried to the tribal wild west of Waziristan where they continue to cause immense suffering to the Pakistani population.

The US taxpayer has also shelled out \$50 billion to mass murderers running Egypt ("an island of stability") since Camp David; \$600m to Erik Prince's Blackwater mercenaries; and they continue to give Pakistan \$6 billion a year, despite their serial deception.

The money trousered by President Karzai and his drug-dealer brother in Afghanistan, and sundry war lords in Iraq is literally beyond calculation. No wonder that American voters liked it when Trump promised no more foreign entanglements.

The White House never grasped that America's reckless footprint was a recruiting tool for Islamists and other terrorists. Weiner recounts the shambles after the overthrow of Saddam. The White House "had no plan", and as Richard Armitage, the deputy Secretary of State, remarked, "Bush didn't know why he was president."

Paul Bremer, appointed by the White House to run Iraq, famously fired Baath Party members, including all the security services who promptly joined jihadist insurgencies and stole the Iraqi army's weapons which had been left unguarded by US troops. The insurgents brought poverty and unimaginable suffering to the people of Iraq, once a middle-income nation where Iraqi women's rights were envied by females across the Muslim world. The instability continues there to this day, with Iran in de facto control in Baghdad and Islamic State biding their time until Trump withdraws America's remaining forces. As Weiner says, it took four years for the Americans to ask themselves why so many Iraqis had become their enemies and what the insurgents wanted, or to see the connections with Syria and Iran. They were clueless.

Weiner's chapters on rendition to black sites (Egypt, Poland, Morocco, Romania, Lithuania, Thailand) reveals that useful information was divulged before torture began, and detainees produced rubbish thereafter, hoping to stop the interrogations. The author also reminds us that torture wasn't a rogue CIA operation: Bush approved it.

Through all of this, Bush preferred the positive spin he got from the US military rather than the CIA's gloomy reports. Like Nixon, (and now Trump), Bush thought the CIA were a bunch of "leftists" seeking to undermine him.

Some of the book's other highlights: the remarkably arrogant General David Petraeus handed highly sensitive CIA information to his mistress who was writing her PhD; for years, the CIA ignored social media and other open source information because it wasn't "secret."; during the first Trump election campaign, his people held 38 meetings with the Russians and 272 email or phone conversations with them – and the CIA was unaware of Russian bots spreading disinformation about Hillary Clinton on Facebook; Obama refused to reveal this Russian interference because he didn't want to be seen as biased, a piety shared by many Democrats who still don't realise we are in new times; neither the CIA nor the US army foresaw the immediate collapse of the Afghan government when the US withdrew four years ago; and two weeks before Hamas attacked Israel on October 7th, Jake Sullivan, the National Security Advisor, said the Middle East was quieter than it had been for two decades.

A fascinating read for those who are interested in the decline and fall of the American empire.

Rebecca Tinsley

Get Carman, in court with George Carman QC, Britain's most feared lawyer - The man behind the advocate, by Karen Phillips. Biteback 2024 isbn 978 178590 8989

The index to this book is awesome, five pages of names in a small typeface; a veritable who's who of the last 50 years or so celebratii. But you're not interested in those, you're only interested in one, Jeremy Thorpe. George Carman has fought a lot of cases, but you're only interested in Jeremy Thorpe. Well, I'm only interested in Jeremy Thorpe too, when it comes to it, so what does Karen Phillips have to say

Phillips contests that the case was a major turning point in George Carman's life. He was offered a very low fee, what the publicity would be immense, thereby enhancing his reputation. I'm pretty sure George Carman had a reputation at that point, which is why George Carman. Thorpe and his fellow defendants were found not guilty, innocent of the charges against them. The gutter press has never accepted this, but who believes anything you read in the papers these days? One wonders if Milton could write the Areopagitica now.

Carmen also took down Jonathan Aitken & Neil Hamilton, and when, at a by-election in Liverpool, I was unable to deliver a Focus to Ken Dodd's house in Knotty Ash for want of a letterbox,

Stewart Rayment

