



## Yemen

From ceasefire to  
lasting settlement?

Steve Bell



## Hostile environment

Rwanda is no safe haven  
for refugees  
Steve Bishop



## Education

Coming to terms with Britain's  
colonial past

Harsev Bains

# Liberation

Journal of Liberation formerly the Movement for Colonial Freedom

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## Ukraine: a proxy war long in the making

Vijay Prashad, Sevim Dagdelen, Skevi Koukouma,  
Liz Payne and Johnnie Hunter on war and peace  
and dealing with the real dilemmas of humanity



**27 July 2016** Over 220 U.S. Marines and Ukrainian forces, riding in 15 amphibious vehicles, participated in an amphibious landing operation in Odessa, Ukraine, the amphibious landing vehicles departed from the USS Whitby Island, securing a beach head before moving inland.



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The bloody history of Empire and exploitation by imperialism is glossed over and replaced with scaremongering about China and other states protective of their independence and with differing views of world development

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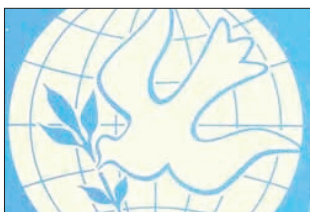
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UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab holds presser with Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, who in May declared that despite the conflict between Russia and NATO-backed Ukraine that the US would remain focused on China as “the most serious long-term challenge to the international order”

In 2021 the British government published its programme for the revival of a “Global Britain”. In his forward PM Johnson pledged strong support for “a resilient international order” and stressed that the British government would underpin this support with record spending on armaments and the extension of military preparations into “newer dimensions of cyber and space”. Kick starting these endeavours, Johnson boasted that the new aircraft carrier, HMS Queen Elizabeth would lead a British and allied force into the Indo-Pacific. The main section of the document contained a pledge to extend the role of NATO beyond the Euro-Atlantic area, with particular stress on supporting the United States in its aggressive posturing towards the Peoples Republic of China. It didn't stop there. The so-called global vision for Britain would also be active in Africa, in particular East Africa, building on Britain's colonial past. Such thinking was extended to the Middle East and was backed up with: “Britain will remain a nuclear-armed power with global reach”. To help sell the proposed economic and military expansion, the document gave special attention to the BBC's role in spreading the government's message “to 468 million people every week in 42 languages.” The entire document is riddled with neo-colonialist ambition. The legacy of Empire and colonialism - slavery, economic plunder, ethnic divisions, and exploitation - is unmentioned. Moreover, the contemporary imperialist objectives of global capitalism, to increase the accumulation of profit, is hidden behind assertions that “British interests and values “are shared by the whole world.” The bloody history of Empire and exploitation by imperialism is glossed over and replaced with scaremongering about China and other states protective of their independence and with differing views of world development. Advocates of peace and progress in Britain have been con-

cerned for some time about the gung-ho style of the current resident of 10 Downing Street. Their fears are now confirmed as the government shows itself intent on following through on Global Britain, joining every action overseas that makes it look tough and uncompromising. Some analysts have stated that the PM is more interested in showing his military interventionist credentials to the US/NATO hierarchy than in trying to find solutions to avert a catastrophic global war. This becomes even more disturbing in the light of what US leaders are currently openly saying. Antony J Blinken, secretary of state, speaking in Washington on 26 May, put it this way: “Even as President Putin's war continues, we will remain focused on the most serious long-term challenge to the international order – and that is posed by the People's Republic of China. China is the only country with both the intent to re-shape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it...” Liberation says that this cannot be interpreted as other than the foreshadowing of a US-led bloody war with unpredictable outcomes to reverse China's economic growth. Britain's security, and the well-being of its people, needs an independent foreign policy, not one tied to the coattails of US economic ambition and military adventurism. Such a policy, based on non-interference in the development of any state, reduction in military spending and mutual respect, would have a positive impact across the world, boosting international development and reducing the danger of world war, rather than threatening the people and the planet with annihilation. Winning public support for this will require fundamental changes to the education curriculum and dissemination of honest information about Empire and the real aims of imperialism.

Jamshid Ahmadi,  
editor



# news/Liberation

We do not believe that [the US and Saudi Arabia] are interested in real change in Sudan. They merely wish to maintain their material interests and preserve the status quo, however unpalatable that might be for the long-suffering people. There can be no legitimate settlement that accommodates the military coup forces or remnants of the overthrown dictatorship.



## US-Saudi-backed civilian-military-talks slammed

SUDAN

US-SAUDI-BACKED talks held in early June between Sudan's military coup forces and the civilian political alliance, the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), have been slammed by a leading force in the country's popular revolutionary movement.

The talks, dubbed "unofficial", were held in the official residence of the Saudi ambassador, Ali bin Hassan Jaafar, in Khartoum and mediated by the Saudi Arabian embassy and the US delegation to Sudan, the embassy said in a statement.

The FFC had previously rejected engagement with the country's military rulers in talks promoted by the United Nations political mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), the African Union, and the eight-nation East African regional group Intergovernmental Authority in Development (IGAD). At the most recent talks, the FFC are reported to have agreed to the laying out of a "roadmap" in consultation with other civilian groups on how to end the current political deadlock and hand over its implementation to the international community, according to the embassy statement.

However, the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), an alliance of the country's professional bodies and trade unions, and prominent force in the country's revolutionary movement, has heavily criticised the talks: "There can be no legitimate settlement that accommodates the military coup forces or remnants of the overthrown dictatorship... There can be no compromise with them whatsoever! This is not just our position, but that of all genuine revolutionary forces in Sudan."

In a statement sent to Liberation, the SPA continued: "The apparent volte-face by the FFC does not come as a big surprise to us. Their recent positions and slogans, such as 'Finish the Coup', are comparatively weak and fall somewhat short of the more comprehensive positions adopted by the SPA and other revolutionary forces.

"On the ground, it is the popular Resistance Committees and groups like the SPA that have the real influence and backing of the Sudanese people, devising and drafting constitutional charters and declarations, conveying their unwavering commitment to radical and genuinely progressive change in the country. The same simply cannot be said now for the FFC.

"Any compromise or negotiation with the military coup forces just repeats the same mistake of the transitional government in 2019. It would also ensure that there is no accountability for the deaths of at least

101 Sudanese people since the military coup last October, as well as a situation whereby the military forces maintain their overall control – with a charade election leading to a weak nominally civilian government carrying the interests of the military and its imperialist backers."

Commenting on the involvement in, and support for, this recent 'initiative' by the US and Saudi governments, the SPA added: "We do not believe that they are interested in real change in Sudan. They merely wish to maintain their material interests and preserve the status quo, however unpalatable that might be for the long-suffering people of Sudan.

"However, we, the SPA, do not see the current situation in Sudan as a 'crisis' that hereby needs to be brought to an end... We see instead a continuing revolutionary movement, one driven by the Sudanese people's dream of a genuine democracy ever since our country's independence."

When Sudan's military, led by General Abdel Fattah Burhan, took power on 25 October 2021, they brought to an end a 'transitional' government that included the FFC. This government was viewed by critics as an attempt designed to curtail and subvert a radical popular uprising that had begun in December 2018. However, resistance has continued with near-daily street protests led by the local Resistance Committees – grassroots neighbourhood networks throughout the country – and the SPA, which authorities have met with a deadly crackdown

Also in early June, a group of lawyers who offer legal assistance to political detainees and activists in Sudan disclosed an increase in enforced disappearance cases after the lifting on May 29 of the state of emergency imposed since October 2021.

The 'Emergency Lawyers' group said the security services continue to enforce measures to clamp down on activists under the cover of local laws and orders.

"The enforced disappearances increased after the lifting of the state of emergency in the country. In addition, the security services are clearly carrying out unlawful arrests, amid the rumoured existence of secret detention centres," stressed the lawyers.

The Sudanese lawyers said that arbitrary arrests continued and that dozens of activists are still held in the notorious Soba prison in Khartoum.

Furthermore, the Sudanese courts continue to try detainees in line with the emergency legislation despite its supposed expiry, they said.

Liberation has long supported popular struggles for peace, democracy, and human rights in Sudan; the SPA UK representative, Mohaned Elnour, briefed Liberation's Central Council at its meeting in May.

## Liberation addresses ASLEF conference

UNIONS

LIBERATION General Secretary, Roger McKenzie, expressed thanks to train drivers' union ASLEF for its continuing staunch support for Liberation at the union's conference in May.

Highlighting the activities and work of Liberation, Mr. McKenzie argued the case for there to be a central role for British trade unions in the work of the organisation going forward.

Mr. McKenzie stressed to ASLEF delegates that while the colonialism of the age of the British Empire has long expired, neo-colonialism remains alive and kicking. He stated that this was why Liberation placed such importance on the reinvigoration and continual strengthening of the links between the organisation and the trade unions - many of whom were so crucial to the founding of the Movement for Colonial Freedom, Liberation's precursor organisation, back in 1954.

ASLEF, currently led by general secretary Mick Whelan, has been one of the longest standing and strongest supporters of Liberation.

A number of branches from different unions across Britain - including the country's largest, Unite and Unison - have either joined Liberation for the first time or renewed their membership in recent months, along with several trades councils.

Local trade union branches and trades councils can affiliate for £36 annually. Individual membership of Liberation, which also continues to grow, costs £24 or £12 unwaged.

These affiliations, as well as further donations from members in a position to do so, help fund our important work and awareness-raising activities.

(While Liberation is currently run 100% by volunteers, the organisation must still cover the costs of its activities – including publication of the *Liberation Journal*.)

Members can also get involved by taking actions to help support Liberation's activities and influence our priorities at our annual general meetings. Affiliated organisations can present motions at the AGM, as well as vote and join in with the informed debates that take place there.

● Are you in a trade union? Can you affiliate your branch or trades council? Find out more about the benefits of membership and different ways to pay on our website [liberationorg.co.uk/join-or-give/](http://liberationorg.co.uk/join-or-give/)

● Get in touch with us at [info@liberationorg.co.uk](mailto:info@liberationorg.co.uk) if you would like some assistance, including a speaker to address a branch meeting or any other event being organised by your union.

## Halt the slide to war!



▲ Biden: imposing inhumane sanctions on Iranian people

IRAN

THE all-but-total collapse of negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States for the revival of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), or a close equivalent in its place, represents an abject failure in international diplomacy and spells disaster in terms of the continually deteriorating situation inside Iran as well as for the prospects for peace in a tinder-box-like Middle East.

The negotiations, the revival of which was a primary foreign policy objective of the Biden administration upon its coming to office, and which seemingly stood on the point of fruition back in March, now appear to be dead in the water. Following what appeared to be an about turn by the Islamic Republic - spurred to a degree by the re-polarising of positions in the wake of the war in Ukraine - progress in the talks appears to have been replaced by a row-back from previous undertakings by the Islamic Republic, followed by the US. This has led to a sharp rise in tensions in the region and the looming spectre of what would be a catastrophic confrontation between Iran and the West with its regional allies.

Meanwhile, with the dashing of any hope for the reaching of a negotiated settlement - and, by extension, for the removal of the crippling sanctions regime imposed by the US - the Iranian economy continues its freefall, with devastating effects for the already long-suffering Iranian people. A 'perfect storm' has been brought about by the regime's endemic corruption and mismanagement; the imposition of inhumane sanctions by the US; and now, the spiralling prices of basic goods in the wake of the war in Ukraine. Vital goods and medicines are increasingly out of the reach of ordinary people. The situation is thus reaching boiling point in Iran with widespread and growing popular unrest against the theocratic dictatorship throughout the country.

● For more information, visit the website of the Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights (CODIR) at <http://codir.net>



# comment/**Ukraine fallout**

There is much to suggest that the economic war against Russia is actually about China and re-establishing US hegemony around the world. A close alliance between Beijing and Moscow signals the end of a world order that operates according to the binding rules of the West



pursued an alliance between the international working class and the oppressed populations of the South against the dangers of imperialist war – a consciousness that has been lost in many Western nations, even on the Left. Progressive resistance to the maintenance of structures of colonial oppression deserves our support. However, we must first regain an awareness that many people in the South are simply sick of the hypocrisy of the Western elites whose only purpose is to uphold structures of oppression.

## Stop the proxy war



**Sevim Dagdelen** on NATO, the Ukraine conflict and the

immediate tasks for an anti-militarist movement faced with the increasing risks of a Third World War.

**W**E ARE LIVING in dramatic and dangerous times. Russia's attack on Ukraine on 24 February must be condemned as a violation of international law and cannot be justified. However, NATO getting directly involved in the conflict would increase the risk of a Third World War and, potentially, a nuclear war that would leave all of Europe in ruins. Progressive forces and the anti-war movement must channel all their efforts into preventing that.

Nevertheless, it is evident that what we are now seeing in the Ukraine war is an economic and proxy war that NATO is waging against Russia. There is a great risk that the vast weapons deliveries from NATO member states, especially the United States and United Kingdom, as well as the training of Ukrainian service personnel to use those weapons, will draw the Western alliance as a whole, or member countries individually, into direct involvement in the war in Ukraine.

As the barrage of media opinion in Berlin would have it, everyone opposed to war is vilified as a friend of Putin's and the peace movement is villainised as part of the enemy within, supporting the external foe with its calls for an end to weapons deliveries. This militarist rhetoric is being propagated on a vast scale by the media in Germany. The war in Ukraine is a war for "our interests", is the idea being suggested to the public in this country. A peace in Ukraine achieved by military means is intended to confirm the rise of Germany, alongside the United States in Eastern Europe, and the destruction of Russia, or at least a regime change to install a new Boris Yeltsin who will sell Russia's primary commodities for next to nothing.

### Security architecture

In this context, the handling of Russia's proposals for a new security architecture prior to the invasion of Ukraine speaks volumes. While Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in his decree of March 2021 called to take back Crimea and Donbass by military means, along with his repeated calls for Ukraine to join NATO, the Russian proposals sought to enshrine neutral status for Ukraine and a continued freeze on the conflicts over Crimea and Donbass. Those proposals were rejected by the United States. The

German Government explained to us Members of the Bundestag that the Russian proposals were not to be taken seriously.

The architects of the current NATO strategy have overlooked the fact that Russia has been heavily engaged in shifting its trade, energy and industrial policy towards Asia since 2014. In just a few years, Moscow will be in a position to redirect Russian energy supplies that used to go to Europe entirely to Asia, particularly to China, India, Pakistan and Viet Nam. This explains how unsuccessful the West's economic war against Russia, targeting the Russian population as a whole, has been so far. Any contemplation of a complete halt to energy imports from Russia would result in the collapse of German industry and an economic crisis in Central Europe on the scale of the 1920s. The German central bank estimates that a total energy embargo would cause an annual deficit of 180 billion euro.

### War against China

There is much to suggest that the economic war against Russia is actually about China and re-establishing US hegemony around the world, which has been increasingly jeopardised by the economic rise of Beijing. While Donald Trump targeted China head on and sought direct containment, his successor, President Joe Biden, appears to have opted for a circuitous route to Beijing via Moscow. The US appears to calculate that should Beijing's greatest prop i.e. Moscow collapse, the country could be isolated and cut off from important markets and energy supplies. The US monopolies would then have free rein once more, and the rules-based order, desired by the German Government alongside many others, would once again be primarily determined in Washington.

For the US and its allies, a close alliance between China and Russia threatens to see the global market parcelled up into spheres of influence, signalling the end of a world order that operates according to the binding rules of the West. Essentially, the US and China are now rivals in the question of who decides the rules that the world follows. The US wants to disable its rival at all costs. That is the pivotal power issue in 21st-century international relations.

The conscious labour movement has always

### Third World War?

The global economic warfare against Russia; the weapons deliveries to Ukraine; the deployment of ever more NATO troops in the direct vicinity of the Russian border; the internal mobilisation of opinion; added to the unprecedented arms escalation, increases the risk of a Third World War.

In view of that growing danger, I see the following as tasks for an anti-militarist movement:

To push for a negotiated peace, an immediate end to the war and the withdrawal of Russian troops. What is needed is a negotiated solution, as was already within reach at the end of March.

A halt to NATO enlargement and to the deployment of NATO troops to the Russian border in Eastern Europe. Counting on military victory, like the EU and NATO, will only see the conflict escalate further and further.

3 No support for the ongoing mobilisation of opinion in favour of Germany's increasing involvement in the war through weapons exports.

4. Not to be badgered into adopting the notion of cross-party truce. This is about resisting arms escalation. The enemies of working people are not China or Russia but the German arms manufacturers, those who profit from escalation, and the Western oligarchs. We have no wish to freeze or starve for an economic war against Russia and will do all we can to stop NATO's proxy war.

5. The policy of arms escalation is also catastrophic in social terms. We demand new kindergartens instead of warships, better healthcare instead of new armoured combat troops, and price caps on rents, foodstuffs and energy instead of new air combat systems and nuclear bombers. We need a socially conscious and peaceful outlook rather than being swept along into warmongering and yet more redistribution in favour of the super-rich and the military industrial complex.

**Sevim Dagdelen** is a Die Linke (The Left Party) member of the Bundestag (German Parliament), chairperson of Die Linke's parliamentary group in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Bundestag, chairperson of the party's working group on foreign policy, as well as the party's spokesperson for international politics and disarmament.

ABOVE: A soldier with the Ukrainian Land Forces in April 2016 during a mortar live-fire exercise near Yavoriv, part of a nine week training rotation overseen by US soldiers.

RIGHT: For the US and its allies, a close alliance between China and Russia threatens to see the global market parcelled up into spheres of influence.

Abridged and edited with permission from a longer article by Sevim Dagdelen



# asylum/hostile environment

## Rwanda – no safe haven for refugees

Photo: Creative Commons/Sandor Csudai

**A broad coalition, including Liberation, is urging the government to reconsider its policy towards asylum seekers and, in line with international conventions to which it is a signatory, drop any measures which could be deemed hostile or inhumane to those seeking asylum in the UK. In addition there is an urgent need for a better-designed UK asylum system, properly resourced, with simplified procedures that will result in fairer and faster assessments,**

**writes  
Steve  
Bishop.**

**T**HE HUMAN RIGHTS record of the government in Rwanda is not one which inspires confidence. It is especially not a record designed to inspire confidence in refugees, fleeing conflict and political turmoil, who are seeking a safe haven. The ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), under President Paul Kagame, continues to suppress opposition voices and to target those deemed to be a threat to the government.

In its World Report 2022, Human Rights watch observed of Rwanda that,

“Arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, and torture in official and unofficial detention facilities was commonplace, and fair trial standards were routinely flouted in cases deemed sensitive. There were credible reports of arbitrary detention and mistreatment of people accused of “deviant behaviours,” including street children, sex workers and petty vendors.”

In October last year a number of political opposition figures were arrested on charges as vague as “spreading rumours”, and “spreading false information with intent to create a hostile international opinion against the Rwandan state.” Such tactics are the common currency of oligarchies the world over, serving to force dissent underground and squeeze the space for legitimate political opposition and protest.

The activities of the Rwandan state also extend beyond its borders, with opposition figures as far afield as Australia and Canada suffering threats and harassment. In Africa, Human Rights Watch has documented and received credible reports of Rwandan refugees and asylum seekers being forcibly disappeared and returned to Rwanda, or killed.

### Covid 19

The response of the Rwandan regime to the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the situation of the poorest. Stringent lockdown measures were reinforced with the arbitrary detention of tens of thousands of people, held without due process or legal representation in stadiums or detained in the Gikondo transit centre, a facility where they faced regular beatings, often in crowded conditions. The European Parliament has adopted resolutions condemning Rwanda's human rights record.

Against this background the UK government announced in April its plans for those claiming asylum in the UK to be relocated to Rwanda, where their cases will be processed. If they are granted asylum, they will be encouraged to remain in Rwanda for at least five years.

Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, announced the policy as an indication of the UK being “a beacon of openness and generosity”, claiming that the plan will not prevent those seeking asylum by legal routes but is intended to curb illegal migration. Quite how those fleeing violence and war would be in a position to gain ‘legal’ documentation was not made clear. How relocated asylum seekers would be accommodated in

Rwanda was equally vague, other than temporary plans to convert a former detention centre into a hostel.

The British government's proposals have raised alarm bells at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN's refugee agency, which is the guardian of the 1951 convention relating to the status of refugees and to its 1967 protocol. This is international legislation to which the UK is a signatory. There is no evidence that UNHCR has been consulted on any plans to send asylum seekers abroad. In addition, the UN human rights office tweeted that the plan raises human rights concerns about forcible returns, family separation, “arbitrary deprivation of liberty” and the prospect that cases might not be assessed on an individual basis.

While British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, insists that the proposals are “humane” and that they will “stop the abuse of these people by a bunch of traffickers and gangsters”, the evidence to date suggests quite the opposite.

### Australian model

The Australian government initiated a policy of placing asylum seekers in detention centres on Nauru and Manus Island in 2001. The policy ran until 2007, and restarted in 2014. The result has been that thousands of asylum seekers have found themselves in detention camps, at a cost of around \$12bn in the eight years to 2021.

The centres have been characterised by harsh physical conditions, with detainees suffering from poor mental health due to prolonged detention and uncertainty about their future prospects. Inadequate and unhygienic living conditions, as well as poor standards of healthcare have also been well documented.

In a submission made to an Australian Senate inquiry into conditions at the Nauru detention centre, Charlotte Wilson, a former Save the Children worker, stated, “I firmly believe that the level of trauma that asylum seekers have been subjected to has caused profound damage to nearly every single man, woman and child who has been arbitrarily interned in Nauru.”

A migration deal between Rwanda and Israel in 2014 saw an estimated 4,000 people leave the country immediately, many attempting to return to Europe through people smuggling routes, and falling prey to trafficking and human rights abuses. Not quite as “humane” as Prime Minister Johnson would suggest. By 2018 the Israeli government claimed that around 20,000 of the estimated 65,000 asylum seekers who had arrived in the country had been deported under one scheme or another.

The British government are planning to adopt the measure to demonstrate that they are tough on immigration and that the UK is not a ‘soft touch’ for those seeking asylum. However, as Rossella Pagliuchi-Lor, the UK representative for the UNHCR has pointed out, “...what's often forgotten amid all the

recent noise around Channel crossings is that asylum claims in the UK have been falling, and remain far lower here than in countries like France and Germany. The situation in the UK is manageable.”

The new proposal is clearly little more than a consolidation of the ‘hostile environment’ approach to refugees and asylum seekers. The scheme also appears to prioritise the offshoring of non-European asylum seekers, many displaced from areas such as Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya and Afghanistan as a result of foreign military activity, occupation, economic sanctions and NATO interventions in those countries.

There is no indication that the policy will apply to those deemed to be seeking asylum from the war in Ukraine, who have been given active encouragement through the government's Homes for Ukraine programme. Ukrainian refugees have the right to work, to receive public funds such as Universal Credit, and access to public services such as schools and health care. By contrast, nationals of other countries claiming the right to asylum in the UK are not normally allowed to work while their claim is being processed.

The policy in the UK is already running into difficulties, with a group of asylum seekers at the Brook House detention centre, near Gatwick Airport, going on hunger strike last week in protest at their threatened deportation. Detainees have been prohibited phones with cameras and no internet access.

In response to the hunger strikes Home Secretary, Priti Patel, said, “we know attempts will now be made to frustrate the process and delay removals; I will not be deterred and remain fully committed to delivering what the British public expect.”

The Home Office was aiming for the first removal flights to commence on 14 June – a move blocked by an 11th hour injunction from a judge in the European Court of Human Rights

As an organisation rooted in opposing colonialism, opposing unjust wars and supporting those in need of assistance and political asylum, Liberation has raised its voice, along with bodies as diverse as the British Red Cross, the Immigration Law Practitioners Association and the Refugee Council, in opposition to the government's proposals.

A broad coalition is urging the government to reconsider its policy towards asylum seekers and, in line with international conventions to which it is a signatory, drop any measures which could be deemed hostile or inhumane to those seeking asylum in the UK.

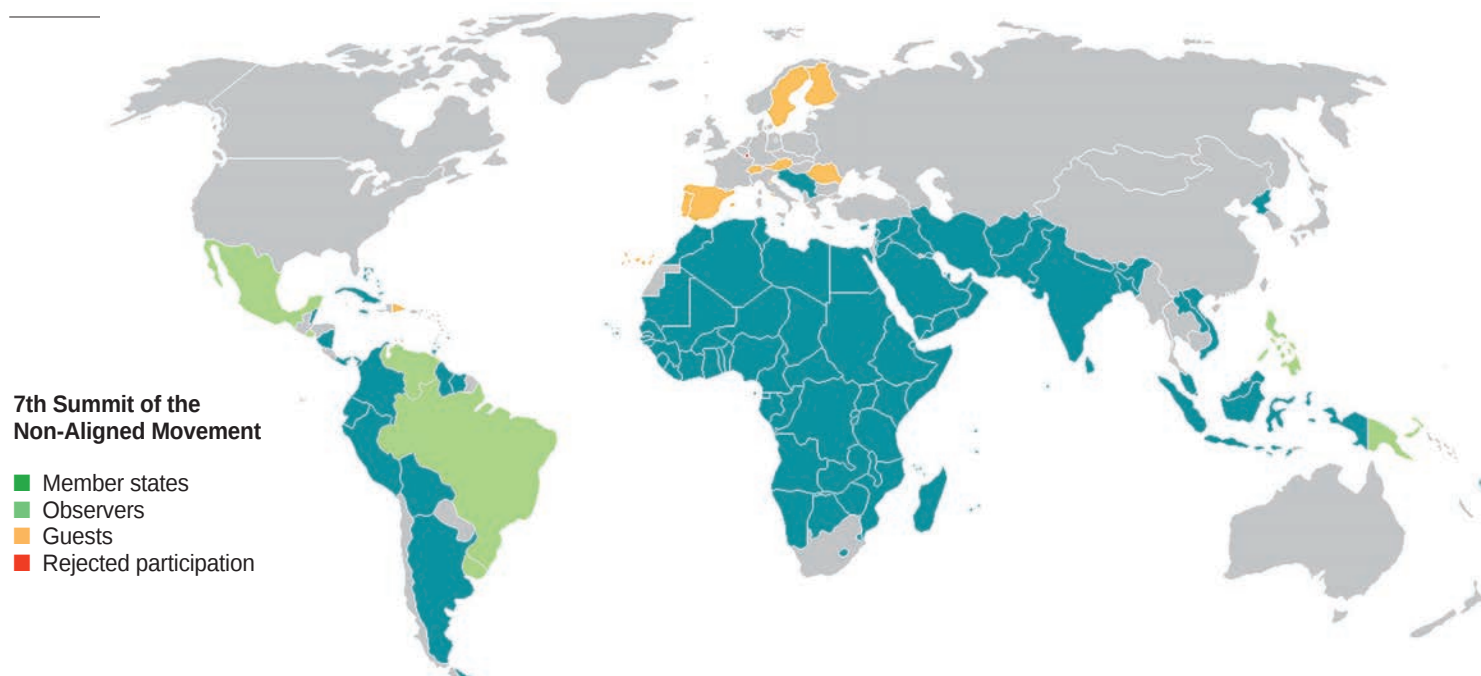
That means, in addition to dropping the current proposals, in line with the views of the UNHCR, demanding a better-designed UK asylum system, properly resourced, with simplified procedures that will result in fairer and faster assessments.

**Steve Bishop** is a member of Liberation



# interview/VJ Prashad

A long period of sedimented “wisdom” has driven the argument that preparing for war creates the basis for peace, a fallacious argument that is shown to be wrong by the string of wars that litter our histories. We need to prepare for peace, to engage with people to deal with our various conflicts and problems



## Reasons to revitalise the Non-Aligned Movement



**Vijay Prashad explains the necessity of a revitalised Non-Aligned Movement,**

**Europe's choices in the context of the war in Ukraine, and the prospects of a multi-polar world challenging US hegemony in the economic and military spheres**

**Liberation** You have talked about the revival of, or bolstering the Non-Alignment Movement. Now, after the collapse of the socialist bloc, non-aligned with who? And does it mean NAM would be neutral towards imperialism?

**Vijay Prashad** Non-alignment is not the same as neutrality. It is a position, worked out in the 1950s and 1960s, that rejects the necessity for post-colonial states to have their newly won political sovereignty hijacked by external powers. The idea is that the states of the Global South cannot build their sovereignty easily in an imperialist world system, but nonetheless must find as much political space as possible to develop their own agendas, and build their own foreign policies. This difficulty persists till now. El Salvador made a commercial deal with Chinese companies to develop a port in the Gulf of Fonseca on the Pacific coast. The United States forced El Salvador to break the agreement. El Salvador should not be placed in a position where the United States forces it to “choose” its orientation. It must develop its own national agenda and make its own choices. This is the essence of non-alignment.

**Liberation** How do you envision the revived NAM helping improve the current world affairs to the benefit of the working people politically and economically?

**Vijay Prashad** The US-imposed policy to “weaken” Russia and China (a word used by US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin) has polarized the international landscape and made it difficult for countries to articulate their views that are not taken to be on “one side” (imperialism) or the other (Russia/China). Countries such as South Africa or Brazil or India are not going to line up easily, and even as China continues to insist that it does not want to form a “camp,” such kind of polarization has taken place and it has made it difficult for countries to articulate their own views, which are not identical to either the United States and the West or to Russia or to China (since there are differences between these two countries). We need to oxygenate international relations, which is what a revitalized NAM must do.

**Liberation** Do you think we are moving towards a multipolar world that can neutralise US's hegemonic position in the economic and military spheres?

**Vijay Prashad** There is no doubt that US hegemony is deeply fragile (the new book by Noam Chomsky and I, *The Withdrawal*, makes this case). However, we should not exaggerate this fragility.

The United States remains the most powerful military force in the world, with a nuclear arsenal and a conventional weapons arsenal that is lethal and able to strike anywhere given the vast network of military bases and the enormous maritime and aerial power that the United States maintains. At the same time, the US continues to dominate the information systems, driving its own narrative of world affairs without much challenge. This is through private pathways (satellite news and youtube), but also due to the nature of the news (bite-sized) which prevents contexts to be developed and allows the already sedimented colonial common sense to prevail worldwide. Finally, there are some glimmers of a challenge to the US-dominated financial system, but even here the Wall Street-Dollar regime remains in force and able to sanction over thirty countries around the world. So, yes, a kind of multipolarity would theoretically be able to minimize US power, but we are far from that reality.

**Liberation** In the context of Russia's so-called special operations, which was argued to be a “defensive war”, you said that war itself is a crime. Could you elaborate please

**Vijay Prashad** War is an ugly business, even if the war is for defensive reasons. All wars end in negotiations, which is why political negotiations must be the principal focus of attention. Anyone who has been to a war zone and heard the sounds of war and smelt the poisons of war, knows that it takes generations to get those sounds and smells out of your nose and ears. War neurologically damages social life, breaks up our confidence in each other, creates disruptions that are civilizational. How can anyone justify war itself, regardless of the motives? This does not mean that in times of terrible necessity one will not fight to defend oneself, but war should never be seen as anything other than a social crime.

**Liberation** Do you think the US drive to subordinate its allies, especially in the EU, to a very costly policy reorientation, both immediately and in wider economic terms, could have counterproductive consequences for US strategy? Producing a more multi-polar imperialism?

**Vijay Prashad** It is hard to say this because Europe's elites are so gutless when it comes to charting their own agenda. Neither the EU nor the European countries within NATO have been able to create any daylight between themselves and the United States. There have been occasional glimmers of disagreement – during the US illegal

attack on Iraq in 2003, for instance – but these are few and far between. Europe faces a clear choice: accelerate the attempt to isolate and weaken Russia – which means no serious attempt at a peace agreement over Ukraine – and see fuel, fertilizer, and food prices skyrocket or to campaign for peace, engage Russia, and buy fuel at a reasonable price from Russia. That's the choice. The European elites are committed – with the US – to the first option, which is incidentally impossible to realize since Russia will not be defeated and since it will merely increase its integration with China and the rest of Asia. Since there is no actual defeat of Russia, why not engage with the fact of Eurasian integration which is inevitable.

**Liberation** In a recent article you mentioned that in 2021, the world spent over two trillion

**US dollars on war, but only invested \$750 billion on clean energy and energy efficiency. The current war in Europe is intensifying this disparity. How can the Left around the globe develop a coherent and unified response?**  
**Vijay Prashad** If the Left can make this choice clear to people and if we campaign on this choice, I believe that there is only one rational way forward: to use our social wealth to deal with our dilemmas of humanity. But this is easier said than done. A long period of sedimented “wisdom” has driven the argument that preparing for war creates the basis for peace, a fallacious argument that is shown to be wrong by the string of wars that litter our histories. We need to prepare for peace, to engage with people to deal with our various conflicts and problems. To prepare for peace means to use our social wealth for the social good, to deal with the real dilemmas of humanity – from hunger to climate catastrophe. Elites keep saying that there are no funds to deal with illiteracy or with houselessness, but when it suits them, they dig deep into our futures and steal money for weapons systems and for tax cuts. Such arguments need to be contested not just in newspapers and magazines, but in our campaigns to build the clarity and confidence of mass movements.

**Liberation** It seems that imperialism's barbarism is driving humanity toward existential crisis. What is the perspective of socialism then?

**Vijay Prashad** Socialism is the real movement of history. There are some obstinate facts in the world, such as the obstinate desire of people to overcome hunger and to overcome illiteracy. This desire is unquenched by capitalism, which is simply not capable of overcoming hunger. It cannot overcome hunger not because there is insufficient food in the world (there is in fact twice the amount of food we need). It is because large numbers of the world's people struggle to get the money to buy food on a regular basis. We don't have money because of social inequality, which is driven by private property and the egregious private accumulation of social wealth. So capitalism cannot answer the dilemmas of humanity, which produce the obstinate facts that require transcendence. Only socialism can do that. Which is what makes socialism the real movement of history. It is naïve and idealistic to believe that capitalism can solve our problems. Capitalism is the existential crisis. We must either build socialism or perish.

**Vijay Prashad** is an Indian Marxist historian and commentator. He is an executive-director of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, the Chief Editor of LeftWord Books and a senior non-resident fellow at Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, Renmin University of China



# analysis/Yemen

The British government, as UN pen-holder on Yemen, has absolutely failed to progress peace, happily following US foreign policy, while selling over £22 billion of military equipment to the Coalition. It is vital that the UK anti-war and anti-imperialist movement highlights the need for a lasting peace



Ibrahim Qasim/Wikimedia Creative Commons

## From a ceasefire to a lasting settlement

Since 2 April, there has been an end to Saudi air strikes on Yemen, and an end to Ansarallah's drone and missile strikes on Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Clearly this is a welcome development,

but will it lead to a lasting settlement? asks **Steve Bell**



ON 2 JUNE representatives of Ansarallah ("the Houthis") and the Saudi led Coalition agreed to a further two month extension of the nationwide ceasefire in Yemen. This follows the establishment of a truce from 2 April. Clearly this is a welcome development, but will it lead to a lasting settlement?

Since 2 April, there has been an end to Saudi air strikes on Yemen, and an end to Ansarallah's drone and missile strikes on Saudi Arabia and the UAE. There continues to be local skirmishes on the ground in Yemen, but generally on a much reduced level.

The original ceasefire was to be accompanied by measures to loosen the external siege imposed by the Coalition; and the internal restrictions on movement imposed by both the Coalition and Ansarallah. At the time of writing, some of these measures have been partially implemented. The Coalition was to allow 18 fuel ships to enter Hodeidah port, 12 so far have got through. The Coalition was to allow two civilian flights a week (16 in total) from Sana'a airport, three so far have taken off. The internal restrictions have not been lifted by either party.

Evidently, the situation at the start of the new truce is fragile. The UN is assisting in talks in Jordan between the Coalition, Ansarallah and the Presidential Leadership Council. These are focusing on lifting internal restrictions and further military de-escalation. However, what needs to be achieved to secure the peace is an inclusive political process which involves all the Yemeni parties and civil society in rebuilding Yemen. There is no sign of this yet.

### Saudi Arabia accommodated

The essential problem is that the Coalition, and the US government, are not yet prepared to accept that Ansarallah will have a substantial role in Yemen's future. President Biden won his election promising to end the war, and make Saudi Arabia a "pariah state". But in power he has accommodated the Saudi regime. At the start of 2021 he stated that the US would end the sale of "offensive" weapons to the Coalition. By the end of 2021 he had put aside such concerns, with a sale of \$650 million missiles to the Saudis in December.

As the siege of Yemen has continued, so too has the humanitarian crisis. According to the World Food Programme, out of a population of 32 million, 17 million Yemeni's are food insecure, with this figure anticipated to rise to 19 million by the end of the year. The UN estimates it requires \$4.3 billion for humanitarian assistance, yet has received pledges for less than a third. While the ceasefire certainly improves the conditions under which aid is delivered, it does not resolve the humanitarian catastrophe created by the siege and war.

The immediate danger is that Biden will prioritise the relationship with the Saudi regime over the needs of the Yemeni people. Despite US prompting, the Saudi regime has so far refused to increase oil production. Gas prices at the pump are at a record level in the US. Biden is suffering from a collapse of public support, and facing losses in the mid-term elections. He plans to visit Saudi Arabia in July. Not only does he want to see oil production increased, he also wants to bring the Saudis into the Abraham Accords with Israel. In these circumstances he is likely to be making concessions rather than pressing the Saudis to end the war.

### US Congress

One ray of hope here is that there is a serious move inside the US Congress to end US involvement in the war. On 31 May, Representative Peter DeFazio introduced a resolution that invokes the 1973 War Powers Act to end US military participation in the Yemen war. This is supported by the Congress Progressive Caucus, a bi-partisan group involving 50 representatives. Senator Bernie Sanders has made a commitment to introduce a companion resolution into the Senate, once it is back in session. Previously in 2019, when both houses passed a similar, if less stringent, resolution, President Trump vetoed it. Certainly the new resolution is placing pressure on Biden.

On 4 June, the *Washington Post* and *Security Force Monitor* published a joint investigation into US involvement in the war. It revealed that the US approved contracts for aircraft, munitions and equipment used by 38 of the Coalition's 39 airstrike capable squadrons. If Congress can end US support for the war then the Coalition would lose their most vital instrument for sustaining the war.

What happens in the US is likely to be decisive for the truce. The UN is mediating talks but in reality has been unable to decisively influence events since the start of the war in 2015. This is because the US, with UK government support, secured a totally one-sided resolution, UNSC 2216. This directs Ansarallah, who control territory inclusive of 80 percent of Yemen's population, to withdraw from all territory, disarm, and hand over governance to ex-President Hadi. This ultimatum has meant that no effective diplomacy has been possible in over seven years. The fact that ex-President Hadi is now under house arrest in Saudi Arabia, and facing a corruption trial, appears to have altered things not a jot.

The British government, as UN pen-holder on Yemen, has absolutely failed to progress peace in Yemen. Instead it has happily followed US foreign policy, while selling over £22 billion of military equipment to the Coalition. Unfortunately, since the change in the Labour leadership, it has faced no pressure to alter course. The Labour leadership has tagged behind the Tories in watching every hesitation and twist in Biden's policy. Since the announcement of the first ceasefire, neither of the Houses of Parliament has found the time to debate Yemen. Waiting for the US reaction appears to be the height of British diplomatic wisdom.

In these circumstances, it is vital that the anti-war and anti-imperialist movement in Britain does what it can to highlight the need for a lasting peace in Yemen. This is best done by demanding an end to all British military and political support for the Coalition's war.

**Steve Bell** is an officer of Stop the War Coalition.

## Liberation and Yemen

Steve Bell spoke at a Liberation online event in March on the seventh anniversary of the beginning of the Saudi-led war on Yemen. Also speaking were Yemeni peace activist and scholar Shireen Al-Adeimi, Prof Madawi Al-Rasheed of the Middle East Centre at the London School of Economics and Political Science, Kirsten Bayes of Campaign Against Arms Trade, and Jeremy Corbyn and Chris Hazzard MPs.

<https://liberationorg.co.uk/events>



# comment/global Britain

Public funds should be spent on our broken public services and infrastructure – on health, education, and the environment, on job creation and raising the standard of living for all – not on facilitating and expanding corporate exploitation and profiteering across the world and not on protecting and nurturing them through chauvinistic aggression, coercion, interventions, and wars



## Queen's speech reveals war policies behind Tory vision

**Liz Payne** examines the chauvinism and militarism of the foreign policy programme laid before parliament at its May state opening.



**G**IVEN THE ASSERTION In the opening words of the Queen's Speech at the state opening of parliament on 10th May 2022 that "in these challenging times, my government will play a leading role in defending democracy and freedom across the world," there was scant reference to foreign policy in what followed.

More significant perhaps was that most of the little that was said was by way of declaring support for Ukraine and Westminster's leadership in "championing security around the world", continued investment in the country's armed forces, and government initiatives with Britain's international partners to strengthen NATO and address "the most pressing security challenges" of our world. This, of course, took as read and reinforced the role of Britain set out in Global Britain in a Competitive Age, the March 2021 integrated review of security, defence, development, and foreign policy and its implementation, as heralded at the state opening of parliament a year ago. Britain was to be a mighty post-colonial power, once again bestriding the world with a political and military agenda to match its economic aspirations.

The "small print" behind the foreign policy headline announcements of the royal speech this year, part of a 140-page government briefing also issued on 10 May, supplies the missing detail of what the government intends abroad. It is a disturbing read (1).

The government will add £300 million to the £450m it has already given to Ukraine. Britain was the first European country to supply Kiev with weapons and has made clear it will continue to do so. This "lethal aid" has so far included over 5,000 anti-tank weapons, five air defence systems complete with missiles, 1,360 portable shoulder-launched munitions for destroying buildings and bunkers and thousands of tonnes of explosives. The briefing boasts that, beyond this, Britain is playing a leading role worldwide in drumming up support for Ukraine's war.

### NATO and Britain

Britain's commitment to the aggressive expansionist NATO pact is to remain rock-solid in terms of finance and military participation. This comes as no surprise after Britain's crucial contribution in recent months to some of the biggest NATO war games (interoperability exercises) ever seen in Europe – from the Black Sea to the Baltic and Norway's arctic north – and preparation to re-site US nuclear warheads at Lakenheath in Suffolk.

Already "the biggest NATO defence spender in Europe" with an annual outlay of over 2% of GDP, plans are for Britain's war chest to swell by a further £24 billion in four years according to the briefing. This is on top of what has been the largest increase in military spending since the end of the Cold War.

Beyond this, former British colonial era relationships are being reinvigorated to form a network of mutually protective security partnerships, including for Cyber security 'defence' across the world. More traditional alliances are also being strengthened including the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing initiative (US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Britain) and the Five Power Defence Arrangements between Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Singapore, bolstered also by

AUKUS [including Britain's lucrative contract to supply Australia with nuclear-powered submarines], whose stated purpose is to deepen the country's engagement in the Indo-Pacific.

The Queen's speech and its government briefing are peppered with thinly-veiled excuses about how all this aggression, militarism and war is about protecting democracy and freedom for Britain and its partners across the world. But the detail makes clear that Global Britain is for the multi-billion pound big-business community and their backers. They are the intended beneficiaries, whose investments and exploitative dealings in the lucrative new markets of South-east Asia, Africa and the Caribbean will be protected, while the shareholders of the huge military-industrial complexes will rub their hands at the trillions that will flow their way as the war machine becomes ever more frenetic.

### Government priorities

Britain's foreign policy has nothing in it for the majority of people in this country, impoverished and struggling to make ends meet as a direct result of a crisis long in the making for which they, unlike big business and its Conservative government, bear no responsibility. Public funds should be spent on our broken public services and infrastructure – on health, education, and the environment, on job creation and raising the standard of living for all – not on facilitating and expanding corporate exploitation and profiteering across the world and not on protecting and nurturing them through chauvinistic aggression, coercion, interventions, and wars.

The "programme" set before parliament has no potential for solving the challenges of our times and, so far as the vast majority of us are concerned, it was never intended to do so. We therefore need to campaign for a new foreign policy in which our country is a bringer of peace not war and whose relationships are built on respect for the independence and sovereignty of peoples within the framework of international law.

In doing so, we should be warned that the government will have no hesitation in turning its security forces on those who oppose the implementation of Global Britain, whether they be overseas or here at home. Peaceful protests and demonstrations are already under attack, but new legislation flagged in the Queen's Speech takes this to a new level so far as Westminster's overseas strategy is concerned. The Boycotts, Divestments and Sanctions Bill, if passed, will make sure that only UK foreign policy "determines how our country interacts with other nations," and will give the government power to ban bodies receiving funds from the public purse, including democratically elected ones, from running boycott, divestment and sanctions campaigns against foreign countries, sale of goods or services from those countries or against British firms that trade with them. We will need to robustly counter these measures if our voices are to continue to be heard.

Our immediate demand must be that the Ukraine conflict be ended at the negotiating table, not perpetuated through the supply of ever greater quantities of arms. Britain should cease to support and orchestrate reactionary hegemonic policies, stepping away from its special relationship with the US, from NATO, from cold war and from any actions that seek to recreate or utilise in the present century any vestiges of colonialism and empire. This, not militarism, will make for a more secure and safer world.

### Reference:

- 1 Prime Minister's Office, Queen's speech 2022 background briefing notes, 10 May 2022, pp. 106 113. Lobby\_Pack\_10\_May\_2022.pdf

**Liz Payne** is a member of Liberation's education committee

**ABOVE** Protest against war in Ukraine and NATO expansion in Trafalgar Square, London



# comment/imperialism

Delegates from across the Americas and further afield highlighted the dangerous new partnership between NATO and Colombia, the ever-increasing US aggression towards Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Bolivia and the general expansion of US bases underway in Latin American and the Caribbean. They also expressed concerns at the forthcoming NATO Summit in Madrid



**Abolish  
foreign  
military  
bases!**

Writing from an international seminar of peace activists held within sight of the infamous US naval base in Guantánamo,



**Johnnie  
Hunter** argues the priorities of the US, Britain and

their allies include maintaining the encirclement of China and Russia while for progressives our priorities should be to expose, condemn and defeat our government's imperialist and warmongering policies

THE SMALL TOWN Of Caimanera, located in Cuba's Guantánamo province, is as close as most civilians can or ever will get to the infamous US naval base and torture facility, which appropriates the name of what would be an otherwise beautiful and tranquil bay.

From a small viewing platform, visitors are able to look across the frontline of two worlds. Standing in Cuba you can see only the outlying tendrils of the illegal US base, the aggressive foothold of another world, a world based on oppression, exploitation, chauvinism, and militarism.

This year Guantánamo was once again the poignant setting for the International Seminar for Peace and the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases, organised by the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) and the World Peace Council (WPC). After having been on a pandemic-imposed hiatus, this year's Seminar brought together scores of delegates from 25 countries and 70 Cubans, including representatives of the mass organisations of the revolution.

Britain's affiliate to the WPC, the British Peace Assembly (BPA), was once again in attendance, representing the wider peace movement in our country.

The conference was held in the striking and powerful surroundings of the Plaza Mariana Grajales, dedicated to a hero of the Cuban wars of independence from Spain. The six dramatic concrete columns of the central monument sit stark against the wide sky, topped with reliefs and statues dedicated to different eras and heroes of Cuba's revolution and its long and unfinished fight for independence.

The Seminar was opened by Fernando González Llort, President of ICAP, one of the internationally revered Miami Five, a contemporary hero of the revolution. He reiterated the demand of the Cuban people and the world for respect for the United Nations Charter and the return of the US base, cruelly and inhumanely

occupied since 1903. In concluding his speech, he noted that our planet now more than ever needs peace and that to achieve it our movement needs unity.

## Guantánamo

The Governor of Guantánamo Province, Emilio Matos Mosqueda, used his address to spell out the social, economic, and environmental impact of the US base and explain what that means for the people of the province. As well as being a grave insult and attack on the Cuban people, for the region, the stolen land and aggressive military occupation and manoeuvres mean stunted economic development, opportunities denied and environmental degradation.

The President of the World Peace Council, Maria do Socorro Gomes, condemned the illegal base and the atrocities committed at the torture camp, cynically located on stolen Cuban soil, noting that they affect all of those defending human rights and peace globally. The WPC president forcefully reiterated the organisation's opposition to foreign military bases, noting that their very existence is an exercise in imperialist domination against sovereign countries. She also noted that the coming NATO Summit in Madrid in June would represent a dangerous development giving the organisation an even wider strategic and interventionist scope.

The contributions of international delegates from across the Americas and those attending from further afield followed. Recurring themes included the dangerous new partnership between NATO and Colombia, the ever-increasing US aggression towards Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Bolivia and the general expansion of US bases underway in Latin American and the Caribbean.

As a representative of Britain's movement for peace and solidarity, the contribution of the BPA focused on exposing the often-overlooked role of Britain in the wider US-led imperialist camp. As ever, it is the primary duty of those struggling for

peace in the most reactionary countries, to expose, condemn and defeat their own governments and the big-business interests they represent.

While the British Empire, which held sway over a quarter of the earth, is now gone, the vision of 'Global Britain', with its economic, political, and military tentacles stretching across the world, is not. Thus, our government engages in reckless ventures in its increasingly desperate effort to play a leading role in maintaining a unipolar world under the United States and crush any progressive or socialist advance. The priorities of the US, Britain and their allies include maintaining the encirclement of China and Russia and provoking a New Cold War and arms race with China. The nuclear armed AUKUS alliance announced in 2021 is just one element of these efforts.

The presence of British military bases is of fundamental strategic importance to the United States. In addition to the occupations of the North of Ireland and Las Malvinas, Britain maintains scores of foreign military bases on every continent. As well as being an affront to the dignity and national sovereignty of the countries on whom they are imposed, these bases play a key role in maintaining the infrastructure of reactionary domination across the world.

Special mention was made in the BPA intervention of our country's bases in Cyprus and Diego Garcia. Britain has maintained substantial military bases in Cyprus for decades in its effort to control and project power into the Middle East, occupying the sovereign soil of the Cypriot people. British bases in Cyprus have been fundamental to the West's interventions in the Middle East, including in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria in recent decades.

## Diego Garcia

Similarly, Diego Garcia, in the British occupied Chagos Islands, was given over to the United States for use as a military base on an indefinite basis over half a century ago, following the forced eviction and exile of the whole of the island's population. Despite UN decisions in their favour and the backing of international law, they have been fighting for their right to return ever since. Britain and the US ignore their pleas. For the US, Diego Garcia is a crucial naval and air base allowing them to strike at will across the entire Indian Ocean and into eastern Africa, the Middle East and beyond.

Following the discussion and debate and a rich cultural programme supported by local Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, the Seminar closed with a determination to carry forward and intensify the fight for peace from all present.

The message from this year's Seventh International Seminar to the world was clear: "[we call] on all peace-loving and progressive forces to multiply the actions and initiatives against imperialism and its warmongering and interventionist policies, which continue to seriously endanger the destiny and the future of all humanity." (Final Declaration of the Seminar)

The British Peace Assembly will continue our work, strengthened by the Seminar, as part of our country's broad peace movement, and an integral part of the international movement, to end the special relationship between the US and Britain, withdraw Britain from NATO, close all British foreign bases, and end British involvement in foreign wars. These are the surest and most tangible acts of solidarity we in Britain can make to the oppressed peoples of the world.

**Johnnie Hunter** is a delegate of the British Peace Assembly

**ABOVE:** Activists demanding the closure of Guantanamo Bay, the infamous, illegal US naval base and torture facility, which appropriates the name of what would be an otherwise beautiful and tranquil bay.



# report/women's activism

The global women's movement must be at the forefront of the fight against the war in Ukraine and oppose the increased military spending that will have tragic consequences for the lives and health of people and the environment. It must do everything to bring the current conflict in Ukraine to an end



## ‘Women must be present everywhere and active for peace’



**Skevi Koukouma** reflects on the 17th Congress of the Women's

**International Democratic Federation, the disproportionate impact of war and imperialism on women as well as the crucial role of women in conflict resolution**

**R**ECENTLY, WOMEN from all over the world participated in the 17th congress of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) under the slogan "Women of the world, united for the elimination of inequality and violence and for peace and health on the planet". The conference focused on the catastrophic consequences of the pandemic and the ongoing war between Russia and NATO in Ukraine.

The congress adopted a declaration emphasizing that both these events have affected and destroyed the lives of millions of people, especially women and children. That is why the global women's movement must be at the forefront of the fight against the war in Ukraine and oppose the increased military spending that will have tragic consequences for the lives and health of people and the environment. It must do everything to bring the current conflict in Ukraine to an end.

The catastrophic resumption of the arms race, as well as the stripping away of huge resources that could be invested in the health and well-being of humanity and the planet, rekindles old tensions and opens new ones, and risks even more dire consequences, including a nuclear conflagration.

According to analyses presented during the conference, the roots of the war lie in the reckless attempt of the US and its European allies to expand NATO in order to regain economic and political supremacy and maintain their position as sole "regulator" of the world, holding sway over countries and peoples.

In this context, the weakening of the United Nations system over the last thirty years, and the demise of international means of negotiating and maintaining the balance of power that existed in the past, is an added cause for concern.

The conference included thematic discussions on the consequences of the pandemic and the degraded and commercialized health systems that are particularly felt by women, younger generations, and the masses.

Delegates talked about the extreme polarization of the distribution of resources, both globally and within countries, as well as the criminal concentration of wealth in the hands of a few - while, at the same time, we are witnessing the expansion and intensification of various forms of economic exploitation and the growth of absolute poverty.

### Protection

The protection of health and the environment, stable employment, women's employment and insurance rights, the care and education of children, support for the elderly and disabled with free public services and infrastructure that are a prerequisite for women's equality were also discussed. Their absence leads to the loss of rights that have already been achieved through decades of struggle.

Lack of protection and abuse of young women and girls, child marriages, food crises, poverty and unequal pay for equal work was another focus of the congress. Despite advances in legislation against gender-based violence, impunity and justification for crimes against women and girls, cases of gang rape against women and girls, and cases of unjust abortion convictions, continue to show that rapists go free while women are criminalized. Unfortunately, statistics on child pregnancies and girls giving birth as a consequence of the pandemic restrictions have not yet been recorded. But this was a time in which children gave birth to children.

The congress called for the release of women political prisoners and an end to the persecution of women who defend women's rights and who have opposed women in public office who have pursued neoliberal policies.

There were discussions on ending discrimination based on sexual orientation, race and religion, combating human trafficking, tackling immigration and eliminating the causes that force millions to flee their country because of poverty and war.

We should recognize that the international political scene today, and the instrumentalization of the peoples' desire for security, leads to their exploitation by the imperialist centers, with consequences for their human rights and political and economic independence.

The UN Security Council in 2000 adopted Resolution 1325, aiming at women's participation in conflict resolution processes but also highlighting the consequences and disproportionately negative impact of war and conflict on women and girls, including through rape and other forms of sexual abuse.

The unanimous adoption of such a document was a recognition of both gender inequalities and the contribution women can make to conflict prevention and resolution around the world. Women are victims and continue to experience the most horrific effects of conflicts at the same time as they shoulder a significant part of the burden of rebuilding the social fabric of post-conflict societies.

The effective participation of women in peace processes is a dynamic process of gender mainstreaming and equality. Studies and research have shown that when women are involved in peace processes, agreements are formed that are 35% stronger and are likely to last more than 15 years. This is particularly important in the traditionally male-dominated security sector, in which issues related to the conflict cycle are addressed.

I want to note here that experience has shown that the participation of women in decision-making is not in itself necessarily associated with peace and justice. We should not stand by and watch women unleash wars, initiate conflicts and follow, or even set out, policies that make people refugees or cause death and destruction. Instead, we should move in the direction of equality and equal participation in decision-making. The participation of women in decision-making processes should enable voices to be heard who speak for the millions of women who are raped, killed, become refugees and victims of impoverishment and who suffer physically and psychologically, in every corner of the globe.

With these few words I want to point out that our world is not a progressive world. It is not getting better, and it is not getting easier for people, especially women. Day after day, new forms of exploitation are coming into being and many of them are somehow hidden, masked as development and great opportunities for women.

I have discussed all of the above in order to explain why I hold that the role of the WIDF should be more proactive than ever. The WIDF should develop ever more links, along with institutional interventions according to the major issues for which our countries struggle. The scores of organizations and millions of women whose voices are raised across the globe should be used to put pressure on institutions, governments, and policy makers.

We should undertake initiatives to revitalise WIDF activities at the local, regional, and international level, because today, more than ever, there is a need for a strong WIDF that can represent the women of the world, empower them to continue their struggle and echo their voice so that it is heard in every corner of the globe.

And women must be present and active everywhere for another reason too. If workers are to win their battle, half of them, the women, cannot be missing. If the struggle for world peace is to be won, half of humanity cannot be absent.

**Skevi Koukouma** is secretary general of the Women's Movement POGO-Cyprus, vice president of the Women's International Democratic Federation and member of the central committee of Cyprus' AKEL party



# comment/education

The understanding of Britain's colonial past is essential for recognising the makeup of Britain's diversity, the enriched culture, common history and shared human values. The debate around immigration and nationality would be better informed. The hostile environment against BAME communities and the indifferent treatment of refugees would be exposed for [its] blatant racism



## Coming to terms with Britain's colonial past



**Harsev Bains**  
on the historical amnesia caused by the lack of

education about Britain's colonial past and its consequences - and why the country must come to terms with its brutal history

**T**O TEACH OR not to teach British colonial history as part of the national curriculum is the question being passionately debated, as Wales became the first state to start teaching the subject.

This is welcomed by organisations who have campaigned over many decades for Britain to come to terms with its colonial past. However, it also introduces a degree of nervousness with the assertion by Nadhim Zahawi, Secretary of State for Education, to teach children the benefits of the British empire and for teachers not to focus on the flaws of colonialism.

When organisations like the Indian Workers' Association, the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre centenary committee, supported by Liberation, embarked on the campaign for teaching British colonial history, we did not define such narrow parameters.

For those of us who have grown up and were educated here, this is one significant aspect of British history that was never taught or mentioned. As school children, we learnt more about: the different ages, stone, bronze, iron; the Roman Empire; changes in farming and the industrial revolution; Vasco da Gama 'discovering' India and Columbus losing his bearings while trying to navigate to India landing in America, which led to the indigenous population being branded "Red Indians". Our education made very little reference to Britain's colonial rule or the formation of the Commonwealth. History lessons covered the abhorrent slave trade and the legislation for its abolition in UK and the USA, yet made no mention of indentured labourers shipped from India around the world to do their colonial masters bidding.

As Kevin Courtney, Joint General Secretary of the National Education Union, said during a lecture at the Marx Memorial Library, the curriculum and course material that is taught in schools is not set by teachers or parents; it is conceived and directed by the ideology of Governments.

The progressive manifesto of the Labour party under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn and John

McDonnell made the teaching of British colonial history and an unequivocal formal apology for the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh in 1919 key commitments during the 2019 UK election campaign. This laid out the process of recognising the hidden wars and healing the open wounds of colonial exploitation described by Dr Shashi Tharoor as "Inglorious Empire".

If one chooses to believe surveys, it is reported that one third of us Brits yearn for the return of the Empire. One wonders how this figure would be impacted if even half the truth was taught about the brutal reality of colonialism: The million plus files that remain hidden from public view; UK forced indentured labour in Africa and the Caribbean; the suppression and killing of over 4000 Mau-Mau struggling for freedom in Kenya; the catastrophic man-made famines in India, which occurred under Churchill's orders to feed the war machine and led to horrendous famines, with the Bengal famine being its worst example; the deaths as a consequence of this colonial policy were greater in number than the horrors of the holocaust. For the scholars and researchers amongst the Morning Star readers and supporters of Liberation, there is a vast resource on this subject at the Marx Memorial Library waiting to be explored.

### Empire and diversity

The understanding of Britain's colonial past is essential for recognising the makeup of Britain's diversity, the enriched culture, common history and shared human values. The debate around immigration and nationality would be better informed. The hostile environment against BAME communities and the indifferent treatment of refugees would be exposed for the blatant racism that is perpetuated and promoted by successive Tory ministers.

If the imperial past of the British Empire was as glorious as some would have us believe, it would not be kept hidden from inquisitive open minds.

Teaching the inconvenient truth of an inglorious empire would enable us to come to terms with our past. This would support the need for a museum with the British Empire's people's history. Not the present warehouses, full of stolen goods, being displayed in "museums", gifted from the gratefully oppressed from around the globe.

It's not about reparations, it is much more than that. With improved connectivity and the impact of the pandemic highlighting the frailty of humanity, it would require us to understand the imperfections of the British Empire as well as any positive legacy.

Minister Nadhim Zahawi's recollection of the positive impact of the British civil service upon the lives of people of Iraq in his birthplace of Baghdad is mentioned by the apologists of the oppressive British Empire along with the introduction of railways. Totally omitted are the tens of trillions looted, languages, education, skills and cultures destroyed, the creation of an opaque, triplicate bureaucracy, the accentuation of divisive race, caste and religion to form the perfect conditions of divide and rule.

'The Empire on which the sun never sets' – a saying reflecting the peak of the British empire's global reach - sought to emulate the Roman Empire, whose contribution was depicted in a scene in the spoof comedy "Life of Brian": What have the Romans ever done for us? These same questions must be correctly and seriously addressed.

The historic truth, however uncomfortable, needs to be written, syllabi drawn up, resources constructed objectively with honesty and delivered at schools and workplaces. A month of Black or South Asian history is important, but not enough to uncover centuries of hidden history. We can deprive ourselves and our future generations no more. Liberation requires widespread support to make this a reality. Please join now and become part of the change.

It's time to shatter the romantic illusions of far pavilions and remove all pretence that oppression by a foreign power colonising and ruling over people in other parts of the globe is acceptable in any shape or form. Liberation and its glorious history are testimony to peoples yearning for freedom.

**Harsev Bains** is chair of Liberation's Education Committee and central council member, and National Vice President of the Indian Workers' Association Great Britain.



**Indian Workers' Association GB**  
Established 1938

**In solidarity with Liberation for democracy, equality, peace, social justice and freedom**

National President Dyal Bagri  
General Secretary Mrs Joginder Bains  
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**ABOVE:** A memorial to the victims of the Mau Mau Uprising and other atrocities committed during the colonial era



# book review/Nigeria

Unlike other British colonies in Africa, such as Kenya and Rhodesia, Nigeria was not a settler colony. The rapacious exploiting companies relied on indirect rule – an arguably cheaper way of maintaining control. This led to considerable regional and tribal conflicts combined with tensions between Muslims and Christians. Sadly, these continue in today's Nigeria

## Liberation

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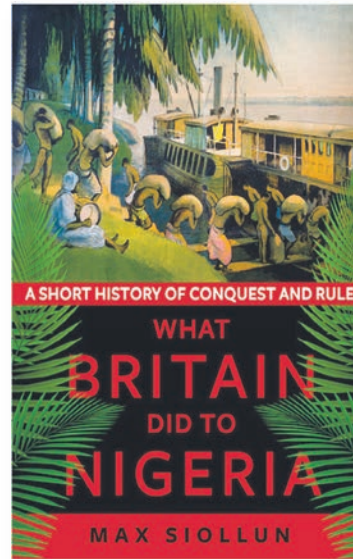
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## What Britain did to Nigeria

Max Siollun's exploration of the history of Nigeria from the 15th century to independence in 1960 puts a different spotlight on Britain's imperial history which has often been written and taught from the perspective of Empire rather than its victims, writes **Bob Newland**



LIKE MANY African states, Nigeria is an artificial construct bringing with it the divisions readily exploited by British Colonialism. It was created from two disparate Protectorates, Northern Nigeria and Southern Nigeria, with no common 'National identity'. Max Siollun's book demonstrates the disaster of British rule and its terrible consequences for the peoples of the region.

Britain's intervention began early in the 19th Century. Palm trees growing wild provided oil to lubricate Britain's rapidly expanding industrial machinery and produced soap to help keep her workers healthy. With the later advent of pneumatic tyres rubber plants became a key crop. Siollun describes how this enterprise was managed by the dregs of British and European society, many transferring directly from the recently banned slave trade.

Nigeria's history is a litany of disputes between trading companies frequently supported by private

armies. Kings and tribal leaders who had in many cases traded their people as slaves were subsequently persuaded to sign away their country, their natural resources and their people's labour for minimal annual allowances. Contracts between rulers and private companies contained amazing clauses such as 'I ... grant and transfer to (The Royal Niger Company) ... my entire rights to the country on both sides of the River Benue .. and the sole right to trade in our territories ... now and forever.'

As the market grew, companies merged becoming bigger and more powerful with the largest eventually becoming Unilever. Occupation and exploitation met resistance. Many workers disputes, tribal revolts and a women's uprising took place and were put down in the most brutal fashion. Unlike other British colonies in Africa, such as Kenya and Rhodesia, Nigeria was not a settler colony. The rapacious exploiting companies relied on indirect rule – an interesting and arguably cheaper way of maintaining control. This led to considerable regional and tribal conflicts combined with tensions between Muslims and Christians. Sadly, these continue in today's Nigeria.

The detail and breadth of this history of Britain's crimes in Nigeria makes the book an invaluable contribution to this ongoing discussion. Even readers with a general appreciation of imperialism's crimes will find Siollun's insight fascinating.

*What Britain Did to Nigeria* by Max Siollun. Published by Hurst and Company £20 Hardback

**Liberation is planning to expand its reviews of new and classic works on colonial history and anti-imperialist struggles in the former colonies of the British Empire. What are your suggestions on essential reads? Plus, if you are an able writer and keen on reviewing books, get in touch. Email us at [info@liberationorg.org.uk](mailto:info@liberationorg.org.uk)**



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Andrew Murray



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