

# Labour Affairs

Incorporating the Labour and Trade Union Review

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## The Great Reform Fraud

At the time of writing [2 May 2025] Reform has narrowly won the Runcorn and Helsby byelection, displacing the Labour Party from this seat. Reform is also set to do well in local elections including winning a mayoralty in Lincolnshire. The Workers Party has failed to make an impact in these elections despite having a good candidate in Runcorn and other places. What is going on?

*Labour Affairs* has argued that Reform is essentially a right wing version of the Tory Party led by someone with a flair for electoral politics and media presence and with ample funding. There is talk among the Tories about some form of accommodation with Reform, which may happen sooner or later. Why is Reform causing the Labour Party such problems if they are a right wing Tory Party? The answer is that they have an appeal to disillusioned Labour voters by prioritising certain issues that appeal to working class voters

including restrictions on immigration, increasing police numbers and cutting NHS waiting lists. Nationalising steel and semi-nationalising the water industry are also attractive propositions which Labour is scared of. Reform was also a natural focus for voters looking to give the Labour Party a good kicking.

Voters do not look at party manifestos but that of Reform is revealing. Restricting non-essential immigration is a minimalist approach to immigration shared by Labour and Conservative parties. It is also evident that Reform wish to undermine the NHS, give bigger tax breaks to the rich than to lower income earners in keeping with its right wing Tory outlook. If Reform were in government the working class would suffer even more than they do under Labour and did under the Tories. They are able to get away with this because they are well funded and get a lot of media attention. What they are currently doing is similar to

Boris Johnson's 'Red Wall' strategy in 2019, appealing to Labour voters with left wing sounding promises. As we all know, the Tory Party did not tolerate this pro working class tilt, Johnson was removed and 'levelling up' was shaved down to a few token gestures. There is good reason to suppose the same would happen with Reform in power.

What can a party that stands up for the working class do? In contrast to Reform it can advocate taxing the rich more, particularly the assets of the rich such as property. This can at least contribute to the revival of areas neglected by the main parties. It can invest in the revival of local transport, amenities and vocational

education in those areas. But a working class party needs resources. The trade union movement continues to back the anti-working-class Labour Party. This makes no sense. It is time that some trade unions broke ranks and supported a working class party with a realistic appeal to working people. This means dispensing with some left obsessions such as unrestricted immigration and support for identity politics and focusing on what matters to working people. Until this is done a fraudulent party like Reform will continue to run rings around the electorate and, no doubt will end up merging with or taking over the Tories.

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## Labour Affairs

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# Sahra Wagenknecht Group

## —Letter to Supporters

*[Labour Affairs: This long letter from the leadership of the BSW comes at a difficult time for the party. After a strong showing in regional elections at the end of 2024, the failure to gain seats in the Bundestag at the recent general election in February came as a crushing disappointment. However, the letter is notable for drawing attention to some of the problems that they faced, including a hostile media coverage, as well as lack of coverage, the promotion of rival parties such as Die Linke by the media and possible electoral sharp practice.]*

*There is also some self-criticism. The party has been kept deliberately small to ensure that it has a cohesive and committed membership. However, events have moved quickly and there has been a lack of co-ordination between national and regional leaderships regarding coalitions which has led to disillusionment among some supporters. Being a small membership party fighting a general election in a large country has also put a huge strain on personnel and resources. However, the party is adamant that it is a mistake to be hostile to voters who support the AfD as many of these are potential (and in the past actual) supporters of the BSW. BSW is keen to show that it has a broad appeal to working class voters and is committed to detaching them from parties like the AfD which are capitalist but pretend to be on the side of the working class. The party is now taking steps to address the membership issue, while remaining careful about whom it admits.*

*BSW's present position illustrates the challenges facing small socialist parties operating in a hostile media environment fighting on a national scale. Labour Affairs remains confident that they will overcome these challenges in due course, but no-one should underestimate the difficulties. It is also a healthy sign that the party is prepared to acknowledge mistakes to its*

*membership. The ability to look at one's performance and to learn from it is indispensable to a party that wishes to make progress.]*

### Dear friends,

It has been a month and a half since the federal election, and we know that many of you have questions about the future of our party. We hope to answer some of them in this letter.

First, the most important news: The BSW is continuing its fight and is needed! In recent weeks, we have received many messages from committed supporters and members with a clear message: now more than ever! In its first year, our party achieved spectacular election successes in the European elections and the state elections, and in the federal elections, almost 2.5 million voters placed their trust in us. Our important project must not now fail because of 9,500 (allegedly) missing votes. Thousands want to continue their commitment to the BSW, and their justified demand of us is to set the course now so that our party has a future.

In view of insane rearmament and a media campaign that wants to make the people in our country mentally fit for war, the BSW is urgently needed as the only consistent party for peace and disarmament in Germany. In view of the economic crisis and the threat of key industries leaving Germany, a trend that is being reinforced by Trump's trade policy, we are also needed as an important voice that demands effective economic policy responses instead of moral outrage: Without overcoming our energy and digital dependence on the United States, without reimporting cheap energy and without good economic relations with the BRICS countries, we will not be able to stop deindustrialisation. No other party represents this with such clarity and combines the demand for realistic anti-crisis policies with the demand for greater social justice: better wages and pensions, good education for all, an end to two-tier healthcare and a fair tax system. Unfortunately, none of this can be expected from the new CDU-SPD coalition, which is more likely to deliver a repeat of the

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traffic light coalition, paternalism and continued arrogance towards the interests of those who are not on the sunny side of life.

We are also very concerned about the increasingly authoritarian tendencies in our society, the alarming narrowing of the corridor of opinion and the growing pressure on citizens to conform. Not only, but especially when it comes to the question of war and peace, today's debate is reminiscent of George Orwell's famous novel 1984, in which those in power turn concepts into their opposites in order to keep the population docile and loyal: hate is love and war is peace. Anyone who stands up against the mainstream and criticises government action today must increasingly reckon with serious personal consequences: from the loss of career opportunities to fines, and now, for the first time, even a prison sentence has been imposed for a satirical meme. This trend is alarming.

At the same time, surveillance of citizens by the state and digital corporations is being expanded. For the first time, people have experienced this new authoritarianism in all its severity during the coronavirus pandemic. The coronavirus hysteria is over, but the hysterical charged debates, the deliberate stirring up of fears and the development towards an illiberal society remain. The demand for a reappraisal of the injustices of the coronavirus pandemic and the fight against surveillance and authoritarian arrogance for a pluralistic, liberal society are part of the BSW's DNA. We are needed for this too.

Especially as respect for basic democratic rules is declining. Not only in Turkey, but also in EU countries, attempts are being made to prevent unpopular political rivals from standing for election by undemocratic means. The fact that these are usually politicians on the political right, for whom we also have no sympathy, does not alter the fact that this approach is

worthy of criticism. In Germany, too, the future government is debating lowering the barriers to prevent opposition politicians from standing for election. We firmly reject any such attempt to eliminate political rivals.

The BSW itself was also the target of undemocratic attacks during the 2025 federal election campaign. This included a massive smear campaign in many media outlets and the arbitrary downgrading of the BSW to 3 per cent in polls in order to discourage people from voting for us. The prevention of many Germans living abroad, who traditionally vote disproportionately for opposition parties, from participating in the election also belongs in this context.

The fact that the BSW has so far been denied the chance of a recount, despite the extremely close result, obvious irregularities and a far above-average error rate compared to the established parties (as evidenced by the more than 4,000 votes 'found' in sporadic checks), is not only a slap in the face for our voters. It also means that the new Bundestag is highly unlikely to be legally constituted and that the CDU-SPD coalition has no democratic legitimacy. We will therefore now file an election review complaint and contest the election result with the aim of achieving a correct recount of all votes.

Of course, we ourselves made mistakes last year and lost voters and supporters of the BSW who initially supported our project with great enthusiasm. We want to do everything we can to win them back. A major challenge in our short party history has been the rapid succession of five election campaigns. Instead of being able to discuss election programmes and our positions on issues with our members and supporters, we had to quickly establish regional associations, draw up regional lists and create the organisational conditions for promising election

campaigns.

The results of the European elections and the state elections proved that our assessment was correct: before the BSW was founded, there was a large void in the party spectrum, and many former non-voters and voters who would otherwise have voted for the AfD gave us their votes. However, the major electoral successes at state level also led to a problem: the coalition negotiations were a real challenge for our young party. In Brandenburg, we were at least able to send clear signals on peace policy in the exploratory paper, which is an important achievement in the current climate. The abstention of the federal states of Brandenburg and Thuringia, which are co-governed by the BSW, in the Bundesrat on both the Ukraine resolution, which called for further arms deliveries (we were the only ones to do so), and on the largest arms package in the history of the Federal Republic, proved that the BSW makes a difference in government and stands for the most important issue of our time, the question of war and peace. This is our most important unique selling point compared to all other parties.

However, we have not yet been sufficiently successful in comparable areas of state politics. Due to budgetary constraints, for which federal policy is primarily responsible, we can only achieve very limited improvements for people in the states, insofar as these cost money. But not every improvement costs a lot of money. In future, we must work together to consider how we can place greater emphasis on original BSW policies at state level. Deteriorations in services and budget cuts must, of course, remain taboo. We must also work to ensure that all state politicians represent the policies that define the BSW and for which we were elected. This applies in particular to the handling of the coronavirus crisis and the AfD, but also to other issues. Statements in state parliaments that are diametrically

opposed to our programme cost us trust and drive voters away.

The federal election campaign has shown once again that the price for the mobilising effect of the *firewall debate* on the left is even stronger mobilisation in favour of the AfD. On this side of the firewall, one can feel morally incredibly noble, good and anti-fascist, but in the end, all one achieves is that more and more people gather behind the firewall out of justified outrage at all the unresolved problems, the incompetence of politicians and the undemocratic treatment of a political opponent. It is a serious mistake for the new federal government to continue this course. That is why we stand by our position: Yes to political debate with the AfD. No to undemocratic exclusion rituals, which, as we have seen for years, only make them stronger.

The fact that there are neo-Nazis and right-wing extremists in the AfD should be one more reason to finally take the concerns of AfD voters seriously, precisely because, with the exception of a very small minority, these voters are not right-wing extremists or Nazis. The fact that we too have so far failed to adequately represent these concerns in the state governments has driven a significant proportion of our potential voters, who had still placed their trust in us in the European and state elections, back to the AfD in the federal elections.

According to a January 2025 poll, Thuringian BSW voters were particularly dissatisfied with the Thuringian coalition, even more dissatisfied than voters for Die Linke, whose party is not even part of the government. This should give us pause for thought. This also explains the disproportionately sharp decline in the federal elections in the very state where we originally had by far the greatest voter potential. The fact that the federal and state governments did not initially pull together in the formation of the Thuringian government contributed to voters turning away in disappointment. We must not resign ourselves to this.

The formation of the state associations and state lists and the thin staffing of the BSW in the early

days also resulted in a significant overlap of personnel between state executive committees and parliamentary groups, with the state chairpersons in the states where we are part of the government also serving as ministers. This situation should be overcome in the re-election of the committees.

If we do not want to lose our profile in government, we need the state executive committees to act as critical and supportive companions to government action, not as an extension of government members.

The heavy demands placed on our small and young party by the election campaigns also meant that the ongoing development of the party, including the creation of regional structures, working relationships and discussion forums, largely fell by the wayside in the first year. This is another reason why we found it difficult to ensure that every member, and especially every office holder, is aware of the BSW's position on individual issues. We urgently need to improve in this area, especially now that we want to grow faster and recruit members more quickly.

Many applicants, including committed supporters of our election campaigns, have been waiting for membership for a year, and quite a few have heard little from us so far and have therefore turned away in frustration. We regret this very much and will therefore focus on party building and membership recruitment in the coming months. The focus will be on the many supporters who have helped us through our first year. We are delighted that so many people still want to support the BSW as members and will do everything we can to ensure a swift admission process and better involvement of applicants and supporters in internal party discussions. As a first step, we will admit 1,200 new members by 30 April 2025, as proposed by the regional associations.

We need ideas to counter the media blockade. To this end, we will expand our independent publication channels (newsletter, Telegram) and, in addition to the newsletter, send out regular member letters to keep you up to date on all important activities and issues. We know that we need

to improve our communication, including communication with you, our members and supporters. At the same time, we need to professionalise our social media presence in order to reach more people with our content again. We are currently working on this.

Another task ahead of us is the development of a detailed policy programme. We have had initial expert consultations and want to initiate further ones. Above all, however, we need discussion processes about our future programme. There is a lot of expertise in our party, and we want to make the best possible use of it.

Our party also needs a new name, preferably retaining the abbreviation BSW. We are counting on your creativity to come up with ideas for a new name. We will set up a contact point in the spring where you can send your suggestions. Ultimately, we will have to vote on our future name in a democratic process.

Our next federal party conference is expected to take place in November of this year. This party conference will be a delegate conference because our party will soon be too large for a membership conference.

Another key area of action is the upcoming state and local election campaigns. The great willingness and motivation to bring BSW politics to the municipalities and federal states is encouraging, and we want to accompany and support this as best we can from the federal level.

Failing to enter the Bundestag is undoubtedly a setback for us. Even if the official final result is ultimately incorrect, the fact remains that if we had reached significantly more voters, even errors in the count in the one per thousand range would not have prevented us from entering the Bundestag. That is why we must learn from our mistakes and do better in the future. For a strong BSW for the people of our country! Let's work on this together.

Yours, Sahra Wagenknecht,  
Amira Mohamed Ali,  
Christian Leye

# USA Going to the Robodogs

By Gwydion M. Williams

Trump is President for the second time, because he promises to do something about the long-term decline of the USA as a manufacturing power.

Not just cheap production of US designs, which is how it started in the 1980s. Being aware that Mao's China had launched satellites and exploded hydrogen bombs after the Soviet Union turned against them under Khrushchev, I had expected the successful rise of China to continue now that the USA was not boycotting them.<sup>1</sup>

Things like China's remarkable take-over of fields like electric vehicles, solar power, drones, humanoid robots, and the increasingly popular robodogs. I've just seen details of their Mountain Cat M20, a next-gen robot that climbs, jumps, swims, and powers through the toughest terrain; useful for war as well as emergency rescues. And the 'Land Aircraft Carrier', a large six-wheeled, four-seat van that also carries a two-person electric vertical take-off and landing quadcopter drone in its rear compartment. The quadcopter can automatically deploy from the van and reattach after flight, with a flight time of approximately 30 minutes. It was displayed at the Zhuhai Air Show in November 2024. On sale soon at a quarter of a million dollars, though much more in the USA if the tariff war continues.

None of this is good for the US. Whether Trump reverses the trend is another matter. Like every US president since Reagan, he is committed to getting rid of rules disliked by

industry, and letting the rich take a larger share of the nation's wealth. He has also been hostile to the broad spread of subsidised scientific and technological research that gave the USA the microchip and the internet. And let a research physicist at the particle-smasher CERN use his freedom for private and possibly useless projects. What he did was start the World Wide Web by developing a useful computer language for the old idea of hypertext.

The Trump administration is keen to cut back on state-subsidised research that it sees no immediate need for. I see this as an extension of previous errors, made by cost-cutting Congressmen with a background in law or marketing or financial tricks.

Much of what they cut will indeed have no benefit except for the joy of discovering new truths. New truths that they are mostly uninterested in, and sometimes hostile to.

Back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, radio emerged unexpectedly from works of pure science. First James Clarke Maxwell worked out the maths of the mysterious ways in which electricity and magnetism interacted, with their forces at right-angles to each other. He noticed that free-running electromagnetic waves were possible, and that their predicted speed was remarkably similar to the known speed of light. A speed discovered by astronomers, based on variations in the times observed for eclipses of the moons of Jupiter as their distance from Earth varies during Earth's orbit.

From there, Hertz decided

to see if he could work with invisible rays with longer wavelengths than light. He saw no practical use for such things, despite the interesting fact that they could pass through walls. Be detectable over greater distances than the lantern signals that were already being used.

The knowledge being there and open for everyone, people soon put it to use. Notably Marconi, and the innovative Marconi was quite comfortable with Italian fascism when it later took over his country. Actual fascism was not at all like what Trump is doing: both Mussolini and Hitler extended welfare for ordinary workers. Hitler favoured science and innovation, so long as it wasn't Jewish: unfortunately for him non-religious Jews were almost a majority of the top minds in abstract realms of subatomic physics that led to the atom bomb. Many of those who made it a weapon usable in World War Two would not have worked on such a thing without seeing Jews everywhere being threatened. And contrary to what some believe, the German and strictly non-Jewish atomic project was aimed just at peaceful nuclear power, which it anyway never made useful.

Despite such errors, fascism was a viable model for a modernist future. Without the Soviet Union and its ruthless strengthening under Stalin, it would probably have become the European norm. Meaning among other things that Ukraine might have been settled by Germans and entirely cleared of those classed as Slavonic and inferior. That would have included the Banderists that

<sup>1</sup> <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/recent-issues/2019-11-magazine/2019-11/>



Kiev now treats as heroes.<sup>2</sup>

To get back to robodogs, the Soviet Union was at one time a leading player. The Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology produced a rather limited device called Masha in 1968, though it has largely been written out of history. Only China's DeepSeek has details: the rest of the internet has it confused with an imaginary device in a Soviet cartoon.

It was the USA that made the first useful devices, but China has now taken up the idea and gone much further. China remains Leninist, and directly inspired by the Soviet experience up to the 1950s. The Soviet Union messed up when Khrushchev pretended that Stalin was something radically different from Lenin. And that a pseudo-market system under total state control was the best way forward.<sup>3 4</sup> By contrast in China, Deng was wiser, keeping political control but allowing private enterprise under regulation. Something that Lenin tried with the New Economic Policy, and that Mao might have allowed under his scheme for New Democracy. Might have preferred had the USA not been an implacable foe that maintained till the early 1970s that the Taiwan remnant was the legitimate government of all China.

In today's world, most of the new Chinese devices are much more than copies. The same general idea, certainly, just as Henry Ford made a success of the automobiles that many others had been building. He fought from 1903 to 1911 to

avoid paying royalties on an extremely broad concept patent:

"The patent covered any automobile propelled by an engine powered by gasoline vapor... Ford appealed, and on January 10, 1911, won his case based on an argument that the engine used in automobiles was not based on George Brayton's engine, the Brayton engine which Selden had improved, but on the Otto engine."<sup>5</sup>

The Otto engine had been developed for stationary power devices, ignoring petrol powered automobiles. An example of how some industries stick to what they know and ignore wilder possibilities. And I've heard complaints about other big firms using patents to stifle ideas they have no interest in.

Another classic case is Apple computers. The ideas of a computer screen showing apparent objects and controlled by a mouse emerged from a freely-innovating centre that the copier company Xerox set up when it decided it had to move in computers. But its top management decided to compete directly with IBM for the classical distant big computers with professional operators. It had a little device called the Xerox Alto, which had many of the features of later personal computers.<sup>6</sup> It was experimental, but led onto the half-forgotten Xerox Star, which sold for \$16,000 in 1981, but flopped.<sup>7</sup> Too expensive to buy except as a tool for a professional office, but they might have started the computer office revolution earlier had the right people been listened to.

The advocates of these devices had given demonstrations at company gatherings. The mostly-male managers were unimpressed – but there was enthusiasm from their wives, who were part of the gathering and who were mostly former secretaries. Mostly the people who would previously have done the dull complex and routine works that managers could push off on another human.<sup>8</sup> But the view of the wives was ignored. Copier salesmen used to making sales to male managers never thought to suggest that secretaries be brought in to see if the new computers would suit their own work.

Much bigger success came with the Apple Macintosh, sold in 1984 at \$2,495, which private users could afford. And it seems that managers bought this and similar devices from the budget specified for typewriters. And then showed them as an existing success to more senior managers. Included things like spreadsheets, which are easy with computers but enormously hard and seldom used before the first office computers.

The billionaires grouped around Trump are people similar to Ford. People who made a marketing success of ideas that others had developed. They seem not to understand the need for a free flow of ideas that may not make any sense in immediate marketing terms. So while they may bring some jobs back to the USA, these will not be good jobs. And they are mostly hostile to the churn of innovations that China is successfully managing.

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stepan\\_Bandera](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stepan_Bandera)

<sup>3</sup> <https://labouraffairs-magazine.com/the-soviet-past/market-socialism-in-the-soviet-union/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://labouraffairs-magazine.com/the-soviet-past/marxism-and-market-socialism/>

<sup>5</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_B.\\_Selden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_B._Selden)

<sup>6</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xerox\\_Alto](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xerox_Alto)

<sup>7</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xerox\\_Star](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xerox_Star)

<sup>8</sup> Fumbling the Future: How Xerox Invented, then Ignored, the First Personal Computer. By Douglas K. Smith. Page 209.

## Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

**Crimea, Victim of West Ukrainian Extremism**

**Lies as the Poison of Democracy**

**Squeezing Protestors**

**Global But Ignoble**

**Fading Fear of China**

**Snippets**

**Old World Civilisations Unite?**

**Diversity for Superior Persons?**

**Is Dyslexia a Woke Imaginary Illness?**

**What Actually Works?**

**US Pressure on India**

**Crimea,**

**Victim of West Ukrainian Extremism**

"Crimea is at the centre of one of the biggest geopolitical crises in Europe since the end of the Cold War, as Russia faces off with the west over Ukraine. Crimea is a hub for pro-Russian sentiment, owing to ties with the country which date back centuries. Crimea remains an important base for Russia, both strategically and ideologically, but not all Crimeans are sympathetic to their former ruler – including the historically anti-Russian Crimean Tatars."<sup>1</sup>

That was *The Guardian* back in 2014, when their general dislike of everything Russian still had some connection with objective truth.

Nowadays, almost any Western source will make you believe it was like Czechoslovakia 1968. The crushing of the Prague Spring really was Moscow using its army to crush a population, and one that was anyway still socialist in its aims. 38% had voted Communist in the Western-style elections in 1946: they just wanted a relaxation.<sup>2</sup>

Had there been someone like Gorbachev in charge in Moscow in the late 1960s, the system might have evolved within a Leninist framework, as China did after Mao.<sup>3</sup> Evolved with modest changes.

There was nothing modest in what the Kiev regime was trying to do in 2014. A parliament influenced by a mob, and maybe also by US bribes.

In Ukraine 2014, the USA must have been offended that the rather useless President they got elected in 2004 was generally despised by 2010. That a majority decided to elect Yushchenko, the target of

their first Orange Revolution. Who in 2014 offered a new Presidential election ahead of schedule, which might have kept the peace.<sup>4</sup>

The USA has always coached its foreign pupils to demand complete surrender rather than risk an unbiased election. That was true during the first protests in Syria in 2011, when Assad offered compromise. Likewise protests recently in both Serbia and Slovakia, where pro-Western politicians demand that governments surrender to them even though they were defeated in the most recent parliamentary and presidential elections.

Many years before, Cambodia was wrecked by their parliament unilaterally deposing Prince Sihanouk, an act which most ordinary Cambodians saw as unacceptable.<sup>5</sup> The global norm would have been a referendum, done in Italy in 1946 and Greece in 1973. So with normal politics abolished, a broad front was formed against the new regime, at a time when Cambodian communism was weak.<sup>6</sup> This US abuse of politics was the cause of all their later suffering.

The USA has always shown great stoicism about the suffering of its allies. Who each in turn are shocked to find themselves dumped.

Most modern US citizens are not so stoical when they do the suffering. They are still whining about being kicked out of Vietnam. Very seldom remembering the suffering of their discarded allies in South Vietnam and Cambodia. Unfortunates who would have fared much better had the USA offered aid to those war-shattered economies.

Kiev in 2014 could have stopped with verbal rejection of Crimea's secession. They could have allowed the two elected governments of the Donbass to hold a referendum to see if a majority in Donetsk or Luhansk wanted autonomy. And they could then have followed their own agenda. Kept control of their considerable mineral wealth. Put up gold statues honouring Stepan Bandera, who began and ended World War Two in alliance with Hitler. Who independently massacred Poles and Jews between times. And they could have been open about their belief in their own virtue in that war, as Japan covertly does.

Japan at least has had the wisdom to treat the USA as about as trustworthy as a rattlesnake. No safer to befriend.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/13/crimea-referendum-explainer-ukraine-russia>

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1946\\_Czechoslovak\\_parliamentary\\_election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1946_Czechoslovak_parliamentary_election)

<sup>3</sup> <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/magazine-001-to-010/magazine-007-july-1988-2/the-1968-invasion-of-czechoslovakia-doomed-the-soviet-union/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Ukraine-Punished-For-Rejecting-US-Values-in-2010>

<sup>5</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1970\\_Cambodian\\_coup\\_d%27%C3%A9tat#Claimed\\_U.S.\\_involvement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1970_Cambodian_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat#Claimed_U.S._involvement)

<sup>6</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pol\\_Pot#Against\\_Lon\\_Nol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pol_Pot#Against_Lon_Nol)



## Lies as the Poison of Democracy

Western liberals complain about Trump being untruthful. But they have been just as outrageous a bunch of liars.

US Democrats went along with the gross untruths that were used to destroy Saddam Hussein's secular and Westernising Iraq. Just as forgetful of how they had saved Saddam from his failed war against Iran in 1987, when the Soviet Union was still there to keep them modest.<sup>7</sup>

Nor have Britons been honest or accurate about the past. *The Guardian* back in 2014 spoke of “historically anti-Russian Crimean Tatars”. But failed to mention that Crimean Tatars were an outpost of the Ottoman Empire, before Moscow conquered them. They were a base for decades of slave-taking raids into what is now Eastern Ukraine. Which had been depopulated by slave raids, and then resettled by a mix of Russians and Ukrainians.

All of them and even many left-wingers talk as if there were a reliable system of International Law. This illusion was encouraged by the Nuremberg Trials, in which various Nazi leaders got hung for things they mostly deserved to die for. But overlooked that Goering was definitely against the war that Hitler began, and probably not aware that Jews were being murdered rather than expelled to the east: yet was found guilty on both counts. If Goering were a criminal for bombing open cities, lots of British and US politicians and military should also have died with him.

I once had a fantasy of giving him a reenacted trial in front of a jury of officers in the Israeli Air Force. But with what they have since done to Gaza, some other

jury would definitely be needed.

There is no genuine International Law, because any sovereign nation can try defying such authorities as exist, and often succeed. That's why it is irrelevant that the UN General Assembly refused to accept that the majority in Crimea had any right to vote themselves independent or to then choose to join Russia. A majority *always* vote against attempts at secession, though not all vote the same way on different matters.

They also normally do nothing more: Kashmir remains split on the ceasefire lines from a brief war in 1947/8. Absolutely nothing beyond non-recognition is done about Northern Cyprus, which was set up by the armed might of the Turkish Republic in 1976.

We have International Norms, not law. But even those have repeatedly been bent or broken by the West and in particular the USA.

## Squeezing Protestors

A few years back, someone made a joke about an imaginary Chinese minister congratulating Western countries on their coming into line with the Chinese view of Human Rights.

Now it is revealed that there was only ever a difference in what they see as worth defending. Unimportant dissent can be ignored, as when Stalin told his people that Doctor Zhivago and its author were fine. But what we've got now is a defence of outrageous lying over Gaza.

Not that I needed that to be aware of the sham. I and others in the Bevin Society have been talking about it for years.<sup>8</sup> And mentioned things like ‘kettling’ – British police made this routine for ordinary peaceful protestors. And got it endorsed:

“The tactic has proved controversial, in part because it has resulted in the detention of ordinary bystanders as well as protesters. In March 2012 kettling was ruled lawful by the European Court of Human Rights following a legal challenge.”<sup>9</sup>

A lot of these were about inequality and privatisation. Which a majority of the voters are against, but somehow most of them vote for parties that support and extend such things. When the system slipped and Jeremy Corbyn became Labour leader, phony claims of anti-Semitism undermined him.

When in 2016 a discontented population might have given the Presidency to either Donald Trump or Bernie Sanders, the leaders of the US Democrats made sure it was not Bernie Sanders. They definitely saw Trump as the lesser evil, and have not yet changed their minds.

## Global But Ignoble

Government of the 90%, by the 1%, broadly supported by the Next Nine. That's the ignoble world that Reagan and Thatcher created.

The US idea of ‘free’ was a system grossly biased to selfish US interest – but till the 1990s, the prime selfish aim was to win the Cold War.

The replacement ideology from the 1990s was unlimited US hegemony. Continuing a process of rolling back concessions made by the rich when the Soviet Union was more of a rival. When it became clear that authentic neo-Nazis were a minor malignancy that the rich need not fear.

And that era is clearly ending. Even if a few members of the US Republican majority flipped and reversed everything Trump has done, the damage is permanent.

<sup>7</sup> <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/magazine-001-to-010/magazine-004-october-1987/why-the-west-saved-saddam-hussein-in-1987/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/post-liberalism/why-all-freedom-includes-limits/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kettling>

I also expect him not to be curbed. Trump and Musk are after a White-dominated political order, and might even be willing to see the USA break up to save it. It's never been tested, but the US Congress and the other branches of government might give a state permission to secede. *'I wish we now could lose California'* might be a popular sentiment: neighbouring states sometimes have signs saying *Don't Californicate Us*.

The libertarian stuff gained power with Nixon and Reagan. Nixon was born in California, while Reagan made his career there, first acting then the film trade union and finally politics. Neither were as privately racists as I think Trump and Musk are. And Vance is happy with it: possible for a racist to have a nicely respectful non-white wife. The Far-Right lady in Germany also has one.

Nixon and Reagan were operating within what was still a White-dominated political order. That has faded, and population trends are against. Latinos are recovering lands that the USA took from Mexico, and redefining what US identity means. Trump and Musk are willing to risk a lot to end that.

Mend fences with Russia, the second-largest nation where the bulk of the population are acceptable for White Racists.

## Fading Fear of China

How can any honest and well-informed individual defend the right of India to rule its chunk of Kashmir, but oppose Tibet remaining part of China? No one in modern times ever recognised Tibet as anything other than an outlying region of China's multinational civilisation. And Western protests are even less honest over Xinjiang. 'Supporters' ignore the actual demand of

Uighur militants, which is for independence. They pretend that Beijing just hates that culture.

The CPC followed the Soviet example of the central power allowing controlled expressions of regional identities. Which turned into wars of population when Moscow's controlling hand was removed.

Other foes of China deny it is socialist, because Chinese after Mao allowed more inequality. But it was the one place where trickle-down actually worked

Worked mostly because the government never lost control. Growth – actually faster than the USA under Mao<sup>10</sup> – turned into the sort of Economic Miracle that West Germany and Japan enjoyed before the New Right talked them into damaging themselves.

If you get twice the income you had 10 years ago, you don't mind if others get more. And from about the year 2000, China began curbing inequality.

Though wrong on many matters, *the Guardian* did at least see that China was not going to back down. Written before China announced its second retaliation, they said:

"China unlikely to blink first as Trump's trade war enters uncharted new territory"

"One of the most helpful factors in Beijing's favour is the fact that the US is far more dependent on Chinese imports than China is on the US.

"The main items that the US imports from China are consumer goods, such as smartphones, computers and toys. Last week, analysts at Rosenblatt Securities predicted that the cost of the cheapest iPhone available in the US could rise from \$799 to \$1,142 – and that was when Trump's China tariffs were just 54%. 'Trump cannot credibly deflect blame on to China for these economic hardships'...

"In contrast, the goods that China imports from the US are

<sup>10</sup> <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/recent-issues/2019-11-magazine/2019-11/>

industrial and manufacturing supplies, such as soya beans, fossil fuels and jet engines. It is much easier for price increases in these commodities to be absorbed before a consumer gets their wallet – or in the case of China, their smartphone – out to pay."<sup>11</sup>

## Snippets

### Old World Civilisations Unite?

Europe's elite may be tiring of US behaviour, which didn't start being immature and bullying with Trump. Some may even understand that the Chinese Communists have been regenerating the civilisation that invented most of what Europe later used to create global empires.

*Global Times* recently gave prominence to one of Xi's efforts on those lines:

"Why Global Civilization Initiative matters to human progress..."

"In the letter, Xi noted that over 2,000 years ago, China and Greece, two civilizations glittering at each end of the Eurasian continent, made groundbreaking contributions to the evolution of human civilization.

"Now, he pointed out, it is of profound historical and contemporary significance for them to work together to promote exchanges and mutual learning and enhance the development of all civilizations."<sup>12</sup>

It is worth adding that China always tried to include those they ruled as part of their civilisation, but keeping their regional customs. It was the West that had a habit of treating the conquered as inferiors, and rooting out their distinctiveness. You can find one example by one of the heirs of Alexander in the *Book of Maccabees*.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/apr/09/china-unlikely-to-blink-first-as-trumps-trade-war-enters-uncharted-new-territory>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202503/1330177.shtml>

## Diversity for Superior Persons?

Western liberals are appalled that racial prejudice has spread again. But ignored the main cause – their own neglect of an economy that ended the secure prosperity that kept the white working class content. Let an open but mostly-white elite grab it all:

“Robert F. Kennedy’s attempt to forge a cross-racial working-class coalition in the 1968 presidential election ... Kennedy opposed even mild forms of racial preference in favor of economic programs that would benefit all working-class Americans...

“But the ugly secret of affirmative action .. is that most Black beneficiaries are middle-class, while many of the white or Asian applicants left out in the cold are working-class students who have done well in school despite significant disadvantages of their own. Are they less deserving?”<sup>13</sup>

Robert Kennedy Junior may have learned some of that. But much too little.

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## Is Dyslexia a Woke Imaginary Illness?

No one has actually claimed that. But similar things are being said about autism. Or else that it must have some recent dangerous cause, with life-saving vaccinations suspected.

Autism and dyslexia were particular problems that got named and recognised from the 1960s. From an AI system attached to X, previously Twitter, I got:

«By the 1960s, organizations like the British Dyslexia Association (founded in 1972) were starting to form, but in the decade prior, dyslexia was often misdiagnosed as laziness, intellectual deficiency, or behavioral issues.»

Much the same for autism – just part of actual human diversity, which cuts across supposed racial differences. And are found but differently expressed across the genuine differences in human gender.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/24/books/review/james-traub-class-matters.html>

## What Actually Works?

“World Happiness Report: Finland named as happiest country for eighth year...

“The study also found strangers are about twice as kind as people think. It measured trust in strangers by deliberately losing wallets, seeing how many were returned and comparing that with how many people thought would be handed in.”<sup>14</sup>

That’s the real answer to crime. Not more punishment for bad people, but average people behaving better.

Much better in Finland than the USA. Voters for Trump were not wrong to be discontented:

«When it comes to decreasing happiness – or growing unhappiness – the United States has dropped to its lowest-ever position at 24, having previously peaked at 11th place in 2012. The report also states that the number of people dining alone in the United States has increased 53 percent over the past two decades.»<sup>15</sup>

And given the chance, many would have voted for Bernie Saunders rather than Trump.

Note also that Finland can live with immigration:

“As of 2023, Statistics Finland produces statistics on foreign nationals in three different ways:

“Origin and background country: 571,268 people or 10.2%, have a foreign background.

“Country of birth: 535,451 people, or 9.6%, were born in a foreign country.

“Language: 558,294 people, or 10.0%, have a first language other than Finnish, Swedish or Sámi.

“No official statistics exist on ethnicities.”<sup>16</sup>

That’s how things work if you see tax as normal, and state regulation as necessary.

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## US Pressure on India

“Trump wants India to buy US corn - but here’s why it probably won’t

“For years, Washington has pushed for greater access to India’s farm sector, seeing it as a major untapped market. But India has fiercely protected it, citing food

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cr72xep44kdo>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20250320-finland-happiness-rankings-us>

<sup>16</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_Finland#Statistics\\_of\\_foreign\\_population](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Finland#Statistics_of_foreign_population)

security, livelihoods and interests of millions of small farmers.

“To be sure, India’s transformation from a food-deficient nation to a food-surplus powerhouse is one of its biggest success stories.

“In the 1950s and ‘60s, the country relied on food aid to feed its population, but a series of agricultural breakthroughs changed that. India became self-sufficient in staples, and became the world’s largest milk producer. Rapid growth in horticulture, poultry and aquaculture expanded its food basket.

“Today, India is not just feeding its 1.4 billion people but, as the world’s eighth-largest agri-produce exporter, also shipping grains, fruits and dairy worldwide.

“Yet, despite such major gains, Indian agriculture still lags in productivity, infrastructure and market access. Global price volatility and climate change add to the challenge. Crop yields lag far behind the global best. Small landholdings worsen the problem - Indian farmers work with less than a hectare on average, while their American counterparts had over 46 hectares in 2020.

“No surprise then that productivity remains low, even though farming remains India’s backbone, supporting over 700 million people, nearly half the country’s population. Agriculture employs nearly half of India’s workforce but accounts for just 15% of GDP. In comparison, less than 2% of the US population depends on farming. With limited manufacturing jobs, more people are stuck in low-paying farm work, an unusual trend for a developing country.

“This structural imbalance also shapes India’s trade policies. Despite its farm surplus, India keeps tariffs high to shield its farmers from cheap imports. It maintains moderate to high tariffs - ranging from zero to 150% - on farm imports.”<sup>17</sup>

They want to let rural values dominate. And need to worry about food security. Climate change could hurt them a lot, and they definitely accept it as real. And resent being blamed, where their contribution per head is far less than the USA or Europe

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Old newsnotes at the magazine websites. I also write regular blogs - <https://www.quora.com/q/mrgwydionmwilliams>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c204q6n0lzvo>



# **Review of *A Misfit in Moscow: How British Diplomacy in Russia Failed 2014-2019*, by Ian Proud, self-published, 2023.**

**By Eamon Dyas**

The author was a member of the United Kingdom Diplomatic Service between 1999 and 2023. In that capacity he was responsible for the organisation behind the 2013 G8 Summit which took place in Northern Ireland and which was the last occasion Vladimir Putin visited the United Kingdom. Having applied to work at the British Embassy in Moscow in June 2013 as the senior diplomat charged with increasing UK-Russian trade (at the time the UK had the largest foreign investment in Russia in the form of BP's 19.7% investment in state oil giant Rosneft) he instead found himself between July 2014 and February 2019 acting as the senior adviser to the British Government on sanctions against Russia that began in the aftermath of the Russian annexation of Crimea. While at the Moscow embassy Proud was also chair of the Russia Crisis Committee, Director of the Diplomatic Academy for Eastern Europe and Central Asia and Vice-Chairman of the Board of the Anglo-American School of Moscow.

Ian Proud is therefore someone whose observations and insights into the events surrounding Britain's relationship with Russia in the critical years 2014 to 2019 are worth considering. The first thing to note is that, as he himself says:

"This is not an academic book or a forensic picking apart of the UK's activity in Russia; the limitations of the Official Secrets Act and the Radcliffe Rules would prevent that. I wrote this account entirely from memory, and from open-source research when I needed to check specific details or data." (Preface, pp.ix-x).

Nonetheless, in compiling

his memoir he was compelled to submit the manuscript to the Cabinet Office for their approval in order "not to unstitch the straitjacket of British government censorship." As it was, he felt he was lucky to have got away with cuts of around four thousand words. The second thing to note is that the memoir is not published by a mainstream publisher but appears to have been self-published. This is in keeping with the way in which "inconvenient" information and perspectives on the Russo-Ukrainian conflict are kept as far as possible from public consumption not only by direct censorship by western states but by the media, and by the literary, educational, cultural and academic institutions of those states. This has meant that alternative interpretations of the Russo-Ukrainian crisis are systematically denied an outlet leaving the debating ground dominated by the establishment narrative.

Although he titles his memoir "A Misfit in Moscow" it would be a mistake to think that Ian Proud is some kind of disloyal servant of the British Foreign Office. He continues to follow the Foreign Office line in describing the Russian Special Military Operation of February 2022 as "a full-scale invasion" for instance. As the economic expert at the British Embassy in Moscow he played an important role in advising the British government on its anti-Russian sanctions and was one of the first to suggest placing a price cap on the price of Russian oil, all of which is testimony to his commitment to his employer. Nonetheless, he does possess an unusual characteristic among western diplomats in that he appears to

have a genuine desire to describe events as he sees them and not always in the context of the Foreign Office perspective. This is something he is unapologetic for as he sees this as an essential component of any diplomat's ability to provide proper advice to his or her government.

From the outset of his career in the Moscow embassy in 2014 Proud did not subscribe to the idea of a Russian threat to Europe. At the time he felt that;

"Russia is undoubtedly still a powerful country, but it is in secular decline. Its economy is about the size of South Korea's, its workforce is shrinking, and life expectancy is around ten years lower than the OECD average. NATO is at least ten-times greater economically: it has three times more active military personnel five times more combat aircraft and four times the number of ships. And NATO has access to more modern and sophisticated weaponry across most systems.

"Putin isn't bent on world domination nor the recreation of the Soviet Union. Of the fourteen other former-Soviet countries, Russia can only count on Belarus to act as a compliant buffer, although [it] retains significant influence in Moldova and Armenia. To its under-populated east, Russia is vastly overmatched by China, also ten-times larger economically, and progressively being overtaken by India." (Preface, p.vii).

The view that Russia is a threat to Europe has been increasingly pumped out by western governments over the past ten years and it now constitutes the main position of most EU governments as well as the UK. Hardly a day goes by without some statement

by a leading politician or military “expert” voicing the opinion that if Russia is allowed to achieve any kind of victory in Ukraine it will then have its sights on the Baltic countries and after that the rest of Europe. What Ian Proud’s continued testimony represents is a reminder of a recent time when more sober minds were allowed to put their case to government decision makers whereas now, the only voices that are heard are the siren voices of the Russophobic war-mongers.

### The Skripol poisonings

The event which Proud comments upon in some detail in the prologue of the book is the Skripol poisonings in March 2018. Although he does not directly challenge what has come to be the official version of that event it is obvious that he is sceptical of the explanation that directly implicates the Russian State in those events. Instead he offers a wide arena of possibilities which includes a rogue state actor or a non-state actor such as a member of a Russian mafia group. He also provides an interesting explanation which involves the possibility of an element from another country that was eager to provoke a British backlash to the improving Russo-British relations that were emerging at this time.

Proud describes this improvement as follows:

“And while UK-Russia relations had been frostier than a Yakutsk winter since Russia’s annexation of Crimea there had been modest signs of improvement at the end of 2017. The press was reporting that, since his appointment as Foreign Secretary in the summer of 2016, an unstoppable Boris Johnson had been blocked from reaching out to Moscow by an immovable Prime Minister

Theresa May. Tory party infighting and Theresa May’s hard line stance was leaving the UK increasingly isolated within the EU on Russia policy. With the Prime Minister’s authority dented by an ill-timed general election that left the Conservatives governing without an overall majority, I pressed on the need for higher levels of engagement.

“Slowly, Whitehall was beginning to move and in November 2017, junior FCO minister Sir Alan Duncan travelled to Moscow for the first ministerial visit to Russia in two years. He visited Moscow’s Luzhniki Stadium to see preparations for the 2018 football World Cup. He also sealed a new diplomatic visa deal between the UK and Russia after a twelve-month blockage which had left the Embassy in Moscow chronically short-staffed. Shortly afterwards, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, arrived in Moscow for a visit described as ‘pastoral, ecumenical and political.’ And then in December and at the third attempt, Boris Johnson paid the first Cabinet-level visit to Russia for five years for talks with his counterpart, Sergey Lavrov. . . .

After an almost four-year permachill in the relationship, this was a positive tidal wave of diplomatic engagement. So, against the backdrop of a slight thawing of relations, the ‘Kremlin did it’ thesis didn’t completely add up to me, although I didn’t discount Russian state involvement in some way.” (Prologue, pp.xv-xvi).

Nonetheless, given his earlier speculation about an agent from a country other than Russia being involved it is surprising that he doesn’t consider Ukraine as a candidate where the prospect of a growing post-Crimea thaw between Russia and Britain was certainly being viewed with alarm at the time.

### The events of 2014

In preparation for his assignment to the Moscow Embassy Proud began a Diplomatic Service Russian language course in London in September 2013. One of his teachers was a woman named Veronika who came from Kyiv and the other a Cambridge educated linguist named Nadia who came from the city of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine. The duration of his Russian language course overlapped the events in Maidan Square between November 2013 and February 2014. Although those events took place over 1,500 miles away they assumed a closer reality in Proud’s Russian language classroom.

“This tension [the Maidan Square events - ED] played itself out for me daily in the classroom. Veronica started to bring in anti-Russian cartoons and poked fun at Putin, although it was clear she didn’t consider Russia’s behaviour funny. Nadia complained that the news coverage in the UK was lopsided and that surely Putin wasn’t that bad. They stopped talking directly and instead communicated through me. I was living in a microcosm of the Maidan Square arguments, without the violence.

“The other Russian teachers were often in huddles in the library area, split into distinct pro-EU and pro-Russia groups. They reflected the clear divide in Ukraine: in Kyiv and in the west of the country, the Ukrainian language is widely spoken; in the east and south, including Crimea, Russian is the *lingua franca* and large swathes of industry were tied into Russian supply chains. . . .

“Time and again I would hear colleagues either at the British embassy in Kyiv or at the FCO in London talking emotionally about Ukraine’s European ‘choice.’ But it was clear that not everyone in Ukraine saw Europe as their first or best option. The western

media often depicts Ukraine as culturally and politically homogeneous, with a citizenry unified in its desire to sever all connections with Russia, but this is grossly inaccurate.” (p.24).

This is a view that has since become a “no-go” area in what passes for discussion about the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. In terms of the usurpation of the elected President Yanukovich Proud is quite frank in that the US Assistant Secretary of State, Victoria Nuland and the US ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt, had been plotting to ensure that Yanukovich was deposed and replaced by a pro-western alternative and that “after Yanukovich’s removal, Nuland wanted Arseniy Yatsenyuk” as his replacement - a plot that had the endorsement of the then Vice-President, Joe Biden. Proud also explains that Yanukovich had, on 21 February, with the approval of the governments of Germany and Poland, agreed several concessions to the demands of the Maidan protesters and committed to hold presidential elections no later than December - the arrangement was known as the 21 February agreement. However, before he had the opportunity to implement this agreement an attempt on his life drove him out of the country on 22 February 2014. The day after, on 23 February, the Ukrainian Parliament passed a vote formally removing him from office despite the fact that the process was itself constitutionally flawed as it was done with “a vote tally that fell slightly short of that required under the impeachment provisions in Ukraine’s constitution.” On reflecting on these events Proud says:

“Had Yanukovich signed the association agreement [it was his refusal to sign the association agreement with the EU that triggered the protests -

ED] and been ousted by pro-Russian extremists, it would have been condemned from the rooftops of the Berlaymont [the European Commission headquarters in Brussels - ED] and the Capitol. Instead, Western diplomats shrugged their shoulders when the 21 February agreement was binned.” (pp.25-26).

He then describes one of the first actions of the post-Maidan Ukrainian parliament as follows:

“Buoyed by anti-Russian sentiment, Ukraine’s Parliament cancelled a law giving regions of Ukraine the right to have a second official language. This meant that in places like Crimea and eastern Ukraine, Russian could not be recognised as an official second language, even though it was the language that most people used.” (p.26).

At this point it should be pointed out that the US-installed replacement Prime Minister, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, had four years earlier been one of the leaders of the violent protests against the Ukrainian Parliament’s endorsement of a new 25-year agreement to permit Russia to continue to use the Sevastopol Naval Base. At the time he had pledged to ensure that the agreement would be terminated at the first opportunity (see: “Agreement on Black Sea Fleet may be denounced”, *Kyiv Post*, 27 April 2010). In February 2014 that opportunity emerged for Yatsenyuk and this no doubt was one of the factors which, on 27 February 2014 – the same day that Yatsenyuk was installed as Prime Minister - led to the Russian government instructing its troops and naval forces stationed in Crimea to take control of the territory.

Proud later pointed to another example of Yatsenyuk’s hostility towards any accommodation with Russia. It relates to the \$3 billion Eurobond which Ukraine had

purchased from Russia in 2013 and which was due to be repaid in late 2015. With Ukraine experiencing a severe economic crisis in 2015 its international creditors had agreed to a debt restructuring deal which in some cases involved a write-down of 20% of debt owed as well as a revised repayment programme. Russia also made some concessions on the repayment of the \$3 billion Eurobond arrangement with Ukraine now expected to make the repayment in three tranches of \$1 billion between 2016 and 2018 but

“in the politically charged nature of the relationship, a deal could not be reached. Arseniy Yatsenyuk, America’s choice as Ukrainian Prime Minister, then declared a moratorium on repayment of the Russian bond.” (p.136).

Proud then reveals that in making this move Yatsenyuk was supported by Ukraine’s Finance Minister at the time, Natalie Jaresko and that Natalie Jaresko “was a former US State Department Official.” She had in fact been born and educated in the United States to Ukrainian parents and was therefore a US citizen. Although Proud does not provide this information, she only assumed her Ukrainian citizenship on the day in which she was appointed Ukrainian Minister of Finance on 2 December 2014.

On that same day the then President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, signed a grant of Ukrainian citizenship for two other non-Ukrainians in order to facilitate their appointment to the Ukrainian cabinet. Those were, the US educated Georgian citizen, Alexander Kvitashvili who was appointed Ukrainian Minister of Health and the US educated Lithuanian citizen Aivaras Abromavicius who was appointed Ukrainian Minister of Trade and Development. Abromavicius was one of the supporters of Zelensky



before he was elected President and was subsequently appointed by him as Director General of Ukroboronprom which is the largest arms manufacturer in Ukraine. He held that position until October 2020 and he is an enthusiastic advocate of austerity and a proponent of deregulation and privatisation. For the above information see: <https://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/237464.html>

### **The condition of the British diplomatic mission in Russia**

Proud is particularly critical of the culture that operated within the British embassy in Moscow during the time he was there. He traces the decline in the standards of British diplomacy generally to the decision by New Labour in the 1990s to abolish the Foreign Office Language School at Millbank where diplomats used to be provided with a first-rate instruction in the languages of the country to which they were to be posted. That action he said “sent an unhelpful signal that monoglot Britain didn’t see foreign language use as a vital component of diplomacy”. As far as Blair’s New Labour was responsible for this he says:

“The dumbing down of diplomacy started under New Labour seduced by the notion that modern diplomats needed little more than a laptop. Language skills? Look them up online. . . . But diplomacy is primarily a people business. While there used to be political courses in the Foreign Office, these were nixed in the noughties.

“This generational disinvestment in skills results in diplomats in Moscow sending regurgitated press insight to ministers through the medium of Google Translate.” (pp.72-73).

And today this tendency to “regurgitate press insight” is more prevalent than ever and not only through diplomatic channels.

Hardly an hour passes than the British press will be uncritically passing as truth whatever the Kyiv regime’s propaganda department issues as a press statement.

Proud credits William Hague as the Foreign Secretary who attempted to rebuild British diplomacy as an important component of foreign policy in the aftermath of New Labour’s slash and burn policy. It was under his tenure as Foreign Secretary (2010-2014) that a new diplomatic service language school was established in the basement of the Foreign Office in King Charles Street and Proud was one of its first students. In terms of the continuing relationship between the British diplomatic service and the Russian language Proud also notes that

“The Foreign Office has improved its performance in language learning since 2010. But even today, [2023 – ED] over a third of British diplomats paid full-time to learn Russian for fourteen months either fail their exams, or worse still, don’t get around to sitting them.” (Note 8 at bottom of p.22).

As already noted, Proud successfully completed his Russian course and arrived at the British Embassy in Moscow in July 2014 at the same time as William Hague resigned as Foreign Secretary. Proud is sceptical of the reasons given by David Cameron for Hague leaving the Foreign Office which was to pursue “other interests”. But according to Proud:

“it wasn’t clear why a grandee of the Conservative Party would step down from his office of state ten months before the next general election. Rumour swirled that he’d fallen on his sword for Cameron’s twin failures on Junker [Cameron’s government had unsuccessfully opposed his election as President of the European Commission – ED] and Ukraine policy.”

“Hague was the best Foreign Secretary during my career. He arrived at the Foreign Office after thirteen years of New Labour disinvestment in diplomacy, and breathed life and purpose back into the organisation. A political titan he was replaced by “spreadsheet Phil” Hammond, who I hoped would be a short-lived stopgap.” (p.30).

As it was, Phillip Hammond remained as head of the Foreign Office for two years until July 2016 when he was replaced by Boris Johnson. In the meantime, Proud admits that the UK was providing military training to the Ukraine army in February 2015 in the context of the conflict in the Donbass region. This was three years before Trump began supplying Javelin anti-tank weapons to Ukraine in March 2018 (see note 14 at bottom of p.33).

There is also an interesting insight into the mind-set of the British Foreign Office during Tony Blair’s government.

“In 2000, a modern [British] Embassy, composed of four metal and glass blocks, was opened on Smolenskaya Embankment. It’s a stone’s throw from the White House [which was the seat of the Russian government in Moscow – ED], where President Yeltsin famously climbed on a tank in 1991 as an act of defiance against the attempted military coup. The materials and labour for the new building were trucked into Russia via Finland. Every dollop of cement was scrutinised, to prevent the introduction of listening devices and other sneaky tech. Steam billowed from the site during the winter, as heaters dried the foundations.” (p.34).

It would appear that the British retained the Cold War paranoia towards Russia at the time despite the fact that the West’s favourite, Boris Yeltsin, was Prime Minister

of Russia during the construction of the British Embassy. Of course, it never occurred to the paranoid British that if the Russians suffered from the same condition they would have insisted on a close inspection of the imported materials in order to ensure that the British were not importing spying devices.

While working at the Moscow embassy he found that his colleagues were more interested in impressing the Ambassador, Tim Barrow, than in actually providing any real information or insights into the situation in Russia. In the context of the following quote from Proud, the term Chancery in an embassy context refers to the group of officers who are assigned mainly to traditional diplomacy, providing reports, and informing Ministers at home of foreign policy development in a particular country.

"Some described the Foreign Office as a group of over-achievers struggling to get along. The one-upmanship and chest-thumping hubris of the Chancery meeting typified this. It would have felt a better use of time if Chancery colleagues gained their insight by time outside of the Embassy, meeting Russian contacts in Moscow and further afield.

"In fact, much of the insight was drawn from unclassified media or from diplomats in other Western embassies. It was in this august setting, nine years ago, that I first heard the rumour that Putin's occasional disappearance from public view might be related to a mysterious and terrible illness that could kill him within days." (pp.35-36).

The story of Putin's health is one that the western media spent hundreds of column inches on during the early years of the current conflict. Proud further explains the way the Moscow embassy gathered its information about what was happening in Russia. The result of this, according to Proud, was:

"The total collapse in the UK relationship with Russia - and related to that, the gradual and dangerous escalation of the Ukrainian crisis - has in part been caused by a statesmanship vacuum in the UK; successive members of the current government have actively chosen not to talk to Russia when tensions were at their highest." (p.17).

Of course, all of this is based on the perspective of the diplomat who sees every conflict as solvable through diplomacy. The limitations of this perspective is that it finds it difficult to accommodate the idea that there was hostile intent from the outset when it comes to their own government. And even if hostile intent is admitted there is always the option of believing that their own government was acting either consciously or unconsciously under the influence of a more powerful ally.

We can see this blame shift operating in Proud's own account of the way another part of the West's narrative on Russia began to play out. That narrative was that Russia was always intent on using its position as the dominant supplier of energy to Europe for its own political, rather than financial, ends. However, as Proud admits:

"Cutting oil and gas exports to Europe would be like playing Russian roulette with a fully loaded gun; there is no evidence that Russia has ever sought to cut energy supplies to Europe to serve a wider political goal." (p.45).

And further:

"In reality, Russia needs to export its gas, in part to subsidise domestic consumption at discounted rates, a hangover from the Soviet days. For a Russian economy that has struggled to diversify, gas exports provide a significance source of foreign reserves and domestic tax receipts. At that time cutting off gas supplies to Europe would have represented a nuclear option with massive economic costs to Russia itself. And there

was practically no evidence that Russia wanted this." (p.48).

And yet, despite this opinion from the man whom the British government itself sent to Moscow with the purpose of providing it with an ongoing analysis of the economic situation in Russia, the British government continued to insist that the object behind Russia's export of oil and gas to Europe was a sinister one. But according to Proud it did this in order to comply with the US policy of opposing Russia's Nord Stream II project (see p.49). According to Proud the foolish nature of this commitment to the US was to contribute to a breakdown in diplomacy and that was taking the UK on a very dangerous trajectory.

"In those early days of my posting I considered that a more open economic relationship with Russia had a greater chance of earning peace than chest-thumping political posturing. Ministers and colleagues in London invariably saw it from the other end of the telescope: that Russia needed to make political concessions after the start of the Ukrainian crisis, that approach has simply inflamed resentment and prompted increasing dangerous tactics by Russia in response. The risk that our political leaders, unable or unwilling to engage in dialogue, will allow us to sleepwalk into the devastation of war with Russia appears greater than ever." (pp.52-53).

So even though he acknowledges that the behaviour of the British government was based on a definition of Russian intent that ran counter to his on-the-spot understanding of what Russia was about he cannot quite bring himself to confront the possibility that this was something that was consistent with a deliberate British strategy of provoking and then isolating Russia. It is far more comfortable to rely on the old standard that Britain was "sleepwalking" into a possible war with Russia in a similar way that some historians still believe



that Britain “sleepwalked” into its war with Germany in 1914.

## How capitalism was made to work in Russia

As an economic analyst Proud’s account of how capitalism was made operational in Russia is also interesting.

“After the Soviet Union collapsed, there were no rules or legal framework to manage the bone-crunching transition from communism to a mixed-market economy. Lawlessness ruled across the Russian Federation, and commercial disputes were more often settled by shoot-out than by subpoena. Within this deadly legal vacuum, some smart-minded Russians conjured up schemes to get rich quick: they monetised the Soviet system of credits to grab hundreds of millions of dollars out of thin air, bought up privatisation vouchers from clueless citizens and conned those citizens with pyramid schemes that always collapsed. Vast profits were used to buy ever-larger stakes in Russia’s lucrative oil, gas and mineral companies. Surfing this raging torrent of venality were the new oligarchs, who became multi-millionaires almost overnight. After Russia’s default in 1998, the oligarchs emerged triumphant as billionaires at the summit of Russia’s industrial complex, lifted up by shady loans-for-shares deals with the ailing Yeltsin.” (Proud, p.60).

In his notes to the bottom of the page Proud provides further details:

“Soviet industry was funded by a system of credits through which one factory could obtain goods and services from another without the need for cash transactions. No money changed hands. Mikhail Khodorkovsky persuaded foreign banks to recognise credits managed by his bank on behalf of the Russian Finance Ministry as hard currency.” (Note 31, p.60).

“In the early nineties thousands of state-owned enterprises in Russia were privatised by the mass issuance of vouchers to every Russian citizen. Each voucher wasn’t worth much and as most people didn’t understand

what to do with them anyway, they practically gave them away in the millions for inconsequential amounts.” (Note 32, p.60).

In the light of the role of the foreign banks in this arrangement it is hard to be convinced by Proud’s eagerness to dispute any charge of Western culpability in the resultant expansion of the corruption and chaos.

## The Minsk agreements – how Britain encouraged Ukrainian sabotage

In his account of the Minsk agreements Proud acknowledges that “it was clear that Ukraine would not follow through with this provision” [the one which required the decentralisation of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions of the country – ED]. Nonetheless, he claims that “Russia made little attempt to hold up its end of the bargain either.” (p.88). It is hard to see how Russia could be expected to do so if Kyiv refused to implement the constitutional changes required to enable Luhansk and Donetsk to function as decentralised regions within Ukraine as whatever Russia had been obligated to do was conditional on that core action being first taken by Ukraine.

Proud does point out the way in which the depiction of Russia as the culprit in 2014 played into the hands of the anti-Russian element in British politics. And he does acknowledge that the British position of insisting that there be no relief from sanctions against Russia unless the Minsk agreement was implemented in full provided an incentive for Ukraine to sabotage the Minsk agreement as, under British policy, Ukraine was not being held to a similar responsibility by the UK government:

“Minsk implementation was described in binary terms; it either was or was not implemented in

full. This might make sense on a tightly edited Foreign Office draft strategy in King Charles Street. However, it was unrealistic in a complex insurgency with state and non-state forces fighting on both sides of a line of contract that stretched for hundreds of miles.

“*De facto*, Minsk conditionality would give Ukraine the casting vote; inaction on their part would lock in sanctions against Russia, so why would they engage with the separatists in the Donbass?” (p.89).

Kyiv’s attitude towards Minsk was revealed in the most basic of levels with its refusal to implement one of the simplest requirements of the agreement, which was that it open negotiations with the representatives of the dissenting regions of Luhansk and Donetsk.

The British government was well aware that its policy on Minsk provided an incentive for Kyiv to refuse to implement its side of the agreement and having established its use in that regard it then “started to push EU Member States to support this approach.” (p.90). And the decision taken by the European Council in March 2015 to link the duration of the sanctions against Russia to the “full implementation of the Minsk Agreements” meant that “The UK government had succeeded in its efforts to insert this conditionality into EU-wide sanctions policy towards Russia.” (p.124).

Surprisingly, or not surprisingly depending on your assessment of Proud, he does not mention the revelations by Merkel and Holland which show that the whole Minsk thing was a charade put in place in order to provide time for Ukraine to improve its military capability.

## Russia and the Greek crisis of 2015

In his capacity as the economic expert at the British embassy Proud attended the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in June 2015. It was a meeting



at which Alexis Tsipras, the Greek Prime Minister, was also a speaker and whose country was in the middle of a debt crisis at the time. The global financial crisis of 2008 had a particularly hard impact on Greece and revealed the country's lack of competitiveness and exposed the government's lax fiscal policy. In response to requests for help in 2010 and 2012 Greece had received bailouts from the Eurozone and the IMF to the tune of 216 billion euros. But by 2014 with the government having failed to fully implement the austerity measures and market reforms that were a condition of these bailouts the second aid programme was held in abeyance. As a result of a snap election held in January 2015 the hard-left Syriza party was elected on the basis of a commitment by Tsipras to end austerity and stand up to the Eurozone.

"By mid-June negotiations with the European Central Bank and Eurozone Finance Ministers were gridlocked, meaning Greece was staring down the barrel of a sovereign default. The other looming deadline was the rollover of European sanctions against Russia.

"And therein lay the reason for Tsipras's visit to Russia. During a visit to Moscow two months previously, he had said that his government 'openly disapproved of sanctions.' (p.125).

According to Proud after the election of Syriza in January the British government had been gravely concerned about the prospect of Greece breaking the European consensus on sanctions as the existing period of their application was due to expire in March 2015 and required unanimity by all twenty-eight members for them to be rolled over. As a result of that concern "Senior British diplomats shuttled around the EU lobbying their counterparts to hold the sanctions line and to encourage the Greeks to do so too."

That then was the political context in which Tsipras took to the stage at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in June 2015. Proud describes what followed:

"He shook Putin's hand on the way to the podium before commenting to the audience, 'You are probably wondering why I am here,' as if it wasn't blindingly obvious.

"Tsipras offered a rambling and indescribably pompous speech in which he spoke of Greece's problem being Europe's problem, and how Greece could help build bridges between Russia and Europe. He offered a vague mention of Minsk and avoided the more direct criticism of sanctions that he'd made during his April visit. The video feed panned to Russian ministers like Sergey Lavrov making eyes and joking with each other as if to say, 'What the fuck is this all about?' When his fifteen-minute speech finished, Tsipras turned on his heel and strode off the stage without acknowledging anyone, including a bemused-looking Putin." (p.126).

Proud offered his explanation for Tsipras's behaviour:

"With the renewal of Russia sanctions on the immediate horizon, Tsipras was clearly playing the Eurozone to drive progress in negotiations on a third bailout package. The benefits of taking a sticking plaster payout from Putin were, I suspect, far outweighed by the risks to Greece's economy of burning bridges with the EU. While Greece defaulted on a small IMF payment at the end of June, a third Eurozone bailout package was nonetheless agreed on 12 July 2015 worth Euro86 billion.

"Three days after Tsipras's visit on 22 June 2015, EU sanctions against Russia were extended; from that moment, they were effectively set in stone." (pp.128-129).

In other words, Tsipras was using the threat of blocking the EU Russia sanctions as the means of acquiring a third bailout from the Eurozone. His public appearance in Russia was meant

to provide credence to that threat with the implication that if no EU bailout was forthcoming he would apply to Russia for help. As it turned out, Putin, presumably eager not to antagonise the EU at a time when it was about to ratify the next rollover of sanctions and in the hope that a refusal (or an offer to help Greece that was so small it could not come anywhere near what Greece needed) would show the EU that Russia was not its enemy.

### **The diplomat's perspective**

When we look at how Victoria Nuland and the US Ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt behaved in Kiev in 2014 and how the US Ambassador to Syria, Robert Ford, behaved in the Syrian city of Hama in 2011 and we compare it with how the British diplomat, Ian Proud behaved during his tenure in Moscow there is a world of difference. However, it would be a mistake to believe that one is somehow superior to the other. They all serve their country in the circumstances in which they find themselves. From the British perspective the difference would be explained by the fact that British diplomats are picked from a cadre of professional civil servants educated and trained specifically in the arts of diplomacy. But, as we have seen in Proud's own experience, that would appear to be something that is currently being eroded. The US diplomat is more often someone who is appointed not from within a cadre of professional diplomats but rather a political appointment that is framed by considerations of election donations and/or for specific skills assumed outside the world of diplomacy. From the US perspective, they would see the difference as something that emanates from the fact that the US diplomat is the representative of the most powerful country

on the planet and is therefore charged with ensuring that his/her country's interest are always first and foremost in what they do whereas the British diplomat represents a second-rate power with the luxury of being able to lay more emphasis on procedure and ceremony than the hard reality of realpolitik.

In the case of Ian Proud, for the above reason, British diplomacy can afford to indulge some levels of eccentric behaviour which can lead to a public display of differences in perspective from that of his government. However, as stated earlier, Ian Proud remains very much a servant of HM government and this is shown by the manner in which even his honest observations of what was happening in Moscow between 2014 and 2019 do not allow him to depart from his government's basic line on Russia in the context of the Ukraine conflict.

Despite all the evidence of how the legitimate President of Ukraine was illegally overthrown in 2014 with US support and how Russia was duped and unfairly treated over Minsk, and the provocations that were thrown at Russia by successive post-2014 Ukrainian governments and the West as well as the threat posed by NATO, Proud, as servant of HM government cannot quite bring himself to dissent from the main line of his government. In direct contradiction to his acknowledgment of all that he witnessed he can still describe Russia's actions as a "mindless and needless invasion of Ukraine" and its initiation of an "unconscionable and, in my view, avoidable war".

But he cannot quite dismiss the impact of all of the evidence he has borne witness to so he seeks a reason that remains consistent with the facts. He chooses to find that reason in the world of diplomacy - or rather a failure of

his government to invest enough in diplomacy. He then asks three questions that all emanate from his chosen reason:

"I ask three questions: was the Tory foreign policy non-engagement with Russia the right approach; is the Foreign Office equipped with the right skills to engage with and understand Russia, and therefore advise ministers well; have Western sanctions materially altered Russia's posture towards Ukraine and made conflict less likely?" (p.269).

There is an innate presupposition operating here and one in which the world of diplomacy can never alter. That is, a presumption that the British government did not have any desire to damage Russia. But it is something that Proud cannot admit as to do so would mean that there are some instances where all the diplomatic skills in the world are of little use except to create a false impression that the country in question does not possess such ill intent. It is this perspective which creates the fallacy of the "sleepwalking to war" scenario that Proud himself subscribes to when he says on page 53 that a failure to engage in diplomatic dialogue by Britain "will allow us to sleepwalk into the devastation of war with Russia".

But despite his honest appraisal of the failure of Britain's commitment to a proper diplomatic relationship with Russia, Proud has remained committed to his government precisely because he views the current state of affairs as a failure of diplomacy rather than a deliberate policy designed to inflict harm on Russia. In the epilogue to the book, Proud says that he was:

"wheeled out of retirement in early 2022 to authorise a significant chunk of sanctions against Russia after the invasion of Ukraine." (p.272).

And it says something for his commitment to his government that he admits he did this even

though he had seen the futility of sanctions when they were applied in 2014, as mentioned earlier in the book:

"we hit diminishing marginal returns on sanctions within the first couple of weeks after war started. Every sanction since then has been a sticking plaster on feelings of inadequacy that we can never give Ukraine quite enough weapons to beat Russia, and that we would sooner not send our own troops. As a result, Russia and Ukraine have fought each other to a bloody standstill, like the Somme. Neither the UK nor the US are promoting the idea of a ceasefire, to allow a (frankly) decades-long peace process to recommence. Nine years on from the onset of conflict, we remain convinced our strategy is working!" (p.272).

One wonders why he should help to continue to contribute to a destructive war in this way when he is aware of the futility of what he is doing. And nobody familiar with the conflict would say that "Russia and Ukraine have fought each other to a bloody standstill, like the Somme". On that Proud is incorrect. A simple check of the map of the front line would show that Russian forces continue to make daily incremental gains in terms of territory. Also, events have moved on with regards to calls for a ceasefire but there is little likelihood of Russia agreeing to such a ceasefire while the west remains committed to continuing the supply of arms to Kyiv.

Overall, Ian Proud has produced a useful insight into the interplay of British diplomacy in Moscow with the government in Whitehall at a critical period in Anglo-Russian relations. However, because of the world in which his perspective has been formed it lacks a clarity of explanation that would have made it a far more important book. On a practical note, the absence of an index is a real drawback to the use of the book as a reference tool.

# Uyghurs: why encourage an independentist Islamist group?

Compare two letters to the UN Human Rights Council sent in July 2019. The first from 22 states (UK, EU states, etc) is critical of China about the Uyghurs; the second from 50 states (including most Muslim majority states) praises China's treatment of the Uyghurs. See The "22 vs. 50" Diplomatic Split Between the West and China Over Xinjiang and Human Rights for background to letters.

Also see Resolutions passed at 46th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation held 1-2 March 2019 in UAE. All 57 majority Muslim states are members of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (IOC). The first resolution, RESOLUTION NO.1/46-MM ON SAFEGUARDING THE RIGHTS OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES AND MINORITIES IN NON-OIC MEMBER STATES:

"Welcomes the outcomes of the visit conducted by the General Secretariat's delegation upon invitation of the People's Republic of China; commends the efforts of the People's Republic of China in taking care of its Muslim citizens; and looks forward to further co-operation between the OIC and the People's Republic of China."

(Paragraph 20)

It's difficult to believe that the Islamic world would be commending China if its treatment of the Uyghurs is tantamount to genocide as portrayed in the West.

When Erdogan visited China a year or so ago he played down the issue though he had been very critical in the past – see <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/07/05/asia/turkey-china-uyghur-erdogan-intl-hnk/index.html>.

This 2019 CNN report includes the following:

"The Turkish leader said he had discussed the 'Uyghur issue' with Xi, but cautioned that when the issue is 'exploited' it reflects 'poorly on the Turkish-Chinese relationship.'

"Those who exploit the issue, those who try to gain something from the issue, by acting emotionally without thinking of the relationship that Turkey has with another country, unfortunately end up costing both the Turkish republic and their kinsmen," he said, during a question and answer session with reporters.

Turkey has a large Uyghur population and the Turkic-speaking, predominantly Muslim, ethnic group has strong ties to Turkey and other central Asian countries. Thousands of Uyghurs have [sought sanctuary in Turkey](#) since the crackdown began.

CNN Fri July 5, 2019

Links to other articles on the Uyghur issue are in the link below. I'm inclined to trust those written by Grayzone and Moon of Alabama, whom I've been reading for many years.

Though it is not mentioned in western media, it may be the case that complaints about Uyghur mistreatment today, including forced sterilisation, are connected with the fact that Uyghurs, like other ethnic minorities in China, used to be free from the one-child policy (which was applied to Han Chinese only) but the two-child policy introduced about five years ago is applied to all racial groups.

Letter from the 22 states:

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#spam/FMfcgzQbdrSjzgzgkqTtGlxFnFssmblGSL?projector=1&messageParId=0.1>

Letter from the 50 states:

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#spam/FMfcgzQbdrSjzgzgkqTtGlxFnFssmblGSL?projector=1&messageParId=0.2>

Links to other articles on the same topic:

<https://labouraffairs.com/articles-on-the-uyghurs-question/>



# The UK Nuclear Deterrent

By David Morrison

**Will David Lammy have to go “naked into the conference chamber”?**

Opposing a resolution in favour of nuclear disarmament at the Labour Party conference in 1957, Aneurin Bevan declared

“if you carry this resolution and follow out all its implications ... you will send a British Foreign Secretary, whoever he may be, naked into the conference chamber”.

Since then, the UK has retained a nuclear deterrent and no British Foreign Secretary has suffered the indignity of being sent naked into the conference chamber. But could David Lammy be the first?

(\*)

Accompanied by the Minister of Defence, John Healey, Sir Keir Starmer recently visited HMS Vanguard, one of the UK’s nuclear-armed ballistic missile submarines, which had just returned to base in Scotland after more than 200 days at sea. Vanguard is one of four nuclear powered submarines, one of which is supposed to be at sea continuously so that Sir Keir can launch nuclear weapons at any time.

A Sky News article on the occasion of the visit by their Security & Defence Editor, Deborah Haynes, was entitled [“PM makes rare visit to nuclear-armed submarine to show UK’s strength - but Putin will notice a potential weakness”](#)

The “potential weakness” which she says “Putin will notice” is the fact that “the fleet is operating well beyond its original in-service life of 25 years because of delays in the building of four replacement boats”. As a result “patrols by one of the UK’s nuclear-armed submarines - which used to last three months - have had to be extended in recent years because of prolonged periods of maintenance and repair work on the other boats”.

## More fundamental weakness

Deborah Haynes didn’t mention the more fundamental weakness of the UK system, namely, that it’s not fully under UK control. At least

nine states in the world now possess nuclear weapons and the means of delivering them. All of them, bar one, manufacture and maintain their own nuclear weapons and the means of delivering them. All of them, bar one, have complete control over the use of their systems. In other words, all of them, bar one, possess what can reasonably be described as an “independent” nuclear deterrent that doesn’t rely on another state to provide vital parts of it.

The exception is Britain. China has an “independent” nuclear deterrent. So has France, India, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia and the US. Britain hasn’t.

Unlike other states that have nuclear weapons systems, Britain is dependent on another state to manufacture an essential element of its only nuclear weapons system – the Trident missiles that are supposed to carry Britain’s weapons to target. These are manufactured by Lockheed Martin in the US.

## Fraudulent

Britain’s dependence on the US doesn’t end with the purchase of these missiles – Britain depends on the US Navy to service the missiles as well. A common pool of missiles is maintained at the US Strategic Weapons facility at Kings Bay, Georgia, USA, from which the US itself and Britain draw serviced missiles as required.

There is some doubt about the degree of “operational” independence that Britain enjoys in respect of its nuclear weapons system (of which more later). But there is no doubt that Britain is dependent on the US for the manufacture and maintenance of a key element of the system. So, to call it an “independent” nuclear deterrent is fraudulent.

(The UK used to operate another nuclear weapons system, which used WE-177 free-fall bombs, but this system was decommissioned in 1998).

## Dependence on US to continue indefinitely

This dependence on the US for

missiles for the UK nuclear deterrent is scheduled to continue indefinitely. In December 2006, the Blair government published a White Paper that proposed that the UK should continue to have a nuclear deterrent. To that end, (a) a second generation of nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines was to be built to replace the Vanguard class and come into service from 2024 onwards, and (b) the UK was to participate in the US Navy’s programme to extend the life of the Trident missiles into the 2040s. In other words, it was planned that US-supplied Trident missiles will be essential to the UK’s nuclear deterrent for many years to come.

(In March 2007, these White Paper proposals were endorsed by the House of Commons by 409 votes to 161, 87 Labour backbenchers joining the LibDems and the Scottish and Welsh nationalists in voting against.)

## Non-functional if US/UK relations sour

Surprisingly, in the 2006 White Paper the Blair government conceded that our US-dependent nuclear deterrent will become non-functional if relations sour with the US and it refuses to supply the UK with Trident missiles. Paragraph 4-7 of the White Paper said:

“We continue to believe that the costs of developing a nuclear deterrent relying solely on UK sources outweigh the benefits. We do not see a good case for making what would be a substantial additional investment in our nuclear deterrent purely to insure against a, highly unlikely, deep and enduring breakdown in relations with the US. We therefore believe that it makes sense to continue to procure elements of the system from the US.”

Today, the Labour Government would probably not assert that a “deep and enduring breakdown in relations with the US” is “highly unlikely”. But that possibility now exists and, as a result, so does the possibility that the UK will cease to have a nuclear deterrent. And it’s too late to take out an insurance policy

against it, because the process of building the replacement submarines is underway, at a cost of £31 billion, with an additional £10 billion contingency, which is sure to be used. Operating costs are expected to be around £3 billion a year. The submarines were originally to be in service by 2025, but now it is likely to be well into the 2030s, over 25 years after the plan to build them was first approved by parliament.

### **Operationally independent?**

On another point, British Governments have always

insisted that Britain's nuclear weapons system is "operationally" independent of the US. The December 2006 White Paper (4-6) states that "the UK's current nuclear deterrent is fully operationally independent of the US". Apparently, if Sir Keir decides to press the nuclear button, it is impossible for the US to stop the launch of missiles or prevent them from delivering British nuclear warheads to the selected target. Maybe so.

Is Sir Keir really free to strike any target he chooses in this

world with nuclear weapons, at a time of his choosing, using US-supplied missiles? I doubt that the US would sell any foreign power – even a close ally – a weapons system with which the foreign power is free to do catastrophic damage to US allies, not to mention the US itself. Surely, the US must have a mechanism, under its explicit control, to prevent the targeting of states that it doesn't want targeted?

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## **Palestine Links**

[Israel is starving Gaza to death, and still the world does nothing \(Mads Gilbert, Dr James Smith & Dr Ghassan Abu-Sittah, Middle East Eye, 1 May 2025\)](#)

[Syria's Druze fearful after deadly attacks on Damascus suburbs \(Madeline Edwards, Middle East Eye, 1 May 2025\)](#)

[Amnesty International: Israel committing 'livestreamed genocide' in Gaza \(Mera Aladam, Middle East Eye, 1 May 2025\)](#)

[UAE's ruling family agrees to \\$2bn transaction with Trump crypto firm \(Middle East Eye, 1 May 2025\)](#)

[With USAID shuttered, Palestine's most vulnerable lose a lifeline. Trump's cuts came as a blow to NGOs like ADWAR \(Ella Halpern-Matthews, +972, 30 April 2025\)](#)

[US tells ICJ it's lawful for Israel to curtail work of UN agencies that aren't 'impartial' \(Sondos Asem, Middle East Eye, 30 April 2025\)](#)

[Documentary on Israeli settlers in occupied West Bank triggers online firestorm \(Middle East Eye, 29 May 2025\)](#)

[The Vach brothers: Israel's first family of genocide \(David Sheen, Electronic Intifada, 30 April 2025\)](#)

[Ben-Gvir touts bombing food depots while at Mar-a-Lago \(Michael F Brown, Electronic Intifada, 30 April 2025\)](#)

[Besieged by settlers, Palestinians race to harvest wheat early \(Georgia Gee and Dikla Taylor-Sheinman, +972, 28 April 2025\)](#)

[A ruined university in northern Gaza becomes a refuge - Forced out of their homes once more, thousands of Palestinians have crowded into the Islamic University campus, west of Gaza City — where burning books is the only way to boil water, heat food, and stay warm \(Ruwaida Amer, +972, 25 April 2025\)](#)

[How Gaza's horrors turned Israeli normalization into a Saudi domestic crisis. Before Oct. 7, the kingdom was meticulously reshaping public opinion to support a peace deal. Gaza upended this strategy — forcing MbS to recalibrate \(Hind Al Ansari, +972, 24 April 2025\)](#)

[Bombing plants, severing pipelines: Israel pushes Gaza water crisis to the brink \(Ibtisam Mahdi, +972, 23 April 2025\)](#)

[Global Charade: Israel, Palestine And The 'Rules-Based Order' \(Media Lens, 15 April 2025\)](#)

[The Israeli army is facing its biggest refusal crisis in decades. Over 100,000 Israelis have reportedly stopped showing up for reserve duty \(Meron Rapoport, +972, 11 April 2025\)](#)

[Where's the outrage over 'systematic' sexual violence against Palestinians? \(Samah Salaime, +972, 17 April 2025\)](#)

[In southern Syria, a violent new Israeli occupation emerges. Israeli forces have advanced miles into Syrian territory — confiscating land and homes, killing farmers, and seeking to divide the region's diverse population \(Tareq al-Salameh, +972, 10 April 2025\)](#)

['I operated on more children in Gaza in one night than I do in the U.S. in a year', says American surgeon Feroze Sidhwa \(Michal Feldon, +972, 9 April 2025\)](#)

[Israel kills children routinely in West Bank \(Tamara Nassar, Electronic Intifada, 9 April 2025\)](#)

[Netanyahu says Iran deal will only work if nuclear facilities blown up, otherwise military force needed \(Lazar Berman, Times of Israel, 8 April 2025\)](#)

[Key 7 October "mass rapes" witness denounced as liar by Israeli reporter \(Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 4 April 2025\)](#)

[Starvation and solitary confinement: 14 months in Israeli prison \(Abdullah Younis, Electronic Intifada, 3 April 2025\)](#)

[Trump goes to war for Israel \(Eli Gerzon, Electronic Intifada, 1 April 2025\)](#)

[Trump takes support for Israel to new extremes \(Hassan Abo Qamar, Electronic Intifada, 27 March 2025\)](#)

[As Israeli bombs fell, wounded children overwhelmed this Gaza hospital. Dozens died \(AP, 25 March 2025\)](#)

## Continued From Page 24

The [IPC's December 2023](#) report warned of a growing risk of famine as a result of critical levels of food insecurity affecting the entire population of Gaza. More than two million people were enduring "crisis or worse" levels of food insecurity - the highest proportion in a single territory that the IPC had ever identified in nearly two decades of operations.

A piecemeal humanitarian performance ensued as the situation in Gaza continued to deteriorate. By February 2024, the [Jordanian](#) government began [dropping food aid](#) into besieged northern Gaza, after which the World Central Kitchen - an NGO that participated in the airdrops - [declared](#) it was "redefining the boundaries of humanitarian aid".

Throughout last year, experts continued to describe an extremely grave situation in Gaza, repeatedly warning of either a [high risk](#), or the [imminent](#) onset, of famine.

By October, the [US](#) government had called on the Israeli regime to increase the delivery of [humanitarian aid](#) to Gaza. Despite this apparent diplomatic pressure, in December, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (an initiative comparable to the IPC but funded by the US government) warned that a "famine scenario" was unfolding in northern Gaza. Rather than forcing Israel to end its torturous policies of deprivation and military violence, US officials instead had the [report retracted](#).

The starvation of the people of Gaza did not begin in October 2023, nor when Israel repeatedly breached [and then broke](#) the ceasefire agreement on 18 March 2025.

Throughout Israel's protracted occupation and blockade of Gaza, babies born with [low birth weight](#), along with stunting in children during the early years of life, have become commonplace. [Anaemia](#) and other micronutrient deficiencies are prevalent too. Each of these nutritional indicators is determined by Israel's tight control over the availability and diversity of food permitted into Gaza.

When Israel intensified its [blockade of Gaza](#) in 2007, it implemented a concerted policy of systematic deprivation, ostensibly to turn Palestinians against the elected government.

No attempts were made to disguise this approach; Dov Weissglas, an adviser to Ehud Olmert, then Israel's prime minister, [openly stated](#) in 2006: "The idea is to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger."

Following a three-year legal case, Israel's defence ministry was forced to release an [official policy document](#) in 2012 that detailed how it calculated daily calorie requirements to reduce the supply of food into Gaza to a "humanitarian minimum". Today, the Israeli regime has completely abandoned the illusion of respect for even the lowest of humanitarian standards.

### Reclaiming political obligations

Last month, [more than 3,600](#) children in Gaza were admitted to health facilities with acute malnutrition, marking a sharp increase from February. Once admitted, many children do not receive the treatment they need, as nearly half of Gaza's nutrition treatment sites are no longer functioning.

Since 2 March, the Israeli regime has [blocked the entry](#) of all humanitarian aid into Gaza, including food and water. On 16 April, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz [brazenly declared](#): "In the current reality, no one is going to allow any humanitarian aid into Gaza." By 25 April, the World Food Programme declared it had [run out](#) of its remaining food supplies.

Israel's military has simultaneously destroyed Gaza's agricultural production capacity and decimated Palestinians' livelihood reserves. Gaza's fragile food basket, bakeries, fishing boats, food storage warehouses, and emergency kitchens have all been targeted.

At least [82 percent](#) of Gaza's croplands have been damaged, [75 percent](#) of its olive trees have been destroyed, and [95 percent](#) of cattle have died. Amid Israel's

renewed attacks, even more land has been occupied and may be subject to annexation. At the same time, chemicals released by Israeli missiles, coupled with untreated sewage from destroyed sanitation systems, has polluted the soil and groundwater reserves.

As physicians who have worked in Gaza during Israel's occupation, blockade, repeated military assaults, and now genocide, we hold complicit every state that continues to actively and passively support Israel. The Israeli regime has resolutely exposed the "logic of elimination" inherent to its settler-colonial ambitions. Only immediate and concerted action will protect the Palestinian people from this latest stage in Israel's campaign of genocidal eradication.

Evidence of scorched-earth strategies, famine warnings, and declarations of [plausible genocide](#) were all designed to provoke action. Despite their grave implications, these terms have been repeatedly manipulated and misinterpreted for political gain.

Rather than invoking concerted action, "risk of famine" warnings have been distorted to imply that the situation isn't as dire as experts have claimed. Similarly, declarations of "plausible" genocide have been manipulated to obscure the immediate obligations of the international community with drawn-out judicial processes and the seemingly endless pursuit of ever-more irrefutable evidence.

It is not too late to reclaim the political obligations attached to these terms. The imminent onset of famine demands collective action. Starvation can't be reversed with food aid alone. Those who starve others must be held accountable for their crimes, and those who have been starved must be afforded justice.

It is not too late to protect Palestinians in Gaza from those who continue to orchestrate and celebrate Israel's depraved policy of extermination by starvation.

<https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/israel-starving-gaza-death-and-still-world-does-nothing>



## KneeCap Statement

*[Kneecap are an Irish hip hop trio from Belfast, Northern Ireland, composed of Mo Chara, Móglaí Bap and DJ Próvaí, the stage names of Liam Óg Ó hAinmí, Naoise Ó Cairealláin and J. J. Ó Dochartaigh, respectively. They rap in a mixture of English and Irish.]*

### STATEMENT:

They want you to believe words are more harmful than genocide.

Establishment figures, desperate to silence us, have combed through hundreds of hours of footage and interviews, extracting a handful of words from months or years ago to manufacture moral hysteria.

Let us be unequivocal: we do not, and have never, supported Hamas or Hezbollah. We condemn all attacks on civilians, always. It is never okay. We know this more than anyone, given our nation's history.

We also reject any suggestion that we would seek to incite violence against any MP or individual. Ever. An extract of footage, deliberately taken out of all context, is now being exploited and weaponised, as if it were a call to action. This distortion is not only absurd - it is a transparent effort to derail the real conversation.

All two million Palestinian people in Gaza are currently being starved to death by Israel. At least 20,000 children in Gaza have been killed.

The British government continues to supply arms to Israel, even after scores of NHS doctors warned Keir Starmer in August that children were being systematically executed with sniper shots to the head.

Instead of defending innocent people or the principles of international law, the powerful in Britain have abetted slaughter and famine.

This is where real anger and outrage should be directed towards.

To the Amess and Cox families, we send our heartfelt apologies, we never intended to cause you hurt.

Kneecap's message has always been — and remains — one of love, inclusion, and hope. This is why our music resonates across generations, countries, classes and cultures and has brought hundreds of thousands of people to our gigs. No smear campaign will change that.

Suddenly, days after calling out the US administration at Coachella to applause and solidarity, there is an avalanche of outrage and condemnation by the political classes of Britain.

The real crimes are not in our performances; the real crimes are the silence and complicity of those in power.

## Israel is starving Gaza to death, and still the world does nothing

Mads Gilbert, Dr James Smith, Dr Ghassan Abu-Sittah

Israel is starving the entire population of Gaza - to the point of death, for a growing number of [Palestinians](#).

There is not a single place in the world where starvation is an inevitability: not after major environmental disasters, amid drought and crop failure, or during armed conflict and genocide. Starvation is an act of either intentional violence or indifferent neglect, both of which are made possible by our collective inaction.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Gaza, where [Israel's](#) occupation, blockade and now-total siege were designed to exert full control over the Palestinian population, deliberately depriving them of the most basic means to sustain life.

Starvation is a strategy as old

as warfare itself. It is deployed as a weapon of mass destruction to inflict maximal harm, and always with calculated disregard for those who suffer and die as a result.

So horrific is this particular form of violence that it is distinguished as a specific war crime in the [Geneva Conventions](#) and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. In addition, [UN Resolution 2417](#) condemns both the "starvation of civilians as a method of warfare" and the practice of "depriving civilians of objects indispensable to their survival".

Despite the multitude of legal protections, it has now been more than a year since the UN's special rapporteur on the right to food, [Michael Fakhri](#), observed that experts on starvation had never seen

a civilian population subjected to hunger so quickly and so completely as in Gaza.

Throughout the early months of 2024, [B'Tselem](#), representatives of [Medical Aid for Palestinians](#), the [EU's foreign policy chief](#), and many others issued similar warnings that Israel was intentionally and systematically starving the Palestinian population in Gaza.

### Persistent risk of famine

These warnings were informed by the first report of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), an initiative established in 2004 to improve evidence-informed projections and targeted responses in situations of food insecurity.

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