

# Labour Affairs

Incorporating the Labour and Trade Union Review

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## Britain and the War on Iran: Staring into the Abyss

The United States and Israel have launched an unprovoked war of aggression against Iran, a state that was not threatening their interests. This is a war to destroy the Iranian state and is waged in such a way as to cause death and destruction to the political leadership, the state apparatus, civil society and the civilian population, including a barbaric attack on a girls' school, citizen gatherings, a desalinisation plant, an oil refinery (releasing toxic gases over civilians) and the homes of ordinary people. By any standard it is a crime of almost unimaginable proportions. The moral case against the aggression on Iran is self-evident.

'Labour Affairs' intends to put the case for supporting Iran on a pragmatic as well as a moral basis and here again the case for supporting Iran is overwhelming. In the March issue of LA Dave Gardner made the point that support for the war on Russia in Ukraine had already cost

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## The Iranian Debacle – A Moment of Opportunity?

The escalating conflict in the Middle East following the attack on Iran threatens to return Britain to the kind of economic stress it last encountered in the 1970s — rising energy prices, squeezed living standards, and a working class searching for political leadership that speaks directly to its situation. In this context, Clive Lewis's recent article in the Guardian on the implications of the Gorton and Denton by-election deserves careful consideration — both for what it gets right and for what it leaves unanswered. (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/mar/08/foundation-lives-crisis-debate-byelection-politics>)

In the article, Lewis emphasises the dramatic change in British politics that followed the election of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister in 1979. Thatcher had a vision of a society in which the role of the state was small. Over the next 18 years, Thatcher and her Tory successors completed a huge denationalisation programme: energy, water, transport,

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the UK £200 billion since 2022, with further losses to come for both consumers and producers through inflated energy prices. The widespread fury of the British electorate against parties who have managed our affairs so incompetently has led to a degree of political instability which is likely to increase.

Iran has not threatened our interests. Our interests depend on maintaining good relations with Iran, in part because our ability to access oil, gas and fertiliser depends on not attacking them. However, we are correctly perceived to be doing so by Iran. The UK has provided and continues to provide logistical support to the US aggression against Iran. A country that assists another country in waging war on a third country is a co-belligerent against that third country. When Iran retaliates against that co-belligerent it is acting within its right in international law to defend itself. To say that the UK is entitled to take defensive measures resulting from its own support for aggression is simply to say that it intends to intensify its aggression against Iran. Indeed, that is how the Iranians see us, as a hostile state dedicated to destroying them and they have taken action accordingly.

A key element in Iran's fight for survival is to choke off the Strait of Hormuz to prevent shipment of oil, gas and other products to the rest of the world. Our faltering economy depends on these to continue operating at all, let alone to flourish. The next step in Iran's war for survival, already underway, is the destruction of extraction, production and refining facilities in the Gulf States. When this is completed, the world will permanently lose energy capacity. Unless the war is stopped we will lose access to energy and fertiliser and will fall into an economic slump along with Europe and much of the world. We are looking at a worldwide recession and quite possibly an economic depression which may take years to emerge from. In the meantime, vulnerable countries will face starvation.

On the grounds of self-interest alone, the case for opposing the aggression against Iran and providing diplomatic support for them to extract favourable terms is overwhelming. These terms will have to include the permanent removal of the US military presence from the Middle East. The longer the war goes on the greater the economic destruction will be and the longer it will take to put it right. Our economy is already faltering, in large part because of our obsessional support for the war against Russia. Our participation

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### Labour Affairs

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in yet another imperialist war against Iran threatens far greater economic destruction. The people of the UK need to understand the operation of cause and effect in this case. Supporting imperialist ventures on behalf of countries such as the US and Israel that do not have our interests at heart leads to hikes in the cost of energy. In the case of Ukraine this is self-imposed through sanctions. In the case of Iran it comes from their retaliation against our own aggression. The results are the same, economic decline and distress for the population of Britain. We are governed by a political class that is effectively controlled by two foreign powers. This means that they will never govern in our interests unless those interests coincide with ours, which will be a very rare occurrence indeed. The time has come to remove this corrupt political class and to promote the interest of the British people.

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telecommunications and manufacturing. [Manufacturing privatisations included](#) British Aerospace (1981), Jaguar (1984), Rolls-Royce (1987), British Steel (1988), and the Rover Group (1988).

But perhaps Thatcher's greatest privatisation programme was housing. Although not technically a denationalisation programme, a strong case can be made that the Thatcher government effectively denationalised council house building, not through direct privatisation, but through a deliberate two-pronged strategy. This involved selling off the existing public housing stock via the Right to Buy scheme while simultaneously imposing strict financial controls that prevented local authorities from using the proceeds to build new homes to replace them.

She also initiated the transfer of economic activity from industry to finance. That was her solution to the problem of loss of competitiveness of British manufacturing.

That transfer combined with anti-union legislation enormously weakened the trade union movement. Trade union membership as a percentage of the nation's workforce was some 54 % in 1979. Today it is around 22%. We are in a completely transformed social and economic landscape, one in which the population has fewer outlets in which to organise into groups that have any sort of power. The economic sectors (services, retail) that replaced industry need to get more unionised.

Lewis laments that the Blair Labour government that eventually came to power in 1997 did little to reverse Thatcher's legacy. In his article, Lewis calls for a complete break with the Thatcherite legacy.

"Nothing short of a decisive break with Thatcherism will suffice. Not managerial tweaks. Not rhetorical resets. A break."

But Lewis's article is far from clear on the form that break should take. There is much talk about democracy, empowering communities and moving power downwards. But it is all somewhat vague and unclear. One suspects that

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Check what we were saying in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which still reads well. Web pages and PDFs at

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those working-class people of Gorton and Denton, who abandoned Labour to vote for Reform, would not find it very convincing.

Lewis is, of course, right that Thatcher's rise to power in 1979 marked a decisive shift in British politics away from the social democratic consensus that had existed since the Second World War. But he makes no attempt to explain why that old social democratic consensus ended. Can one really talk about breaking with the Thatcherite legacy without some understanding of why Thatcher ever came to power in the first place? After all, if the conditions that led to her rise to power still persist, then it may not be possible to break with her legacy.

Lewis says:

"Until control over the foundations of everyday life is democratised, no government will fully resolve the cost of living or cost of doing business crises. Economic renewal requires a decisive downward transfer of power to people and communities."

But did that not exist in the post-war social democratic consensus? If so, why did Thatcher ever come to power?

The view of this magazine is that Thatcher came to power because the main institutions of working-class power, the trade unions, were unable to deal with the economic stress

under which Britain was put after the huge increase in oil and gas prices in the 1970s, caused by Israel's attempts to dominate the Middle East.

The unions should have addressed the macroeconomic issue of how the effect on the cost of living should be distributed throughout society. Instead, each union opted to largely consider only the interests of its own members.

The post-war consensus, which Thatcher ended, had effectively adopted a policy of full employment. Beveridge had understood better than most the problems inherent in such a policy when he wrote in his 1944 book *Full Employment in a Free Society*:

"The problem of how wages should be determined under conditions of full employment is more important and more difficult ... Irresponsible sectional wage bargaining may lead to inflationary developments which bestow no benefits upon the working class; which spell expropriation for the old-age pensioner and the small rentier; and which endanger the very policy of full employment whose maintenance is a vital common interest of all wage-earners. How real is this possibility cannot be decided on theoretical grounds..." (paragraph 283)

"...But the fact remains that there is no inherent

mechanism in our present system, which can with certainty prevent competitive sectional bargaining for wages from setting up a vicious spiral of rising prices under full employment." (paragraph 285)

It was the vicious spiral of rising prices that would lead to the rise of Thatcher.

Are the unions any wiser today as we face another round of huge increases in energy prices after the attack on Iran?

The unions will again, as in the 1970s, have to address the macroeconomic issue of how the effect of the impending energy price explosion should be distributed throughout society. Will each just focus on its own members? Or, will they demand a national discussion on how the increase in the cost of living should be distributed throughout society? That remains to be seen. But a political party which calls for such a national discussion will increase its chances of winning in the next general election.

The electorate of Denton and Gorton will understand the relevance of such a discussion better than vague claims that "fiscal and administrative devolution would allow communities to shape their own priorities".

## House of Commons Debates on the Middle East

**2 March 2026**

**John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab)**

Others have mentioned Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, and I think many of us know the way this goes. There are responsibilities on all of our shoulders. The Prime Minister is right that there needs to be a plan. Has the US President shared with him what the plan is, or consulted him on it? We know from experience that it is easy for politicians to fire weapons and start a war, but it is when the shooting ends that the nightmare begins. That is why we need clarity on our role as an independent country that is not swayed even by Donald Trump.

When my right hon. Friend stood for the leadership of the Labour party, he clearly set out that there would be a vote in this House on any decision about military action. Can I therefore ask him to assure us that there will be such a vote in this House, so that we do not drift into this war as we have done in the past?

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2026-03-02/debates/C3BE6001-08B4-4DF8-8193-A4BFF0C57E9B/MiddleEast#:~:text=It%20is%20simply%20not%20possible,that%20have%20not%20been%20involved.>

**Abtisam Mohamed (Sheffield Central) (Lab)**

I have constituents and family in the region who

are all terrified about what may come next. The world is an infinitely more dangerous place today than it was last week. Trump and Netanyahu chose to throw away diplomacy and launch a direct attack on Iran—an attack that, as the Prime Minister has said, can never be justified under international law. Equally, Iran's indiscriminate attacks on airports and hotels across the Gulf are flagrant violations of sovereignty and clear breaches of international law. Does the Prime Minister recognise that this attempt at regime change, like so many others before it, will only result in years of instability and conflict in the region? What assurances can he give that the UK's involvement will remain defensive and not turn into full-scale military involvement, as we saw in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya?

**Ms Polly Billington (East Thanet) (Lab)**

So far we have rightly focused on defending and protecting British citizens in the region. Can the Prime Minister confirm, though, that he believes that the future of the Iranian Government is a matter for the Iranian people and no one else? Can we focus our diplomatic efforts as soon as possible on de-escalation and peace, including identifying allies in a coalition of the willing

to bring this to an end?

**Imran Hussain (Bradford East) (Lab)**

Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen and now this illegal war on Iran—the reality is that time and again we are dragged into conflicts that are illegal, make the region less stable and result in devastation and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women and children. Have we not learned the lessons of the past? Will the Prime Minister make it clear from the Dispatch Box that Britain is not Trump's poodle and never again will we be a launch pad for illegal and endless wars that have no plan and no end, and will he make it clear that any final decision will be made by this House?

**Dr Ellie Chowns (North Herefordshire) (Green)**

My party and I stand with all the brave Iranians who condemn the vile regime in Iran. We also condemn the deeply irresponsible and illegal attack by the US and Israel on Iran, which was launched in the middle of nuclear negotiations and led by Trump—a clearly unstable loose cannon—and Netanyahu, a war criminal. The UK must stand unequivocally against this reckless action.

Will the Prime Minister publish the legal advice that he received on the initial American and Israeli strikes,

not just the more recent advice on the defensive posture? Will he also commit to a vote in this House on any UK involvement in this war?

**Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South and Walkden) (Lab)**

We have heard this language before, with military intervention dressed up as necessity or as being done out of humanitarian concern: Libya, Iraq—the list goes on. All those interventions led to devastating consequences for the people who lived there: hundreds of thousands dead, infrastructure destroyed, countries and regions destabilised, and the creation of a refugee crisis. I hope all those who are chomping at the bit for this war will welcome the extra refugees who will be coming on to our shores as a consequence. Article 51 of the UN charter does not allow for regime change, and I am so grateful to our Prime Minister for not joining in this illegal war by the US and Israel. I ask him, please, to continue with this direction, so that we do not get involved in another illegal war in the middle east.

**Apsana Begum (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab)**

A constituent who fled Iran fought back tears as she told me that she wanted an end to the regime in Iran that had targeted her and her loved ones. She also said that she wanted absolutely no illegal military intervention from external forces.

Does the Prime Minister understand that enabling the use of military bases by the Government's allies—in this case, the US—and Israel's illegal actions are dragging our country into a wider conflict, but that the Government have no power to determine the conflict's outcome, and that that risks making us all more, not less, safe?

**Richard Burgon (Leeds East) (Lab)**

This is an extremely dangerous moment, and Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya show where it can end up: with death, destruction, terror and chaos impacting tens of millions of people. Given that, should the Government's focus not be on pushing Trump, Israel and Iran towards diplomacy, de-escalation and a ceasefire? Instead, by siding with Trump, has the Prime Minister not risked dragging us into a wider conflict, which leaves us all less safe? Mission creep would erode the distinction that he is attempting to make between offensive and defensive actions and would lead us to become fully embroiled in an illegal US war in the middle east.

**Ayoub Khan (Birmingham Perry Barr) (Ind)**

I thank the Prime Minister for accepting that the reason the British Army is not involved is that it would be

unlawful and illegal. Thereby, what America has done is illegal—an illegal attack that has led to the death of 167 girls aged between seven and 11. There are people sitting in this Chamber who oppose refugees coming to this country; they are the very same people who are asking for war. Would he be surprised if we had a sudden influx of refugees as a result of what has happened?

**Mr Adnan Hussain (Blackburn) (Ind)**

As the Prime Minister admits, following the illegal pre-emptive strikes and the killing of Iran's leader, Iran has become more aggressive and more unpredictable in the region. How can we possibly be assured that further strikes, further attacks and further aggression will somehow calm the situation? Britain must not contribute to another conflict whose legality is in serious doubt. Will the Prime Minister now commit unequivocally to upholding international law, to publishing the Government's legal advice, and to pressing for an immediate ceasefire and a return to diplomacy rather than allowing the United Kingdom to be drawn into another unlawful war?

**Zarah Sultana (Coventry South) (Your Party)**

US congressional staff were told on Sunday that Iran was not planning to strike American forces or

bases unless Israel attacked Iran first. In other words, there was no intelligence indicating an imminent threat. Yet we have already seen pre-emptive strikes attacking a girls' school, killing over 100 children. This has been condemned by UNESCO as a grave violation of humanitarian law, yet the Prime Minister did not bother to mention it. Continuing such actions is unlawful, and allowing them to take place from UK bases is unlawful, so I ask the Prime Minister: is the genocide of the Palestinian people not enough for this Labour Government? Is he proud to be another Labour Prime Minister obediently following Washington into yet another illegal war in the middle east, making us all less safe? Finally, how much does he enjoy being Donald Trump's poodle?

#### **DEBATE ON MIDDLE EAST 16 MARCH**

**John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab)**

As has been said, Trump and Netanyahu launched this war without consultation. They did it unilaterally, and recklessly and irresponsibly, and it was absolutely predictable that the strait would be threatened in this way. Yet some shipping is moving, is it not? Some shipping is going to our ally, India, because it is not engaged in the war, because it is at peace with Iran. Does that not teach us the lesson that we need to bring about peace, that that should be our main and prime purpose in negotiating a peaceful settlement, and that the first step towards that is

de-escalation?

**Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con)**

Do the Government not realise that this nation is already at war? Iran is firing on sovereign British territory, and Russia has already proclaimed that it is at war with the United Kingdom. Is it not time to put the whole Government on to a war footing, because otherwise we will carry on running behind the curve as we have over this recent matter of the strait of Hormuz?

**Paul Waugh (Rochdale) (Lab/Co-op)**

This Government are absolutely right to refuse to take part in the war being waged by the United States and Israel. Will the Minister confirm to the House that we are going to put British interests first in everything we do? That includes protecting the global economy, and protecting all our constituents' energy bills.

**Dr Ellie Chowns (North Herefordshire) (Green)**

The Minister and the Prime Minister have talked about the UK being willing to participate in a "viable, collective plan" to reopen the strait of Hormuz, but does the Minister really think that President Trump has a viable plan, given that he had no plan for the illegal war, nor any legal justification for the war he has launched? Given that, will the UK be absolutely unequivocal that we will not give in to Trump's

bullying demands, but will instead stand up for British interests, and will we make it absolutely clear that we will not be dragged into a catastrophic, illegal war in the middle east?

**Dr Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con)**

Since there is no plan to reopen the strait, it seems that the price of fertiliser will skyrocket. What advice does the Minister have for farmers in the northern hemisphere who would normally be buying fertiliser at this time to support spring plantings? Many are making a decision on whether to go ahead with those plantings. He will know that if they do not, that will have dire implications for food prices and the cost of living.

**Ayoub Khan (Birmingham Perry Barr) (Ind)**

Over the weekend, France and Italy opened talks with Iran to allow their ships to pass through the strait of Hormuz.

France has limited America's use of its bases to non-combat missions only; Italy has refused to help altogether. With this Labour Government giving a licence to American assets on British bases, there is no hope of our striking a similar deal to let our ships through at present. Will the Government confirm that they will keep all options on the table—including suspending American military operations from our bases—because British citizens must come

first, and they must be shielded from bearing the brunt of America and Israel's illegal war?

**Iqbal Mohamed (Dewsbury and Batley) (Ind)**

It is suspected that AI systems have been used to target and murder 165 schoolchildren and their teachers using US-made Tomahawks, with further double-tap attacks falling on survivors 40 minutes later. This Government say that tackling violence against women and girls is a priority, but in failing to call out this clear war crime, those words mean nothing as the bodies of children get buried. Will the Minister explain what the UK Government are doing to hold America and Israel to account for these war crimes, and does he share my concerns about the use of AI to kill?

**DEBATE ON MIDDLE EAST 17 MARCH**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2026-03-17/debates/5E7F5053-690E-47A6-926D-6A2B1A904946/MiddleEast#main-content>

**Paul Waugh (Rochdale) (Lab/Co-op)**

I thank the Foreign Secretary for confirming today that British foreign policy is being decided by the British Government and not outsourced either to Washington or to Tel Aviv.

At the weekend, Israeli police killed two young Palestinian brothers and their parents in the occupied west bank, shooting all four in the head and face as the family returned from a Ramadan shopping trip. Mohammed was five, and Othman, who was blind and had special needs, was seven. Their mother and father were driving them through their home town of Tamoun late on Saturday when Israeli forces opened fire. Eleven-year-old Khaled, who survived the shooting, told Reuters that Israeli police who dragged him out of the car said, "We killed dogs." Does this not

show the need for the UK to take tough action against Israel for the expansion of illegal settlements in the west bank and the wider crimes being committed by settlers in the west bank?

**Kim Johnson (Liverpool Riverside) (Lab)**

The illegal war started by Israel and the US is shifting focus away from the atrocities that we are seeing happen daily in Gaza and the west bank. This morning I listened to the mother of Hind Rajab. In the week when the film about her was nominated for an award, her name has become a symbol of strength for the children of Gaza. Investigations have shown that 355 bullet holes were found on the car in which Hind hid with dead members of her family—overwhelming evidence of the terror that she faced while trapped and frightened. Does the Foreign Secretary agree that the horrendous actions of the Israel Defence Forces in this case, and so many others, as we have heard today, can only be described as barbaric and inhumane? Can she say what this Government are doing to challenge these atrocities and barbaric actions, and does she have more to say than just warm words?

**Dr Ellie Chowns (North Herefordshire) (Green)**

In the Foreign Secretary's statement—all six pages of it—there was not a single word of criticism of the illegal, reckless action of Trump and Netanyahu in launching the strikes that have set off this conflagration in the middle east. If the Foreign Secretary is not prepared even to criticise that, what hope can the British people have that the UK Government are standing up to the aggression of Trump and Netanyahu behind closed doors? Can she assure us that she and her Government are showing more backbone behind those closed doors? And can she

assure us that she is investing in building a special relationship with allies we can really rely on, who believe in human rights, diplomacy and peace?

**Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Ind)**

In this overarching statement on the middle east by the Foreign Secretary, it is surprising that she did not take the opportunity to condemn the continuing genocide in Gaza, the brutality of the occupation of the west bank, the destruction of Palestinian villages there, the invasion of Lebanon by Israel and the continued supply of British weapons. Trump has declared war on Iran without any war objective or war plan, and we are involved in that. Can she end this nonsense about whether we are sending defensive or offensive strikes from this country? The reality is that if a bomber takes off from RAF Fairford and bombs civilian targets in Iran, we are involved in that act of aggression against the people of Iran. Should we not join Spain and say no to the USA?

**Ayoub Khan (Birmingham Perry Barr) (Ind)**

The one thing Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu knew full well when they entered this illegal war unilaterally was that the strait of Hormuz would be a place of strategic weaponry, if you want to call it that, for Iran to use against all other nations. Some European countries have unilaterally now decided to open negotiations with Iran, such as France and Italy. They have done that because they are not participating in any direct military action. My question for the Foreign Secretary is: if the Iranians said, "We would allow UK ships to pass through the strait of Hormuz, but you must prevent America from using your base," would we comply?

**Shockat Adam (Leicester South) (Ind)**

I think, and hope, that everybody

in this Chamber, including the official Opposition, now agrees that Donald Trump had absolutely no plan when he agreed, along with Israel, to this illegal invasion of Iran. Their first action was to bomb a school, killing more than 160 schoolchildren—mainly girls—and over 1,500 people have been killed and more than 20,000 injured. The whole region is in flames, and the obstruction of the strait of Hormuz is affecting the global economy. Does the Foreign Secretary agree that no UK warships should join this illegal war, and that there should be no boots on the ground to deflect from what is essentially Trump’s “Operation Epstein Fury”?

## **DEBATE 23 MARCH 2026**

**Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney  
North and Stoke Newington)  
(Ind)**

The Iranian regime is a threat to us all, not least to its own population. I implore Ministers to remember the importance of a debate in Parliament, just as we had on Iraq, if we move further in our involvement with Trump’s war.

**Jon Trickett (Normanton and  
Hemsworth) (Lab)**

I join my right hon. Friend in paying tribute to members of the armed forces, and I acknowledge too the difficult path that he has to tread. The Government’s stated objective was to achieve de-escalation of this war led by diplomacy, yet the truth is that the US planes leaving British soil, which he authorised without parliamentary consent, are carrying not diplomats but heavy payloads. The Secretary of State said that he wants these actions to be legal. What protocols has he agreed with the United States to ensure that those bombers are operating within national and international law and in a defensive capacity only?

Anything else leads to a slippery slope from defence into offence.

**Mohammad Yasin (Bedford)  
(Lab)**

One of the clearest lessons of the Chilcot inquiry was that the UK must be prepared to say no to the US when British interests, legal standards and global stability are at risk. Will the Government hold firm and not be drawn further into this conflict by a so-called ally whose conduct is unpredictable, insulting, destabilising and, in my view, deranged?

**John McDonnell (Hayes and  
Harlington) (Lab)**

What Donald Trump said at the weekend was that unless the strait was opened, he would obliterate Iran’s power plants. I agree that attacking a nuclear plant could be extremely catastrophic. As we have made clear to Putin, however, attacking power plants that supply power to civilians is against international law and is clearly a move from defence to aggression. On that basis, while I join the Secretary of State in hoping that the next five days secure peace, may I ask him to confirm that UK bases will not be used to attack power plants? If there is to be such a change of policy, will he ask the Prime Minister for a debate and a vote in this House, because I want my constituents to know that I am not willing to support such escalation?

**Dr Ellie Chowns (North  
Herefordshire) (Green)**

The expansion of US use of UK bases announced over the weekend represents an escalation of UK involvement in this war. At a time when we all agree that de-escalation is urgently needed, we are being dragged into Trump’s illegal, reckless war, with huge ramifications for the region and for households in this country. Last week, the Secretary of State said that he would get involved only if there was a “viable,

collective plan”, but where is that plan? This afternoon, the Prime Minister said to the Liaison Committee that we must beware of “the false comfort of thinking that there will necessarily be a quick and early end to this” conflict. Given all that, when will we have a Commons vote on the escalating UK involvement in this illegal and reckless war?

**Apsana Begum (Poplar and  
Limehouse) (Lab)**

Under international law, the use of force is permitted for “individual or collective self-defence” against “an armed attack”. Such use of force must satisfy the requirements of proportionality and necessity. In light of the broadening use of British military bases at the request of Donald Trump over the past week, will the Defence Secretary clarify for the British public how this satisfies those requirements? If the lessons of Iraq are to be learned, surely he must understand that the British public will not accept anything other than a parliamentary debate and vote on any further British military involvement.

**Ayoub Khan (Birmingham  
Perry Barr) (Ind)**

Every credible legal analyst will state that this attack on Iran by Israel and the US was illegal. There was never an imminent threat, and the Caroline principles incorporated into the UN charter were simply not engaged. Given that Trump now seeks to withdraw from this war, and given the disquiet in this House about whether our base use is offensive or defensive in nature, will the Defence Secretary allow a parliamentary debate in which Members can vote on whether we should allow our bases to be used? If not, why not?

## News from Sahra Wagenknecht

### A New World Order?

Ukraine, Iran, Gaza: Today's brutal wars are part of a global realignment. Germany and Europe stand at a crossroads: Are we increasingly becoming an appendage of the imperial foreign policy of the declining world power, the USA, which threatens to plunge the world into chaos and is driving our economic decline? Or do we commit to an independent German and European policy that puts our interests first and advocates for peaceful international relations? What role Europe could play as a mediating force for peace in a multipolar world, and what the German government would need to do to ensure that Germany no longer stands in the way of such a development – I discuss these and other questions in a new episode of "Sahra meets" with political scientist, Europe expert and journalist Ulrike Guérot.

Watch the full video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSHxttqJFqY>

### No to bombing Iran!

Bombs on civilians, black rain over Tehran, millions displaced – the war waged by the US and Israel in violation of international law is a horrific crime against the people of Iran. At the same time, we in Germany are feeling the consequences: energy prices are skyrocketing and threaten to cripple the economy and consumers.

*We at BSW want this to stop at once! Join us on Saturday, 21 March, at our rally in Berlin:*

*Speakers: Fabio De Masi, Amira Mohamed Ali & Michael Lüders*

*We say: No to the war against Iran! Peace instead of war inflation!*

### No to unaffordable petrol prices!

Italy and Austria are cutting fuel tax. The German government is

letting the public be fleeced at the petrol pump. Enough is enough! The fact that petrol would cost less than a euro in Germany if it were completely tax-free highlights the government's failure. We need an emergency brake on fuel prices now: cut VAT, scrap the CO2 levy, reduce energy tax, and enforce a price cap! No petrol station in Germany should be allowed to sell fuel for more than 1.50 euros. Furthermore, we urgently need to buy oil and gas again from wherever it is cheapest and most readily available. It's mad: even the US is easing sanctions against Iran in the midst of its own war, because it is in their interest that energy prices do not skyrocket even further. But even after four years of proxy war in Ukraine, the German government is sticking to the failed sanctions against Russia, even though they are driving our economy to ruin. The fact that, as a result of the war in Iran, Qatar – which was supposed to compensate for the loss of Russian imports – is now also failing to supply gas to Germany shows all the more clearly: it is high time to end this sanctions madness!

### Time to repair relations with Russia and put an end to German deindustrialisation!

The energy policies of the EU and the German government are an absolute disaster! In last year's 'tariff deal', Brussels agreed to import overpriced American fracking gas worth 750 billion euros. Now, in the midst of the energy price crisis triggered by the war in Iran, the US is threatening to cut off supplies unless the EU accepts Trump's trade diktat word for word.

We are now paying the price for the fact that Merz, von der Leyen and Co. have driven us ever deeper into dependence on American energy imports, thereby making us subject to the whims of

the megalomaniac US President. It is in the vital interests of Germany and Europe to source energy from as many sources as possible and, above all, to buy it again where it is cheapest.

Instead of allowing itself to be blackmailed by Trump, the German government should now enter into negotiations with Russia to once again procure cheap gas via Nord Stream – ideally as part of a ceasefire in Ukraine. Without lower energy prices, Germany's deindustrialisation will be unstoppable!

### 26 March 2026 Newsletter

This is Sahra Wagenknecht's newsletter. In it, I provide regular updates on my activities and current political issues.

Billions spent on rearmament, a ban on combustion engines, uncontrolled migration: for years, politicians have been governing without regard for the interests of the people. Instead of taking citizens' concerns seriously, opinions that deviate from the political and media mainstream are marginalised and stigmatised. Following the unspeakable 'traffic light' coalition, the black-red government under Chancellor Merz – which is no better – is in the process of squandering our country's future. Can Germany still be saved? How can we explain the failure of the ruling politicians, who have apparently lost all touch with the people? What needs to change for democracy in Germany to work again? And what responsibility lies with the media, which increasingly engages in hack reporting rather than critical journalism? I discuss these and other questions in a new episode of "Sahra meets" with Peter Hahne, a long-standing ZDF journalist and presenter as well as a multiple bestselling author.

# The Central Bank of Japan

By Michal Lerner

In the March issue of *Labour Affairs*, I described the operation of the UK and US central banks. In this article I will look at the central bank of Japan.

But first a word on terminology. There will be many references to ‘reserves’ and ‘reserve accounts’ in the article. Reserves is just another name for money. Reserve account is the name given to the accounts which institutions, such as commercial banks like NatWest and Lloyds, hold at the central bank. Although a reserve account just holds money, it is useful to distinguish accounts held at the central bank from accounts held at commercial banks, hence the habit of referring to them as reserve accounts.

The **Bank of Japan (BOJ)** is Japan’s central bank, responsible for issuing currency, maintaining financial system stability, and implementing monetary policy to achieve price stability.

## Foundation

The Bank of Japan was established in **1882** under the Bank of Japan Act, during the modernization of Japan in the Meiji era. Its legal framework was significantly revised in **1997**, granting the Bank greater independence from the government. The revised law came into effect in 1998 and strengthened the BOJ’s autonomy in conducting monetary policy. It’s hardly coincidental that this is the same year that Gordon Brown, as Chancellor in the UK, made similar changes to the Bank of England’s independence. 1998 was probably the high point of the neoliberal era before the dot com crash in 2000, the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) in 2008-2010 and the Covid Pandemic in 2020-2022.

The BoJ’s highest decision-making body is the **Policy Board**, which determines monetary policy. It consists of the **Governor**, two **Deputy Governors** and **6** additional members. Members are appointed by the Cabinet and approved by the legislature, called the National Diet.

The BoJ is independent in

monetary policy decisions. This means it can take decisions about what rate of interest it will charge, how many Japanese Government Bonds (JGBs) it will buy from or sell to the private sector, etc. However, despite being legally independent, the BOJ maintains close coordination with the Japanese government, particularly the Ministry of Finance, especially in matters related to financial stability and currency operations.

## BoJ and government spending

The Japanese legislative body, the National Diet, equivalent to Parliament in the UK, authorizes all government spending. Once authorized, the Ministry of Finance manages the payment

Suppose the government decides to fund a public project—say a rail upgrade or disaster reconstruction. The **cabinet proposes the budget**, and the National Diet of Japan debates and passes it. What that law really does is **authorize the government to make payments** up to certain amounts for specific purposes. But at this point, **no money has moved yet**.

Once the spending is authorized, the operational side begins. The relevant ministry—say the transport ministry—approves a contract with a private company. When it’s time to pay an invoice, the payment request goes through the government’s accounting system run by the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Finance then **instructs that a payment be made from the government’s account** which is held at the BoJ.

The Japanese government holds its main account at the Bank of Japan. This is often called the **Treasury account** or **government deposit account**.

When the Ministry of Finance authorizes a payment, the BoJ **debits the government’s account and credits the reserve account of a commercial bank**. No cash moves physically—this is just **balance sheet entries at the central bank**.

The commercial bank then increases the amount in the deposit account of whoever the government is paying.

Can anything stop the payment happening? Yes. The payment cannot be made if the balance in the government deposit account is not greater than the amount to be paid. In this respect the behaviour of the BoJ is more like that of the Federal Reserve than that of the BoE.

In the UK, the BoE simply makes the payment. The government is given an automatic overdraft if the balance in its account at the BoE is insufficient.

In contrast, both the BoJ and the Federal Reserve must first check that the balance in the government’s account at the central bank is greater than any payment to be made before a payment can be made.

At this point, however, the Japanese and US systems diverge. When the National Diet in Japan authorizes spending, it authorizes, at the same time, the issuing of Japanese Government Bonds (JGBs).

There is no concept of a debt ceiling in Japan, unlike in the US. A debt ceiling in the US can often delay government payments because when congress authorizes spending it does not at the same time authorise the ‘financing’ of the spending.

One has to be very careful about terminology here. For instance, when we talk about ‘financing spending’, it sounds like we are asking where does the government find the money. But that’s not what we mean.

In the US and Japan, the acts of the legislature setting up the central banks require that when a government spends into the economy more than it taxes out (government deficit) then the government must at the same time drain an equivalent amount of reserves from the economy. Reserves here just means the money in the accounts that financial institutions, mainly commercial banks, have at the

central bank.

How can reserves be drained out of an economy? They can be mainly drained by taxation or the selling of government bonds. Draining reserves through taxation reduces the private sector's wealth. Draining reserves by issuing bonds simply changes the private sector's portfolio of assets. Money in reserve accounts becomes interest paying government bonds. One assumes that the private sector would only have made the switch if they thought it would increase their wealth.

The legal requirement in the US and Japan that reserves should be drained does not exist in the UK as a matter of law. However, since 1985, it has become an agreed policy to drain an amount of reserves that matches any government deficit.

Why is it considered important to drain reserves? A mandate of all three central banks is to control inflation. The economic theory that the central banks follow tells them that inflation is related to the level of unemployment, that higher unemployment may be necessary to reduce inflation. So the central banks may, however regrettable they find it, have to increase unemployment. A tool they have for doing that is the rate of interest, often called the Bank Rate. The economic theory they follow tells them that an increase in the Bank Rate will reduce demand in the economy and so create unemployment and thereby reduce inflation.

How does all this relate to the matter of draining reserves? Imagine a commercial bank has more reserves than it needs, then it will happily lend them to other banks so that it can earn interest on these reserves. It may be happy to lend them at a rate of interest that is lower than what the central bank thinks is appropriate to meet its inflation target.

So the idea of forcing governments to drain reserves through bond issuance is closely related to the need of central banks to use the interest rate to increase unemployment and so, according to the Phillips curve, reduce inflation.

Recently, since 2006-2008, all these central banks came up with a different strategy for retaining control of the rate of interest. They opted to pay interest on the full balance of reserves in reserve accounts. Previously, they had only paid interest on a portion of these reserves, the portion that was required so that the commercial banks met their capital requirements.

It was somewhat fortuitous that the central banks adopted this strategy in 2006-2008 since the Quantitative Easing (QE) that they engaged in during the GFC in 2008 and Covid in 2020-2021 greatly increased the amounts of money in the reserve accounts of the commercial banks.

However, because interest is now paid on the full balance in reserve accounts, it makes little sense for a commercial bank to lend at less than the Bank rate.

Given this is the case, why is it necessary to drain reserves? Particularly, if reserves drained through selling government bonds to the private sector are immediately replenished through the central banks buying these same government bonds from the private sector in the secondary market.

We can summarise the current situation as follows.

In the UK, US and Japan, a government deficit leads to an equivalent amount of reserves being drained from the reserve accounts of the commercial banks through the buying of government bonds. In the US and Japan this happens because the law requires it. In the UK it is government policy rather than a legal requirement. The policy is referred to as the 'full funding rule'. It was adopted as a policy in 1985. It could be abandoned without the approval of Parliament.

But the purpose of the draining of reserves is to ensure that the central banks have control over the rate of interest. The rate of interest is the main tool they have to increase unemployment and so reduce, according to the Phillips curve rule, the rate of inflation to their target level.

## The Japanese National Debt

When governments spend money the wealth of the private sector goes up. The national debt goes up, in the first instance, by the same amount. If reserves are drained from the economy via an increase in taxation then the national debt goes down but the private sector is poorer by that amount. If reserves are drained by selling bonds then there is no change in the national debt since the wealth of the private sector has not gone down. They are simply rearranging their portfolio, exchanging reserves for government bonds.

In Japan the ratio of debt to GDP is very high at 270%. Commercial bank reserves are also at an all-time high. This is somewhat puzzling. If the government is required by law to drain an amount of reserves broadly equivalent to its spending, how can reserves in the economy be increasing.

Here's what is happening. The government spends and reserves increase. The government issues bonds and reserves decrease. The Bank of Japan then buys JGBs in the secondary market and reserves increase. Furthermore, when buying JGBs in the secondary market, the BoJ deliberately pays a price for the bonds which limits the yield on the JGBs to the level that the BoJ thinks is appropriate.

What is that appropriate level of yield? But first of all let's clarify what exactly is the meaning of the yield on a JGB.

A JGB is a piece of paper that promises to pay the owner an annual amount of money for a number of years and then a lump sum. For example consider a piece of paper that pays the owner £1 each year for 5 years and then a lump sum of £100 after 5 years. This piece of paper would be called a JGB with a maturity of 5 years. The total income for the owner will be \$105. Investors will bid for this piece of paper in an auction. Someone might bid £95, someone else £98. If you only pay £95 for a piece of paper that pays you £1 per year then the interest rate you achieve is  $100/95 = 1.05\%$ . The interest rate on the

piece of paper is 1%. But because you only paid £95 for this piece of paper your effective interest rate (called the yield) is 1.05%

What determines what investors offer for this piece of paper? Since 2016 the BoJ has been running a yield control curve policy (YCC). This policy aims to control the yield on JGBs with different maturities. For instance the BoJ had decided that the yield on a 10 year JGB should be 0% while the yield on a 1 year JGB would be negative. Why did the BoJ follow such a policy? Why did it not just let the market determine the yield on government bonds, as happens in the UK and US?

Since about 1990, Japanese consumption and investment have been at a level that would have created unemployment without government intervention in the form of government running large deficits. By keeping the yield on JGBs close to zero, the BoJ and the finance ministry have been hoping to make investment in Japanese industry attractive since it would likely have a return on investment higher than the 0% yield on 10 year JGBs. That was the motivation for the YCC policy. But the private sector has stubbornly remained a net saver.

#### Recent Developments in Japan

The central banks of the UK, US and Japan have all been preoccupied with controlling inflation, but from very different starting points. The UK and US central banks have been raising interest rates to reduce inflation, while the Bank of Japan has until recently been using ultra-low interest rates to increase it. The contrast reflects Japan's unique economic predicament. Since the collapse of the property bubble in 1990, Japan's private sector appears to have lost what Keynes called its "animal spirits" — its appetite for consumption and investment. Households save rather than spend, and businesses accumulate cash rather than invest it. The government has consequently had to run large and persistent deficits simply to prevent this excess private sector saving from causing unemployment. Japan's national debt, at over

250% of GDP, is the largest in the developed world — yet for most of the past three decades the country has struggled with deflation rather than the inflation that conventional economics would predict from such borrowing.

To stimulate the economy the Bank of Japan adopted, and maintained until 2024, a policy called Yield Curve Control (YCC). Rather than merely setting short term interest rates, the BoJ targeted specific yields across the entire range of Japanese Government Bonds (JGBs) of different maturities, committing to buy as many bonds as necessary to keep yields near zero. The intention was to make borrowing as cheap as possible and discourage the hoarding of savings. At best, JGBs under this regime were simply a device allowing the private sector to preserve the nominal value of its savings — the BoJ was certainly not going to reward it with significant interest income for the very behaviour, excess saving, that was causing Japan's economic stagnation.

This is where the interests of global financial markets came into direct conflict with Japanese policy. Financial institutions — pension funds, hedge funds, insurance companies and wealthy investors — want income from their holdings. More precisely, they want rent: a return on wealth derived not from any productive activity but simply from the act of possessing financial assets. Near-zero yields on JGBs denied them that rent. As global interest rates rose sharply from 2022 onwards, the pressure on Japan to abandon YCC and allow yields to rise intensified considerably. Eventually, believing that inflation was sustainably approaching its 2% target — supported by evidence of the strongest wage growth in Japan for thirty years — the Bank of Japan began dismantling YCC in 2024 and has subsequently raised interest rates for the first time in decades.

This shift has created a significant political tension. Japan's recently elected Prime Minister, Sanae Takaichi, has been an outspoken critic of interest rate rises, at one

point describing them as "stupid," though she has moderated her language since taking office. A protégée of the late Shinzo Abe, she is a strong believer in using fiscal policy — government spending and tax cuts — to stimulate growth when the private sector is unwilling to spend. While she has paid lip service to managing the debt-to-GDP ratio, she has been far less constrained by it than a long succession of UK chancellors who have treated rising public debt as the central economic problem to be solved. Takaichi's election platform included cutting Japan's 10% consumption tax — particularly the 8% rate applied to food — to boost household spending and promote growth.

Herein lies the tension. A consumption tax cut would widen the government deficit and require the issuance of more JGBs. Under YCC the Bank of Japan would have absorbed those bonds in the secondary market, controlling the yield and keeping borrowing costs low. But now that YCC has been abandoned, the BoJ is no longer committed to doing so. If it declines to intervene, private sector investors may demand higher yields on the increased supply of bonds — raising the government's debt servicing costs at precisely the moment Takaichi is trying to stimulate the economy. Japan's debt servicing costs are already projected to reach around 31 trillion yen in fiscal 2026, roughly a quarter of the entire national budget — a figure that will rise further as older low-yield bonds mature and are rolled over at higher rates. Takaichi will not willingly accept a situation in which rising bond yields choke off the private sector consumption and investment she is trying to encourage.

How the tension between Prime Minister Takaichi's expansionary fiscal instincts and the Bank of Japan's newfound appetite for monetary tightening will resolve itself remains one of the most interesting questions in the global economy.

## Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

### Iranian Democracy Deemed Nonexistent Jews as Victims of Anglo Hegemony Iran Doing What Saddam Failed To Do Snippets

**The USA: One Nation, Suffering From  
God Delusions**

**China Once Again Remakes Itself**

**China Not Short of Workers**

**Goths as Mongrels?**

**How To Fail Again in Afghanistan**

**Electricity Failure**

**Gay But Sorrowful**

### Iranian Democracy Deemed Nonexistent

Iranians in 1979 chose to replace the corrupt system of the pro-Western shah with a strong reassertions of Islamic values. And if Khomeini's networks grabbed power to get the outcome they wanted, they didn't rig it any more than most Western systems get rigged. We have Starmer because he promised to continue most of Corbyn's policies. We might get Reform dominating after the next election, because Britain sticks to the unfair First-Past-the-Post system. The same thing gave the USA Trump-Biden-Trump. Bernie Sanders would have been elected had the vote been less unfair.

No one should lecture Iran about their electoral system. It works, while much of the Global South has failed governments.

Western leftists make the point about British-led hostility to functional Iranian secularism back in 1953. But fail to realise that some changes cannot be undone.

Cooking can offer lessons about politics. Eggs when raw can become many different things. But when you've made scrambled eggs, say, you can't then backtrack and get poached eggs instead. Likewise the half-arsed cunning of Anglo politicians in the 1990s has *permanently* ended the chance of substantial Westernisation in most of the Global South. I hope they can move on to accept the more positive things invented in the European Enlightenment, as China has done. But the imitative culture that was once widespread is increasingly marginal. (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/the-west-fails-in-five-civilisations/the-west-fails-in-five-civilisations-2/>.)

Most Western leftists ignore the previous major

war: Saddam's Iraq invading in 1980, hoping to detach oil-rich Khuzestan with its significant Arab population. The USA almost certainly encouraged him, and it's well-recorded that in 1987 the US stepped in to save Saddam when Iran seemed likely to destroy him. (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/magazine-001-to-010/magazine-004-october-1987/why-the-west-saved-saddam-hussein-in-1987/>.)

The whole thing has slipped out of the political discourse, even though it undermines US claims just as clearly as the 1953 tragedy. But most Western leftists fail to understand the twisty logic of global hegemony. Saddam was useful when the Soviet Union was a global rival, but its collapse gave the New Right a wildly inflated view of what they could do with their victory. A view that was disastrously shared by Tony Blair.

Imperial China had a saying: *when the swift deer are caught, the hounds are cooked*. The US elite would not do that to dogs: they manage to reason themselves into doing it to non-white and culturally unfamiliar foreigners.

The war against Iraq actually solidified the new Islamic Democracy in Iran. Those who doubt it ignore what happened in Iraq after Saddam was destroyed. The USA devised what they saw as a perfect electoral system. But actual voting produced what Westerners called a Sistani Tsunami: most Shia Iraqis voted for religious and pro-Iranian parties. Plans for a perfect Capitalist Parliamentary Democracy failed.

Something similar happened in Turkiye. And began to happen in Egypt after a vigorous pro-Western minority forced open elections, but discovered that the Muslim Brotherhood had a clear majority. The USA endorsed a return to military autocracy, but seems incapable of learning any wider lessons.

The New Right notion of Capitalism, Open Parliamentary Democracy and Fast Economic Growth as a single and inevitable combination was silly and ignorant. Not just misunderstanding and scorning alternative versions of civilisation, but also not understanding our shared Western past. The new US Republic was not even loosely democratic till the 1830s. Britain not till the 1880s. France denied the vote to women till after WW2. Switzerland made them wait till 1971, with the idea rejected by 67% of voters in 1959.

The New Right fantasists can't admit how much of the current idea of the normal had needed to be pushed by the 'woke' left of previous generations. Opposed or evaded by older generations of the centre-right. (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by->

[topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/998-from-labour-affairs/the-french-revolution-and-its-unstable-politics/against-globalisation/the-left-redefined-the-normal/](https://www.labouraffairs.com/m-articles-by-topic/040-religion-as-a-mode-of-human-existence/religions-as-imperfect-human-understanding/)). It was even more half-arsed than the cynical but unrealistic power politics of the French elite. Fools who shot themselves in the foot when they reneged on the bargain that Gaddafi had made with them.

One further twist. Trump seems to share the racism of his Ku Klux Klan father, who was also a genuinely brilliant businessman in a way 'Trump Junior' is not. He seems to think of the new globalised USA as hopelessly corrupt. He also and correctly sees the world as slipping out of US control. So maybe Trump would be quite content to see the global order crash

### **Jews as Victims of Anglo Hegemony**

The 23<sup>rd</sup> March saw another round in the Western elite's twisted muddling of actual anti-Semitism with attempts to limit Israeli extremists. As before, the absence of hard facts did not stop the headline-writers

"Jewish charity ambulances set on fire, with PM calling it 'deeply shocking antisemitic attack'...

"Green Party leader Zack Polanski has said he is 'horrified' by the attack. 'Antisemitism is vile and has no place here,' he writes on X. He expresses solidarity with the Jewish community in Golders Green and across the country" (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/czj1m8xpk14t>).

Polanski is being naive. False Flag attacks are common, and there are some confirmed cases of events aimed at exaggerating protestors' hostility to Jews rather than Israelis. The ambulance attack is exactly the sort of thing I might do if I were a libertarian and supporter of Israel.

Or just a supporter of the Iran

war with no strong feelings about Jews. Especially the now-marginal Iranian royalists.

Also worth suspecting are some right-wing Christian groups, mostly found in the USA but some over here. Hastening Armageddon. And expecting an easy exit with the 'rapture'. Which, incidentally, is a 19th-century addition to the already-crazy notions of the Book of Revelations.

Not that it's a Christian monopoly. Some foes of Israel wildly exaggerate Israel's ambitions. They cite a biblical promise of land for Abraham's heirs:

"From the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates" (Genesis 15:18)

This ignores Biblical history. The Israelites reportedly led out of bondage by Moses were already west of the Nile. Abraham's home city Ur was on the Euphrates. So was Babylon, where Jews lamented their exile.

Biblical history claims Arabs as well as Jews as descendants of Abraham. Arabs via Ishmael who was the child of a concubine. A youth driven out after he failed to defer to Abraham's son Isaac: the son he was later willing to senselessly slaughter in obedience to God. And Esau survived to father the squabbling siblings Esau and Jacob / Israel. All of which I find as outdated and absurd, but I was amused to note that both Egypt and the Mesopotamian / Iraqi lands later became Arab, thanks to Islam.

In modern times, Jews living in Egypt or Mesopotamia regard themselves as still in exile. Strict religious Jews say the Exile continues and can't end until the supernatural arrival of the Jewish Messiah. See secular Israel as a mistake.

For my views on religion, see <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/040-religion-as-a-mode-of-human-existence/religions-as-imperfect-human-understanding/>.

[com/m-articles-by-topic/040-religion-as-a-mode-of-human-existence/religions-as-imperfect-human-understanding/](https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/040-religion-as-a-mode-of-human-existence/religions-as-imperfect-human-understanding/). For why I think Israel should have been honest in the 1990s and allowed a real Palestinian state, see <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Israel-Against-Zionism>.

### **Iran Doing What Saddam Failed To Do**

At the time of writing, 24<sup>th</sup> March, Iran can still reliably hit Israel. Thankfully, it seems their genuine religious faith would not let them use nerve gas, anthrax spores, or one of the many infectious diseases bred for germ warfare. Something that Saddam thought about but did not carry through.

A post on X (Twitter) reminded me of another major difference:

"In 2002, the US conducted Millennium Challenge, the largest war games in its history.... Red team was supposed to lose, but General Van Riper didn't want to lose. So he played to win. He used asymmetric tactics by doing things like using civilian boats instead of military ones, motorcycle couriers and coded messages in mosque towers because their cell phone networks had been hacked.

"He launched a massive preemptive strike using a swarm of small boats and cruise missiles, which overwhelmed the Blue Team's Aegis defense system. In the simulation, this resulted in the "sinking" of 16 American warships, including an aircraft carrier.

"The exercise was supposed to take 14 days. Vin Riper and his team won after day one.

"Understandably, the US military was embarrassed because this was supposed to show off all its superior tactics and cutting edge technologies. So, they restarted the exercise and changed the rules to force everyone to follow a script so that the red team could

not win.” (<https://x.com/SizweLo/status/2035267027309306190>).

Saddam thought in Western terms. Fascism is part of Western thought: the Baath used it as a way of getting a society to think in broadly Western terms, puzzling people who thought Westernisation was *natural*, and who learn nothing from repeated failures.

It is better to think of the Nazis as an extreme in a general European metamorphosis that began before 1914 with the right-wing Republicanism of Imperial Portugal. Created a new Polish state under Pilsudski, who like Mussolini had been part of the socialist Second International before 1914, and whose mildly-antisemitic system was seen at the time as a variation on the fascist theme. And it was variously expressed without using the word Fascist in Britain’s National Government, the USA’s New Deal, and De Valera’s *Fianna Fail*, which literally means *Soldiers of Destiny*. De Valera’s main foes self-identified as Fascists: one of them managed the bizarre feat of making an absurd failure of trying to help Franco in the Spanish Civil War with keen and experienced Irish volunteers. Most of the actual Irish contribution was on the Republican side, and actual Irish fascists were a parody: what the Chinese call ‘an ape dressed up as a philosopher-king’.

Baath Fascism was working until the West destroyed it. Nasser’s Egypt had a lot of fascist influence, and is the main secular and Westernising hold-out among Arabs.

Iran has been thinking in its own terms since 1979; something that began much earlier and incorporated many ideas from Leninism. It has many people who fully understand Western political thinking, and are unsurprised when it fails to work.

In making a system that combines a rational scientific output with a genuine faith in their own older religious tradition, Iran repeats what Japan did in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. I’ve not seen anyone make the comparison, but to me it seems obvious.

I’d also say that only a fool would assume that Japan will never ‘flip’

and decide it need not bother to be so Western. Not to quarrel with China over issues irrelevant to Japan’s long-term interests. I even saw a hint in *The Silent Service*, a rather improbable adventure about a rogue Japanese submarine that’s now showing on Amazon Prime. Just as *Batman* gives an insight into secret US wishes, it may be what more and more of them are thinking.

Meantime Iran has avoided the errors of Japanese Imperialism, which had some idea of being the leader of East Asia, but helped defeat itself by a racist belief that people who were close to them historically and genetically were inferiors. Wastrels fit only to be pushed around and kept down.

For Islamic Iran, there seems to be no racism and a broad belief in equality. And there are downtrodden Shia-Muslim minorities or even majorities in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirates, where Sunni Islam is the religion of the rulers. The only exception is Oman where the rulers and many of the people follow Ibadi Islam, a third and much smaller branch of the faith.

## Snippets

### The USA: One Nation, Suffering From God Delusions

The USA was created by rich gentry and business people who were believers in the European Enlightenment. Which had its good points, but tried to normalise inequality. Even slavery, for many of the Founding Fathers.

Most British studies of the USA ignore the three recognised waves of faiths known as the Great Awakenings. In particular the second, from about 1790 to 1840, giving a new culture to people who had broken with their previous British identity.

Religion was an attempt to reassert human values, but when hostile to socialism it does the opposite. Sadly, that’s what it became in the USA. It can’t have helped that the functional socialism of Roosevelt’s New Deal was implemented through the corrupt old Democrat Party.

Sad that the once-radical

Republicans got captured by a naive trust in business interests. US ‘conservatives’ do realise that market values are inherent eroders of whatever society they operate within. Conservative where it costs them nothing, but ‘*come not between the business person and their profit-margin*’. The role of a state machine in keeping them civilised is denied and denounced.

Religion offers false answers in a society that is increasingly offended by the predictable results of its own long-term policies. Or rather its failure to plan long-term, haunted by a great fear that the state machine might be out to get them,

Socialism remains strong in Europe, and is still far too weak in the USA. Many who voted for Trump would sooner have voted for Bernie Sanders, given the chance.

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### China Once Again Remakes Itself

“Beijing’s decades-long push to reduce its dependence on foreign oil with huge investments in clean energy sources like electric vehicles is now paying off...

“China has spent decades and hundreds of billions of dollars investing in electric vehicles and renewable energy, a long-term strategy that is paying off as other countries grapple with upheavals in the oil market. Beijing has sought to curb its reliance on foreign energy by expanding domestic supply and accelerating the development of alternative power sources, including solar, wind, hydro and nuclear.

“Chinese demand for refined oil, gasoline and diesel fell last year, making a second straight annual decline.” (<https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/14/business/china-oil-cars.html>)

The West’s ‘Feed the Rich’ policies have failed. More money and power for the rich does not make a better economy even in crude GDP terms.

When Deng Xiaoping moved away from Mao’s policies, he did so as a

much more orthodox Marxist. Used controlled amounts of capitalism and foreign investment to upgrade from what People's China had learned from the Soviet Union during their 1950s friendship.

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### China Not Short of Workers

"The average years of schooling for retirees around 60 years old in China are about seven to eight years, while the average years of schooling for young people newly entering the labor market has reached 14 years. This means that the increase in effective labor contributed by new workers far outweighs the reduction caused by retirements." (<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202603/1356725.shtml>)

Fewer but more in educated and more in tune with modern values. And China is also now way ahead in robots that can do tasks once done by humans.

And also remember that it was Mao who gave the entire population of China a basic education and a habit of working collectively. Turning peasant farming into collective farms went surprisingly smoothly, and boosted yields. This truth – evaded or ignored in current Western books about China – were the background for the over-ambitious higher-level collectivism of the Great Leap Forward.

For anyone interested, I've just done a long new study. "*The Myth of Millions Killed By Mao*", <https://gwydionmadawc.com/040-politics/the-myth-of-millions-killed-by-mao/>.

The land remains owned and managed by entire villages. Families can work it independently on long-term leases. But anyone who's been working in the cities and has to return is given land to work themselves. Very different from the landlessness and landlord exploitation of India, and much of the rest of the global south.

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### Goths as Mongrels?

"People from the two [culturally Gothic] sites were markedly

different genetically, but both groups showed a mix of ancestries. The peoples were descended from populations as far afield as Scandinavia, the Caucasus, the Levant, Anatolia (modern Turkey), East Asia (modern Mongolia), Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa." (<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2519371-the-ancient-goths-were-an-ethnically-diverse-group/>)

Just one of many DNA studies that show that people who currently speak one language and have one culture may have very different origins.

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### How To Fail Again in Afghanistan

"Russia's Permanent UN Representative Vasily Nebenzia gave a powerful speech about Afghanistan in early March. He condemned the West's 'attempts to advance a selective approach, with an emphasis on matters that Western donors are willing to discuss', which he expects 'will not lead to the desired result'. He told them that 'if you truly want to help the women and girls of Afghanistan not just with words but with deeds, then help create conditions for them to live in a stable and developed country.'...

"The US is reluctant to provide this and also still holds the occupation-era government's nearly \$10 billion assets that it froze in late 2021.

"Strings are attached to releasing this, however, such as the Taliban complying with its promise to assemble an ethno-regionally inclusive government and uphold the Western conception of women's rights. The Taliban isn't ready to do either" (<https://korybko.substack.com/p/russias-top-un-representative-reminded.>)

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### Electricity Failure

«Seen by Margaret Thatcher as a relic, the CEGB was broken up and privatised in 1989. Labour warned that prices would rise. They did. The 'privatisation premium', according to an analysis by the Common Wealth thinktank, sees almost a quarter of

the average household energy bill – roughly £450 – flow today into corporate profits. Other essential services are similarly hit. Nearly 30% of a water bill in the English privatised system goes to shareholder returns and paying debt. By contrast, publicly owned Scottish Water spends 10% of revenue on borrowing costs.» (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/mar/08/the-guardian-view-on-ev-charging-china-took-the-right-lessons-from-britains-past>)

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### Gay But Sorrowful

"Leo Varadkar: LGBTQ+ rights in Europe face 'chill wind' from east and west

"Ireland's former taoiseach warns of conservative Russian influence and says US is now 'off the pitch' under Trump". (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/mar/19/leo-varadkar-lgbtq-rights-in-europe-face-chill-wind-from-east-and-west>).

It seems not to occur to him that this is caused by the expansion of Gay Rights having tragically become part of a malignant cultural package. One that from the 1990s has included the centre-left promoting inequality and a renewed bid for Global Western Hegemony.

*Glad to be gay, greedy, and a fan of bullies?*

Before the 1990s, the opposite was more commonly the case. Openly gay people were more often against inequality and against imperialism or hegemony. And many still are, but the right-wingers no longer hide their private lives. They are often more famous.

The shift among gays could be seen as a classic case of trying to kick away the ladder after you've been able to use it. And is also visibly failing, but Varadkar's only answer is more of the same.

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

# “The Fraud: Keir Starmer, Morgan McSweeney and the Crisis of British Democracy” by Paul Holden

## Book Review by David Jackson, Part 3

This is a lengthy, significant and substantial book of almost 550 pages. It is supported by nearly 800 footnotes, which the author decided to place online. I believe that to do it proper justice required more than one review. The initial review considered the early years of Labour Together and the rise of Morgan McSweeney, who was Keir Starmer’s Chief of Staff for almost 6 years. The second review centred on what “The Fraud” had to say about the funding of Labour Together and its lack of transparency. In this review I cover other aspects of the book which I think are particularly noteworthy.

The first area is the anti-semitism controversy which took off from early 2018 and ultimately became the pretext for the suspension of Jeremy Corbyn after the publication of the EHRC (Equality and Human Rights Commission) report in October 2020.

In relation to anti-semitism, Holden covers various aspects of this controversy in some detail. He also writes about it with some passion and returns to the issue on repeated occasions in the first half of the book. The reason for the degree of anger with which he writes about the issue only became clear at the end of the book, where he mentions in the acknowledgements that he talked to victims of the Starmer project. Many of those victims were Jewish for whom being accused or suspected of anti-semitism was a particularly difficult experience.

In the introduction to the book, Holden suggests that Labour Together’s most consequential intervention was to insert itself into the anti-semitism controversy. You get a very clear sense that his feelings on the issue are stronger than the demonstrable facts allow – he states that there is now little doubt that Labour Together’s role was profound, wide-ranging and at times despicable, whilst also arguing that further investigation is needed to establish the full extent of Labour Together’s involvement in “what became a

protracted national controversy”. A further investigation of this nature is unlikely to be ever undertaken.

In subsequent chapters, Holden fleshes out why he thinks Labour Together’s role is significant. Whilst acknowledging the role of groups that operated openly such as Labour Against Anti-Semitism and the Jewish Labour Movement, he argues that Labour Together was different because it operated in the utmost secrecy. In the process, McSweeney worked with Steve Reed and Imran Ahmed to create an organisation called the Center for Countering Digital Hate and a related campaign called Stop Funding Fake News which would prove to be useful in attacking and undermining Corbyn’s support. Imran Ahmed had been a spin doctor for various Labour MPs such as Hilary Benn and Angela Eagle with a track record of hostility to Corbyn and his supporters. A track record which made him an ideal kindred spirit.

An example of an early intervention by McSweeney and Ahmed crystallised on 1 April 2018 in the front page of the *Sunday Times* with the headline ‘Exposed: Jeremy Corbyn’s Hate Factory’. This was accompanied by a further article on the inside pages ‘Vitriol and Threats of Violence: The Ugly Face of Jeremy Corbyn’s Cabal’.

The genesis for this sensational story was when McSweeney and Ahmed joined a raft of Corbyn supporting Facebook groups in either January or February 2018. They trawled the Facebook groups and recorded every post they could find that they deemed to constitute ‘hate’ of one kind or another: racism, misogyny, violent language or antisemitism. McSweeney ensured that the most disturbing examples found their way to the *Sunday Times*. The subsequent article was based on 2,000 incidents of ‘hate’ which had been found by combing through twenty Corbyn supporting Facebook groups with a combined membership

of 400,000. Many of these groups were open which meant that anyone in the world could post to them.

Four days later, Wendy Patterson the administrator of a Corbyn supporting Facebook group rebutted the tone and content of the *Sunday Times* article in a rebuttal published by *openDemocracy*. As part of the rebuttal, she estimated that there were approximately 4 million posts across the Facebook groups investigated. Whilst the ‘hate’ posts were to be regretted, they were miniscule as a proportion of the groups’ overall activity.

From my perspective, as a proportion of 4 million, 2,000 incidents is just 0.05 per cent of total activity. Any factory (hate or otherwise) with a failure rate of 99.95 per cent on its production line would soon go out of business.

Holden laments the fact that Patterson’s rebuttal was universally ignored in the mainstream press. In so doing, he doesn’t pose the question of why no supporters of Corbyn or indeed any other fair-minded people within the Labour Movement did not take up Patterson’s rebuttal. In April 2018 the anti-Semitism controversy was still in its early phase when there was still a chance to control and shape the narrative. In that context it was not surprising that a Survation opinion poll in 2019 found that the public believed that 34 per cent of Labour Party members were under investigation for anti-Semitism.

What I find particularly disturbing about the activities of McSweeney and his associates prior to 2020 is that as well as doing this fishing expedition on Facebook they also commissioned polling of Labour Party members. One of Starmer’s other biographers commented that the results of this polling found that the average Labour Party member was more inspired by John Lennon than Vladimir Lenin. Whilst they are perfectly within their rights to amplify the spectre of anti-Semitism for political ends, the evidence they

gathered themselves clearly demonstrated that contrary to what they were promoting to their media contacts, the Labour Party was not in any danger of being overrun by anti-Semites.

The second aspect that caught my attention is the book's coverage of Starmer and his campaign for the leadership in 2020. While it is unlikely that the ultimate result would have been different, the Labour Left/soft Left could and should have mounted a more robust challenge. His campaign relied heavily on donning the mantle of Corbyn and in that context he could and should have been more forcibly challenged as to why he resigned from the Opposition frontbench during the Chicken Coup of 2016 in contrast to Rebecca Long Bailey, his main contender for the Leadership, who instead of running away from the Shadow Cabinet stepped in and stepped up. When the policy platforms of the two main contenders in a leadership contest are almost indistinguishable, then it is perfectly reasonable to raise the issue of character.

Another aspect of Starmer's leadership campaign that received a very light challenge was in relation to who funded his campaign. Under the rules of the leadership contest, all contenders had to periodically report their donations to Parliament on set reporting dates – February 10, March 2, March 16 and April 14.

His main rivals, Rebecca Long Bailey and Lisa Nandy declared their funding and donations contemporaneously. Starmer refused to follow suit. He took some £708,000 in donations but only disclosed £223,000 before the close of voting on 2 April 2020. Starmer did not make a full disclosure of his donations until 14 April 2020, 10 days after he was declared the winner of the contest. Almost half of the late declarations came from 3 donors – Baron Waheed Ali (£100,000), Martin Taylor (£95,000), Trevor Chinn (£50,000) – who vehemently opposed Corbyn and the politics he represented.

All three donations from Messrs Ali, Taylor and Chinn were made in February 2020 but only 'accepted' by Starmer's campaign in March. The donations from Ali & Chinn were accepted after 16 March. The donation from Taylor was accepted on 9 March but not registered with Parliament until 31 March. There was limited criticism of Starmer's failure to publish donations contemporaneously (from Jon Trickett of the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs) and uncomfortable questions on the matter by the broadcaster Andrew Neil. But once again there was no sustained scrutiny from the supporters of Long Bailey & Nandy when it would have been reasonable to do so.

Holden also alludes to Starmer's time as Director of Public Prosecutions (2008 to 2013) focusing on three issues that would have cast him in a bad light with Labour's left-leaning membership – the establishment of 'night courts' after the London riots of 2011; the Gary McKinnon extradition case<sup>1</sup>; and his approach to Julian Assange, the

<sup>1</sup> Gary McKinnon was an autistic IT expert who hacked into US military databases looking for information about UFOs. The US Government sought his extradition with the possibility of a 70-year sentence in a high security prison. Starmer facilitated the extradition process which was only halted when Theresa May used her authority as Conservative Home Secretary to block the extradition (much to Starmer's reported chagrin).

founder of *Wikileaks*<sup>2</sup>. He notes that these matters were extensively reported by the *Guardian* when Starmer was DPP but were ignored in 2020 when Starmer was running for Leader. Given that these matters were already in the public domain, it is reasonable to ask why there was no meaningful Left-wing challenge to Starmer and his own projection of himself as a Human Rights lawyer/champion.

The final set of thoughts are linked to the decline in Party membership. Holden details the downward trend in Labour membership during the 2019-2024 Parliamentary term. During that period Party membership declined by almost a third:

December 2019:	532,000
December 2020:	523,000
December 2021:	432,000
May 2023:	396,000
March 2024:	367,000

This pattern of declining membership has persisted to the point that membership in 2025 was reportedly around 250,000 less than half of the membership in 2020.

Holden correctly identifies that over half of the 165,000 decline in membership occurred in the 12 months after December 2020, when Corbyn's 'de facto' suspension from the Parliamentary Labour Party was upheld. He quite rightly points out that had all the departing members formed their own party, they would have challenged the Conservatives for the title of Britain's second largest party.

This is a point that is not further developed or discussed as it is beyond the remit of the book. But I believe there were 2 different options for the Labour Left that were missed – Strategic Pre-Emption or Strategic Patience. Neither of them would have been straightforward or easy, but they are preferable to the current situation of British Politics.

Strategic Pre-Emption would have been the earlier creation of Your Party or something analogous to it. They would probably have encountered the same issues that Your Party experienced during its establishment, but they would have had a longer period to stabilise and be better placed to challenge the Greens as the voice of progressive Liberalism.

Strategic Patience would have involved remaining in the Labour Party. A difficult decision given the degree of control McSweeney and Labour Together exercised from 2021 onwards and difficult given Starmer's response on Palestine after 7 October. On the other hand consider the more recent U-turns that have been forced on the Starmer Government with a relatively weakened and smaller Left compared to 2020. A party with more than 100,000 additional left-wing members would result in more leverage for the Left.

I don't have a settled view on which option is preferable, but in line with Joe Hill's farewell advice, it is better to organise than to mourn.

<sup>2</sup> This centred around a conflict between the Swedish authorities and the Starmer's CPS (Crown Prosecution Service) over how to question Assange over sexual assault allegations against him. Assange wished to be interviewed by the Swedish authorities in London to which the Swedish authorities were agreeable, but the CPS and Starmer blocked any such interview in London and then lobbied the Swedes not to drop the case against Assange.

# How goes the US/Israel armed aggression against Iran

By David Morrison

Before the US and Israel launched their armed aggression against Iran on 25 February, a report by the US National Intelligence Council (which is part of Tulsi Gabbard's US Office of National Intelligence) assessed that even a large-scale military assault on the country would be unlikely to overthrow the regime in Tehran, even if the supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was assassinated ([New York Times, 7 March 2026](#)).

But David Barnea, the head of Israel's foreign intelligence service Mossad, thought otherwise. He predicted that within days of the war's beginning, "if the military goals of the operation were achieved – decapitation of the leadership, as well as serious harm to regime institutions and its capacity to repress its own citizens.", Mossad and the CIA would likely be able to galvanize the Iranian opposition — igniting riots and other acts of rebellion that could even lead to the collapse of Iran's government" ([Times of Israel, 20 March 2026](#)).

Netanyahu accepted Barnea's plan and so did Trump. Despite doubts about its viability among senior American officials and some officials in other Israeli intelligence agencies, both he and President Trump expected a swift regime change and a swift end to the war. But it hasn't happened: the Iranian regime has held together so far and lived up to its promise to keep attacking Israel, US bases and other infrastructure in the Gulf States.

Crucially, Iran has taken control of the Strait of Hormuz and is in a position to block one-fifth of the world trade in oil and natural gas from reaching its usual market. As a result, the global price of oil has risen to over \$100 a barrel, which if it persists would have grave consequences for the world economy.

At the time of writing, there is no sign that the US will be able to wrest control of the Strait from Iran – and even if it did, Iran is in position to determine the quantities of oil and liquefied gas that are produced by the Gulf States for export through the Strait.

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In addition to regime change, Trump's other war aims include forcing Iran

- (1) to give up uranium enrichment (and prevent it producing nuclear weapons)
- (2) to limit the number and range of its missiles, and
- (3) to end its support for regional proxies

However, none of those objectives is achievable without a change of regime to one that is willing to do the bidding of the US and Israel. But that would require major ground operations involving hundreds of thousands of troops for a prolonged period. President Trump is not going to do that.

With the price of gasoline in the US rising sharply and 6 out of 10 Americans [opposing the war](#), President Trump is looking for a way out the war that doesn't look like defeat. To leave Iran in possession of the 400kg of 60% enriched uranium that could be enriched relatively easily

to 90% for nuclear weapons would certainly look like defeat. But taking the 60% enriched uranium out of Iran would require either US or Israeli ground troops to find it and remove it from Iran. This may be difficult or even impossible if Iran has hidden it.

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If the 60% enriched uranium is not removed from Iran, then Iran could use it to produce nuclear weapons. In present circumstances, it would be rational for Iran to obtain nuclear weapons, which are the ultimate weapons of self-defence.

Iran was one of the original signatories to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the internationally accepted rules-based system governing nuclear activity by states. It signed the NPT as a 'non-nuclear-weapon' state on 1 July 1968 and, by so doing, undertook not to develop nuclear weapons. It hasn't developed nuclear weapons. As required by the NPT, Iran's nuclear facilities are and always have been under IAEA supervision and the IAEA has never detected any diversion of nuclear material from these nuclear facilities for possible military use.

Iran's leaders have repeatedly denied that they have any ambitions to develop nuclear weapons. What is more, in a speech to nuclear scientists on 22 February 2012, Iran's Supreme Leader, the late Ayatollah Khamenei, declared the possession of such weapons a "grave sin". There was nothing new in this statement: in 2005, he issued a fatwa – a religious edict – saying that "the production, stockpiling, and use of nuclear weapons are forbidden under Islam and that the Islamic Republic of Iran shall never acquire these weapons".

Of course, this is not an absolute constraint on Iran developing nuclear weapons, but it's unlikely that the religious authorities in Iran would modify this principle unless Iran was perceived to be under an existential threat, most plausibly, after having been attacked by the US and/or Israel. It has been attacked twice in less than a year.

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Under Article IX of the NPT, Iran would be within its rights to withdraw from the Treaty and remove the constraints upon it due to NPT membership. Article IX says:

"Each Party shall in exercising its national sovereignty have the right to withdraw from the Treaty if it decides that extraordinary events, related to the subject matter of this Treaty, have jeopardized the supreme interests of its country. It shall give notice of such withdrawal to all other Parties to the Treaty and to the United Nations Security Council three months in advance. Such notice shall include a statement of the extraordinary events it regards as having jeopardized its supreme interests."

Over the past 50 years, Israel has built up an arsenal of nuclear weapons, with a triad of delivery options: air, land and sea (the latter from submarines built in Germany and subsidized by the German taxpayer). By any objective standard, Iran (and other neighbours of Israel) has good

grounds for withdrawal from the NPT because of the buildup over the past 40 years of an Israeli nuclear arsenal directed at them. There could hardly be a better example of “extraordinary events, related to the subject matter of this Treaty”, which “have jeopardized [their] supreme interests”.

It might not be wise for Iran to withdraw from the NPT at the present time, since it would risk further terrible havoc from the US and/or Israel. But, there is no doubt that such an action would be within Article IX of the NPT.

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On 21 March 2026, President Trump threatened Iran with the destruction of its electricity power stations, if the Strait of Hormuz wasn't open within 48 hours. Iran responded by threatening to destroy electricity power stations in the Gulf States, at which point the President extended his deadline for 5 days and proposed a 15-point plan as the basis for negotiating an end to US military action against Iran.

According to [Al Jazeera](#) the plan includes:

A 30-day ceasefire.

The dismantling of Iran's nuclear facilities in Natanz, Isfahan and Fordow.

A permanent commitment from Iran to never develop nuclear weapons.

The handover of Iran's stockpile of already enriched uranium to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and a commitment from Iran to allow the IAEA to monitor all elements of the country's remaining nuclear infrastructure. Iran must also no longer enrich uranium within the country.

Limits on the range and number of Iran's missiles.

Ending Iran's support for regional proxies.

Ending Iranian strikes on regional energy facilities.

Reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

A removal of all sanctions imposed on Iran, alongside the ending of the UN mechanism that allows sanctions to be reimposed.

The provision of US support for electricity generation at Iran's Bushehr civil nuclear plant.

If Iran were to agree to that wish list, it would mean the destruction of its civil nuclear programme and the curtailment of its ability to defend itself against further bouts of armed aggression by the US and Israel.

It's inconceivable that Iran will agree to such terms or anything like them. The Iranian state has survived the present US/Israel attempt to overthrow it, and it is not going to agree to a settlement that undermines its ability to resist the next attempt by

the US and/or Israel.

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Iran's state broadcaster Press TV says, quoting a “senior political-security official”, that Iran has rejected a US proposal aimed at ending the current war. Press TV didn't name the official, nor their rank or title, but reports the official saying: “Iran will end the war when it decides to do so and when its own conditions are met”.

According to Press TV, the official outlined five conditions for the opening of negotiations, including:

A complete halt to “aggression and assassinations” by the enemy

The establishment of concrete mechanisms to ensure that the war is not reimposed on the Islamic Republic

Guaranteed and clearly defined payment of war damages and reparations

The conclusion of the war across all fronts and for all resistance groups involved throughout the region

International recognition and guarantees regarding Iran's sovereign right to exercise authority over the Strait of Hormuz

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## PALESTINE LINKS

[‘Erasing the lines’: How settler outposts are seizing new regions of the West Bank \(Oren Zvi & Ariel Caine, +972, 26 March 2026\)](#)

[Oops, we have wrecked another country \(David Hearst, Middle East Eye, 25 March 2026\)](#)

[‘Forever live by the sword’: Understanding Israelis’ massive support for Iran war \(Jonathan Ofir, Mondoweiss, 22 March 2026\)](#)

[By dropping all charges against the soldiers filmed abusing a Palestinian detainee, Israel has abandoned the whole masquerade of accountability \(Michael Sfar, +972, 21 March 2026\)](#)

[Judges clear ICC's Karim Khan over sexual misconduct claims \(Sondos Asem, Middle East Eye, 21 March 2026\)](#)

[Eid in Gaza: Despite immense loss, we deserve to celebrate \(Ahmed Dremly, Middle East Eye, 21 March 2026\)](#)

[Israelis kill family — then gloat \(Nora Barrows-Friedman, Electronic Intifada, 20 March 2026\)](#)

[Decades of neglect have left Palestinian citizens unprotected from missile fire, while police are carrying out arrests for expressions of dissent \(Samah Watad & Baker Zoubi, +972, 19 March 2026\)](#)

[Restoring our mosque revived my soul \(Ali Skaik, Electronic Intifada, 19 March 2026\)](#)

[‘I thought we were going to be raped’: A night of settler terror in the Jordan Valley \(Oren Ziv, +972, 17 March 2026\)](#)

[‘Our coverage is not truthful’: How Israel is censoring reporting on the war](#)

[Barred from publishing details of Iranian missile impacts or interceptions \(Oren Ziv, +972, 13 March 2026\)](#)

[Israel enforces draconian Gaza closure during Ramadan \(Nora Barrows-Friedman, Electronic Intifada, 13 March 2026\)](#)

[Why Iran Isn't Breaking: Vali Nasr on the Uprising That Isn't Coming \(The Mishal Husain Show, Bloomberg, 13 March 2026\)](#)

[Why Trump and Netanyahu are the most dangerous men on the planet \(David Hearst, Middle East Eye, 10 March 2026\)](#)

[Lost paperwork prompts fears for property rights \(Malak Hijazi, Electronic Intifada, 9 March 2026\)](#)

[Swiss federal court rules in favor of Ali Abunimah \(Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 6 March 2026\)](#)

[Did Israel drag Trump and the US to war with Iran? \(Michael F Brown, Electronic Intifada, 6 March 2026\)](#)

[Israel punishes Gaza as it attacks Iran \(Nora Barrows-Friedman, Electronic Intifada, 6 March 2026\)](#)

[An enormous crime against Iran \(Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 1 March 2026\)](#)

[Family of Francesca Albanese sues Trump administration over sanctions \(Middle East Eye, 26 February 2026\)](#)

[Israeli 'liberal' opposition leader agrees with Mike Huckabee that the bible gives Israel the right to land from Egypt to Iraq \(Jonathan Ofir, Mondoweiss, 24 February 2026\)](#)

[Trump invades Venezuela and 12 other times the US has brought about regime change \(Danial Tester, Middle East Eye, 13 January 2026\)](#)

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## Leninist Communism – A Better History that Failed to Complete Itself

By Gwydion M. Williams

Born in 1950, I remember how different the world was in the 1970s. Communist parties were powerful in most of Western Europe, and the British Communist Party was very influential despite a lack of electoral success.

At that time, many in Eastern Europe wanted Reformed Communism rather than a surrender to Western values, the same sort that Brezhnev and the other heirs of Khrushchev had crushed in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Those who grew up in the world remade by Thatcher and Ronald Reagan will find it hard to believe that Moscow's Communism was once popular among ordinary people. It gets written out of history. But you can confirm it from sources like the *Wikipedia*, which is mostly neutral and which tends towards the US Libertarian views of its founders, in as far as it is biased. It will show you the large votes that Communist parties once got within Western electoral systems and in the fact of mostly-hostile media.

Or you can find it nicely summarised by one of the on-line web-page-reading services. Their judgement can be wildly off, but they generally have the facts set out correctly:

"The decline of Communist Party votes in Western Europe between about 1970 and 2000 was gradual but very clear, and it varied somewhat by country. At a high level, most parties went from being significant electoral forces (often 10–30% of the vote) to marginal ones

(often under 5–10%, sometimes collapsing entirely).

"1. Peak strength around the 1970s

"In the early 1970s, several Western European communist parties were at or near their historical highs:

"Italian Communist Party: around 25–34% in elections during the 1970s (one of the largest in the West).

"French Communist Party: roughly 20–25% in the late 1960s/early 1970s.

"Spanish Communist Party: legalized after Franco, gained influence but peaked lower (around 10%).

"Smaller but relevant parties existed in countries like Finland and Greece.

"2. Decline begins in late 1970s–1980s

"From the mid-to-late 1970s, vote shares began to fall:

"In Italy, the PCI dropped from ~34% (1976) to the mid-20s by the 1980s.

"In France, the PCF fell from ~20% in the 1970s to around 10% by the mid-1980s, and kept declining.

"In Spain, the PCE declined quickly after the transition to democracy, dropping below 5–10%.

"3. Collapse around 1989–1991 (end of the Cold War)

"The biggest turning point

was the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union:

"Many Western communist parties lost ideological credibility.

"Some rebranded or dissolved:

"The Italian PCI dissolved in 1991 and became the Democratic Party of the Left.

"Voters shifted to social democratic, green, or new left parties.

"4. By 2000: marginalization

"By the end of the century:

"In Italy, no major communist party remained; successors were no longer explicitly communist.

"In France, the PCF had dropped to around 5–8%.

"In Spain, the PCE was part of broader coalitions (like United Left) with low single-digit influence.

"In most of Western Europe, communist parties were minor players.

"5. Overall pattern (summary)

"Across Western Europe:

"1970s: Typically 15–30% in strongholds.

"1980s: Decline to 5–20%.

"1990s–2000: Often below 10%, sometimes near 0–5%.

"6. Key reasons for the decline

"Disillusionment with Soviet-style communism.

“Rising prosperity reducing appeal of revolutionary politics.

“Competition from social democratic and green parties.

“Internal splits and ideological crises.

“The symbolic and real impact of 1989–1991 events.

“In short: Communist parties in Western Europe went from being major electoral forces in the 1970s to largely marginal ones by 2000, with the sharpest decline occurring in the 1980s and especially after the end of the Cold War.” (ChatGPT)

At that time, many in Eastern Europe wanted the same sort of Reformed Communism that Brezhnev and the other heirs of Khrushchev had crushed in Czechoslovakia in 1968. And in most of the former Warsaw Pact countries, Communist parties remained strong in open Western-style elections till about the year 2000. Then they either declined or became part of coalitions using other names. But before the year 2000, some were significant.

Yeltsin as President of Russia banned the Soviet Communist Party after the 1991 coup. But a successor called the Communist Party of the Russian Federation was founded in 1993. It began to get votes surprisingly similar to the 23.3% the Bolsheviks got in the 1917 Russian Constituent Assembly election. 22% in the 1995 parliamentary election, becoming the largest party. 32% in the first round of the 1996 presidential election, and 40% in the runoff against Boris Yeltsin. 24% in the 1999 parliamentary election, still the largest party. Putin then rallied the system with Christian Nationalism and much tighter controls on Russia’s newly-rich oligarchs. From 2000 it has remained the largest Opposition party, ranging between 13% and 19% of the vote.

Most surprising to those who trust mainstream Western media is

what happened in Ukraine. After soviet officials shared power in the initial creation of a sovereign state, a Communist Party of Ukraine was established or re-established in 1993. It got 13% in 1994. And 24% in 1998, making it the largest single party. In the 2002 election it was still strong at around 20%, but fell to 5% or less in 2006 and 2007. It rallied in 2012 with 13.2% but fell to less than 4% in 2014. Kiev banned it in 2014, when there was armed conflict began with Russia and pro-Russian Ukrainians. Kiev also banned non-Communist parties that sought compromise after 2022, even though they had condemned the actual invasion.

Globally, Communism in the various sovereign states has gone in very different directions. China remains under the absolute control of the Communist Parties, though other small parties are allowed small roles. And people in China have much more trust in their rulers and more satisfaction with their work than has ever been the case in any Western country.

None of the ruling Leninist parties outside Europe have lost power, though the USA is just now targeting Cuba. Mongolia is the nearest to an exception, with the party renaming itself the People’s Party and officially social-democrat from 1992. It was always close to Russia and suspicious of China, and remains so. Other Mongols in Inner Mongolia diverged long ago and remain content to be autonomous within People’s China.

In Iran, the communist Tudeh Party was once strong. Crushed in the 1953 coup, it was one of many leftist groups who supported Khomeini in 1979, and were then crushed. It is no longer significant.

Something similar happened in Indonesia, though it never got beyond 16% of the vote. And its members were killed in vast numbers after a supposed left-wing coup in 1966, which is widely believed to have been a CIA machination. It seems not to have recovered after the later relaxation.

In India, the Communist Party split, with the largest being anti-Moscow but not Maoist. It settled down to function as three strong regional parties, but lost West Bengal in 2011. Lost Tripura in 2018, but remains strong in Kerala.

In Nepal, two of the three dominant parties call themselves Communist, though one is functionally social-democratic. The other was a survival of Maoist Communism and forced the ending of a corrupt royal government.

South Yemen had a successful Marxist insurgency, with the National Liberation Front driving out one of the last stands by the British Empire, and then beginning to spread in Muscat and Oman. But failed, and seems no longer to exist as a distinct force. There seems to be no coherent account of it in English, perhaps because most of those calling themselves Revolutionary Socialists are or were Trotskyist or pro-Moscow and jealous that the ‘wrong’ movements were the only serious force.

The same seems true of the Shining Path that was once very strong in Peru.

In Japan, anti-Moscow Communists have ranged between 7% and 11%, and seem a stable strong opposition party. Of course the Japanese Liberal Democrats do most of the things social-democrats do in Europe.

There was a split but entirely serious global communism in the 1970s, but it has diverged and in many places declined. It is no longer what it once was and on social matters it has achieved most of its original aims. Sexual and racial equality were once mostly championed by Communists, and correctly identified by right-wingers as communist-inspired. But the inspiration has happened, and most movements calling themselves communist failed to adapt to a changing world.

# Complaints to the BBC

By David Morrison

The BBC coverage of the US/Israel aggression against Iran has been disgraceful. Here are the three examples of their coverage, to which I made formal complaints.

## **1 Newsnight, 12 January 2026**

### **Ayatollah not implacably opposed to compromise**

On this programme, Sir Alex Younger (the former head of MI6) asserted that Ayatollah Khamenei “is just implacably, implacably opposed to any compromise”. That is untrue since the Ayatollah didn’t veto Iran signing the JCPoA nuclear agreement with the US (and the other permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany) in July 2015.

The JCPoA placed severe limitations on Iran’s nuclear programme, in particular, on its uranium enrichment. If the JCPoA was in force today, it would restrict Iran to a mere 300kg of uranium enriched to no more than 3.67 per cent, far from the quantity or purity needed for a nuclear weapon. A Supreme Leader implacably opposed to any compromise would never have agreed to these limitations. In exchange for these limitations, the onerous economic sanctions imposed on Iran by the US and EU in January 2012 were lifted.

On the present situation in Iran, Sir Richard said: “This is pretty clear: this is about the economy. There’s not enough to eat in Iran. The reason for that is because of the sanctions and the sanctions are in place because of Iran’s nihilist total resistance policy conducted by Khamenei.”

The last sentence is untrue: the current US sanctions against Iran are not “in place because of Iran’s nihilist total resistance policy conducted by Khamenei”. They are in place today because in May 2018 President Trump violated the JCPoA by reinstating the US sanctions that were in place prior to the JCPoA coming into force. He did so despite the fact that Iran was in full compliance with the agreement, ten reports by the IAEA, the latest in May 2018, having confirmed this.

Another indication that Ayatollah Khamenei is not implacably opposed to compromise is that last May Iran expressed a willingness to negotiate a deal with the US similar to the JCPoA (see <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/iran-enriched-uranium-nuclear-deal-trump-rcna206833>)

## **2 BBC News at Six, 3 February 2026**

Sarah Smith, the BBC’s North American correspondent, told News at Six viewers on 3 February 2026 that “Donald Trump is demanding that Iran gets rid of its nuclear weapons program”.

That statement gave viewers the impression that Iran has a nuclear weapons program when, according to US intelligence, it hasn’t.

In December 2007, the US administration published declassified Key Judgments from a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) entitled Iran: Nuclear Intentions and

Capabilities. Its principal conclusion was that Iran had halted its nuclear weapons program in the autumn of 2003 and hadn’t restarted it.

Since then, the US has regularly restated this view. For example, US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta told NBC’s Meet The Press in February 2013 that Iran has “not made the decision to proceed with the development of a nuclear weapon.”

And in March 2025, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard told the US Senate Intelligence Committee: “The IC [Intelligence Community] continues to assess that Iran is not building a nuclear weapon and Supreme Leader Khamenei has not authorized the nuclear weapons program he suspended in 2003.”

My complaint is that Sarah Smith’s statement on Iran’s nuclear program is inaccurate.

## **3 Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg, 1 March 2026**

Interviewed by Laura Kuenssberg on this programme, Zack Polanski emphasised the need for negotiations with Iran. In response, she asked:

“Why do you think that negotiations [with Iran] could have been an option here? What evidence do you have of that when it’s failed for decades?”

This assertion by Laura Kuenssberg that negotiations with Iran have “failed for decades” is manifestly untrue.

On 14 July 2015, Iran signed a nuclear agreement with the US and the other permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany. This agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA), was endorsed unanimously by the Security Council in resolution 2231 on 14 July 2015. Contrary to what Laura Kuenssberg told viewers, negotiations with Iran were spectacularly successful in July 2015.

The JCPoA imposed severe limitations on Iran’s nuclear programme, for example, Iran was restricted to holding a mere 300kg of uranium enriched to no more than 3.67 per cent, which is far from the quantity or purity needed for a nuclear weapon. In exchange for these limitations, the onerous economic sanctions imposed on Iran by the US and EU were lifted.

In May 2018, President Trump tore up the JCPoA, unilaterally breaching UN Security Council resolution 2231, and reimposed sanctions on Iran. He did so despite the fact that (a) the IAEA had continuously reported that Iran was in compliance with the agreement and (b) the agreement restricted Iran’s uranium enrichment to a level far below the purity needed for a nuclear weapon.

Today, President Trump constantly talks about the need for an agreement with Iran guaranteeing that it won’t develop nuclear weapons. There was one a decade ago. He broke it.