

# ***Marginal Gains***

A PolSoc publication

[marginalgains@solsch.org.uk](mailto:marginalgains@solsch.org.uk)

June 2019



**Winter is coming ...**



# Game of Tory Thrones



By Alyssa Morrison

There were 10 contenders confirmed to be grappling for the Tory throne: backbenchers Boris Johnson, Dominic Raab, Esther McVey, Andrea Leadsom, Mark Harper and Cabinet members Michael Gove, Environment Secretary, Jeremy Hunt Foreign Secretary, Sajid Javid, Home Secretary, Matt Hancock, Health Secretary and Rory Stewart, International Development Secretary.

The deadline for nominations was Monday, 10 June. As well as announcing they were standing, candidates needed to get enough backers to even take part in the vote – the party recently decided to change the rules for the contest in order to speed up the process, and candidates now need the backing of eight colleagues, which Sam Gyimah failed to do.

The first round of voting by Tory MPs took place on June 13th where candidates with fewer than 17 votes were eliminated – Andrea Leadsom, Esther McVey and Mark Harper. The second

round will take place on June 18th and candidates will need 33 votes to proceed further. More rounds of voting will be held, if necessary, until only two candidates remain. A series of hustings around the UK follows for those left in the race, then finally a postal ballot of 124,000 Conservative Party members. The winner then crowned King or Queen of the Conservative party and Prime Minister will be known during the week beginning 22 July.

In the battle for the throne Michael Gove has been experienced some unwanted attention after he revealed he'd taken cocaine at several social events while working as a journalist, describing how he was 'fortunate he wasn't jailed'.

But ultimately what difference will this make in this Game of Thrones? Former Prime Ministers have been open about their drug use, seemingly unaffected by the stigma – David Cameron was applauded for stating that politicians deserved a private life before entering politics after he claimed that drug use

was 'all part of an ordinary university experience'. Likewise, other candidates in the running have admitted to drug use: Boris Johnson, the favourite to succeed Theresa May, admitted he tried cocaine and cannabis as a teenager at Oxford. International Development Secretary Rory Stewart has apologised for smoking opium at a wedding in Iran. Furthermore, Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt has said he might have once tried cannabis in his youth, telling The Times 'I think I had a cannabis lassi (drink) when I went backpacking through India.'

Given how many candidates for the leadership have admitted to drug use in the past, it seems unlikely this outwardly damaging scandal could affect Gove's place in the race, and he may yet survive to challenge Boris for the Iron Throne.



# Rory Stewart

By Guy Tomlinson

Theresa May has officially stepped down from her position as Leader of the Conservative party as of June 7<sup>th</sup>. The race is well and truly on to succeed her as Prime Minister, and currently, there are 10 hopefuls, all proclaiming their magical negotiation powers, or their wishes for no deal, as well as promising to cut taxes and increase public spending, whilst all being fixated on the unrealistic 31<sup>st</sup> October deadline.

This all comes with one exception however; Rory Stewart, Secretary of State for International Development. Rory Stewart, MP for Perineth, is very realistic about the current situation and claims that 'If we really want to change, we have to face reality'. Rory Stewart is a remainer but accepts the need to deliver on Brexit, while opposing a hard line, no deal Brexit, like Dominic Raab. He backed Theresa May's deal, acknowledges that the conservatives do not have a majority for it in parliament, but he also acknowledges that Europe is unlikely to

offer a different deal, and argues that no-deal would be a lethal enigma driven through against the wishes of parliament. He has also made the rational conclusion that a good deal cannot be renegotiated between now and the 31<sup>st</sup> October.

The main question splitting the candidates is obviously how each of them would deal with the current Brexit situation. Candidates like Boris and Gove propose renegotiation with a possible chance of a no-deal, whilst candidates like Raab plan on shutting down parliament and leaving without a deal. Rory Stewart however takes a more democratic approach to the situation, proposing a 'Citizens Assembly'. This would be a grand jury which would help the public 'focus on practical details, and take the party politics out'. He does not guarantee this



will work however it seems the most thoughtful, rational and most democratic solution put forward so far.

Rory Stewart seems the most honest, and most intelligent candidate among the 10 candidates, however, the way the Conservative Party leadership election process works he is very unlikely to end up in No.10.

## No such thing as a 'No Deal Brexit'

By George Bould

When people hear of the option of a 'No Deal Brexit', it incites panic and fear. The image of the 5th largest economy in the world stepping into the darkness without a deal is a worrying to say the least. But this is where people are all wrong.

Actually, a 'No Deal Brexit' includes a lot of deals and agreements between the UK, the EU and the world. The UK would leave the EU on WTO (World Trade Organisation) terms which means we would trade with the world with these rules like the majority of countries do with each other. Currently there are 135 non-EU member countries of the WTO. Of those countries only 58 members have an active trade agreement with the EU. Most of the world trades with the EU on WTO terms including Israel, Singapore, India, Hong Kong and the U.S. and do they really look like they are suffering as a result?

As well as leaving on WTO terms, instead

of nothing, we would also have agreements with the EU on things such as aviation, banking, visas and EU and UK nationals living and travelling to each others countries for example. These have been and are being agreed upon before we leave so chaos in these areas can be avoided.

With the preparation of the UK leaving the EU so far, we already have post-Brexit trade deals with many countries and others have also offered to make trade deals with the UK such as New Zealand, India, Australia, Canada and the USA. The US ambassador to the UK has said that a US-UK trade deal 'would blow all others out of the

water', and Donald Trump has stressed that 'he has Britain's back and will give a UK trade deal to boost prosperity after leaving the EU'.

Overall, a 'No Deal Brexit' actually is a 'Deal Brexit' with the whole world and isn't as scary as people think: it's not a step into the darkness for the UK, but a step into the light!





# Extinction Rebellion

By Lottie Perkins

From what started as an idea between friends in early May 2018, Extinction Rebellion has rapidly become one of the most influential political movements in UK politics in recent times. Founded by activists from the campaign group Rising Up!, Their resistance started on 31 October 2018 when a group occupied Parliament Square to announce a 'Declaration of Rebellion' against the UK government, including speeches by 15-year-old Greta Thunberg. An estimated 1500 people attended the Declaration, and 15 campaigners were arrested for continuing a sit-in outside the Houses of Parliament.

In November activists blockaded the UK's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and glued themselves to the gates of Downing Street. Five days later, in what was dubbed 'Rebellion Day', 6000 protesters gathered to block the five main bridges along the Thames. During what The Guardian described as 'one of the biggest acts of peaceful civil disobedience in the UK in decades', protesters planted trees and coffin shaped holes representing the future of humanity. This created major traffic disruption throughout London and was criticised for slowing emergency services in the area.



***'the key demands of the movement: the government must tell the truth and declare the climate an ecological emergency, act now to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025'***

climate and ecological justice.

Extinction Rebellion are also targeting specific corporations, and on 21 December protesters outside multiple BBC locations caused headquarters to be placed on lockdown. On the 1 April 2019, 12 protestors were arrested after undressing and gluing themselves to the glass in the House of Commons viewing gallery during a debate on Britain's exit of the EU, mirroring acts of the Suffragette movement in 1909. They cited government's negligence on the state of climate change whilst focusing on Brexit as the main reason.

In February 2019, following an Extinction Rebellion petition, Reading Borough Council declared a climate emergency aiming to cut carbon emissions by 2030, and in March Somerset County Council also declared a climate emergency, citing school strikers and Extinction Rebellion as having influence the decision. However, many still believe Extinction Rebellion to be a group of Middle-Class left-wing activists who are taking police attention and resources away from issues such as knife crime in London. But with MPs approving a motion to declare an environment and climate emergency on 1 May 2019 the true influence of Extinction Rebellion should be seen in the coming months.



On the second Rebellion Day, held a week after the first, Extinction Rebellion blocked the roads surrounding Parliament Square and held a mock funeral march outside Downing Streets. Extinction Rebellion co-founder Gail Bradbrook read out a letter to the Queen whilst superglued to Buckingham Palace, citing the key demands of the movement: the government must tell the truth and declare the climate an ecological emergency, act now to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025. In addition the government must create and be led by the decisions of a Citizen's Assembly on



# Is it the end of the line for Change UK?

By Robert Stockdale

Only a few months ago Change UK was sending shockwaves throughout the political scene as a new modern force in British politics with aim of changing the UK political system. However, it has been quite the opposite. Over the last few weeks, Change UK has suffered major blows with six MPs breaking away from the party, following dismal EU election results, and it must questioned whether Change UK will last in the long run.

With major household names such as Chuka Umunna and Luciana Berger leaving the party, it has been put into question whether the only possible path

from this point is to align with the Lib Dems. Whatever the outcome is, it is clear that the new shape of politics which was promised only a few months ago has not been delivered.

Throughout the recent months, there has been an move in support away from the two major parties towards smaller parties. However, Change UK has failed to take advantage. In many ways the Brexit Party and Change UK have many similarities, with both only really having clear policies regarding Brexit. However, Change UK failed to effectively connect with the average voter leading to an



overall vote share of 3.4%; compared to the Brexit Party's 31.6%. It can be suggested that for a party which has 'change' in its name it has failed to put forward any major policies which will lead to real change within the political system. Whatever the future for Change UK may be, it is clear that if it wishes to even survive a new strategy must be deployed - or extinction is an inevitability.

# Why Labour should back a second referendum

By Zaki Hashmi

In 2015, a lifelong Eurosceptic socialist back bench MP, who had never held a position in either the government or shadow cabinet, won the Labour Party leadership race by a convincing margin. A year later, many pro EU MP's within the Labour Party felt that their leader, who had officially endorsed remaining in the EU, had not campaigned sufficiently enough resulting in much of Labour's traditional core working class base to vote leave. A leadership challenge was promptly launched after over a dozen shadow cabinet resignations which Jeremy Corbyn won by an overwhelming margin.

Since then a second referendum campaign has been launched and has very strong support from the young membership of the Labour party (72%) and its MP's. They have argued that Labour's Brexit position, which has shifted from remaining in the EU pre-referendum, to seeking a 'jobs first Brexit' in the 2017 general election, to now an ambiguous stance on whether to

hold a 'confirmatory public vote' on a re-negotiated labour Brexit deal. The current stance at best has left voters confused whether to vote for Labour, and at worst made long standing members and party activists unwilling to vote for their party, as seen in the recent EU elections where Labour actually slipped to third despite topping the polls less than a month beforehand. It is clear that although Labour has been losing some votes to the Brexit party, as around 70% of 2017 Labour voters voted to remain in the 2016 referendum, Labour has lost the majority of its electorate to the

openly pro remain Liberal Democrats and Greens. If Jeremy Corbyn is serious about becoming Prime Minister and implementing radical social and economic policy which this country needs then the Labour party must unequivocally back a second referendum.





# Trump's state visit to the UK

By Katie McCabe

In June 2019, President Trump made a state visit to the UK during which he planned to discuss trade deals with Theresa May, following the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union, as well as meeting, and dining with, the Royal Family. Trump's radical approaches and ideas have caused controversy and uproar, but he did win the 2016 election and the Republicans have survived the mid-term elections of 2018.

Even before Trump had landed in the UK, he had already started to cause tensions to rise. Moments before Air Force One arrived at Stanstead Airport, Trump made a tweet about the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan. Trump and Khan had already had a political feud, and in his tweet Trump labelled Khan as a *'stone cold loser who should focus on crime in London'*. A spokesperson for

Khan said that *'childish insults should be beneath the president of the United States'*. This shows the political feud between the two is still going on.

There have been varying opinions about the US President coming to the UK, both by politicians and the general public. It was announced that the Labour Leader, Jeremy Corbyn, would speak at the protests against Trump's visit to the UK. However, Trump turned down a request from Corbyn to meet with him, describing Corbyn as a *'somewhat of a negative force'*. A Labour spokesman said Mr Corbyn remained *'ready to engage with the president on a range of issues, including the climate emergency, threats to peace and the refugee crisis'*. Corbyn's position is controversial - some argue that Corbyn is standing with the people and has similar views to that of the majority of the population. However, many people think that Corbyn shouldn't



have got involved in the protests against the head of state of our closest ally.

Huge numbers of people turned out for the protests against the President's visit to the UK. In Parliament Square protesters started the day by inflating a giant balloon depicting Mr Trump as a baby, and in Trafalgar Square the protests included a model of Mr Trump seated on a golden toilet.

Part of the agenda of the visit was for the President to talk with Theresa May and, unsurprisingly, a big part of these talks was on the topic of Brexit. Talks covered areas such as trade, investment, security and defence, and some hoped this could help the UK with its withdrawal from the European Union and secure deals with the US.

However, the many protests against the president shows his unpopularity with the British public. Trump labelled these protests as *'fake news'*, even though the protests could be heard from his press conference!

By Tom Carter

Trump visited the UK from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> of June for his first official UK state visit. However this was greatly criticised as a result of the £18 million cost that the visit incurred for the UK government, with additional costs in order to fund extra 10,000 policing and crowd control staff needed to keep peace among the large protests of over 100,000 that







gathered to show their anger over the visit. Protestors included London Mayor Sadiq Khan who labelled the US President 'a 20<sup>th</sup> century fascist' and Speaker of the House John Bercow who refused to invite Trump to address the Houses of Parliament, unlike other heads of state who have visited Britain, including the president of China.

The controversy continued as the anti-Trump protestors used a 6-metre inflatable 'Baby Trump' blimp in order to mock the president, and leader of the opposition Jeremy Corbyn refused to attend the royal banquet being held in Buckingham Palace to host the US president, claiming that it would be wrong to 'roll out the red carpet for a racist and misogynist'. However he then went on to add that he 'would welcome a meeting with president Trump to discuss all matters of interest', which seems to be a contradiction of his previous boycott of meeting the president at the royal banquet.

After the state visit, Trump claimed that May's Brexit deal would most likely kill any future trade deal with the US, and he also predicted that Tory MP Boris Johnson would become the next Conservative party leader. Despite this Theresa May felt that the visit was productive and beneficial to both countries, describing it as 'an opportunity to strengthen our already close relationships', building a strong relationship with the US and the UK, though the thousands who turned out to protest would disagree!

# The rise of the far right in Europe

By Cameron Kilpatrick

Recent events such as Brexit, alongside the huge media coverage of terrorist acts against Western democracies, has fueled a steady rise in nationalism in nations such as the UK and Poland, shown by the sheer number of protest votes in the 2019 European Parliament elections.

This, paired with a growing disillusionment with the Conservative and Labour parties since the beginning of the Brexit negotiations, has pushed many of the electorate into the arms of those, such as the Brexit Party, that promise far more decisive action in regards to giving the electorate what they asked for in 2016. The number of votes they won in the EU elections suggests that as a nation we are slowly turning our backs on globalist establishments such as the EU in favour of a more nationalist approach.

Poland has experienced a very similar situation to the UK since 1989 when Soviet control of Poland was lifted and the country was finally able to elect its own parties. Since 1989, the party in office has been the conservative Law and Justice party, which has inspired a very strong sense of nationalism and in some cases, fascism, within Poland. This was apparent in the late months of 2017 where around 60,000 nationalists and 'Neo-nazis' marched on the streets of

Warsaw, which was tolerated by the government. The Law and Justice party itself has even been labelled as a fascist establishment with their tough policies on immigration and the weakening of individual rights of their people.

Criticisms of the party from other European nations were made even stronger when the government said it refuse to home any refugees. Jaroslaw Kaczynski even suggested that migrants could bring 'epidemics' to Europe and that they carried 'various parasites and protozoa, which don't affect their organisms, but which could be dangerous here' - language that recalled anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda. Despite this, however, Poland is unlikely to see large scale political change anytime soon due to the levels of prosperity that the country is enjoying, with unemployment at its lowest rate since 1990.

Overall, we can see that the far right has grown within the UK and Poland due to rising nationalism alongside the desire for a strong, decisive government. The current inability of UK political parties to do these things paired with the effectiveness of the current Polish government leaves us to question whether nationalism will eventually occupy the entirety of Europe. Will Europe ultimately remove itself from the European Union?

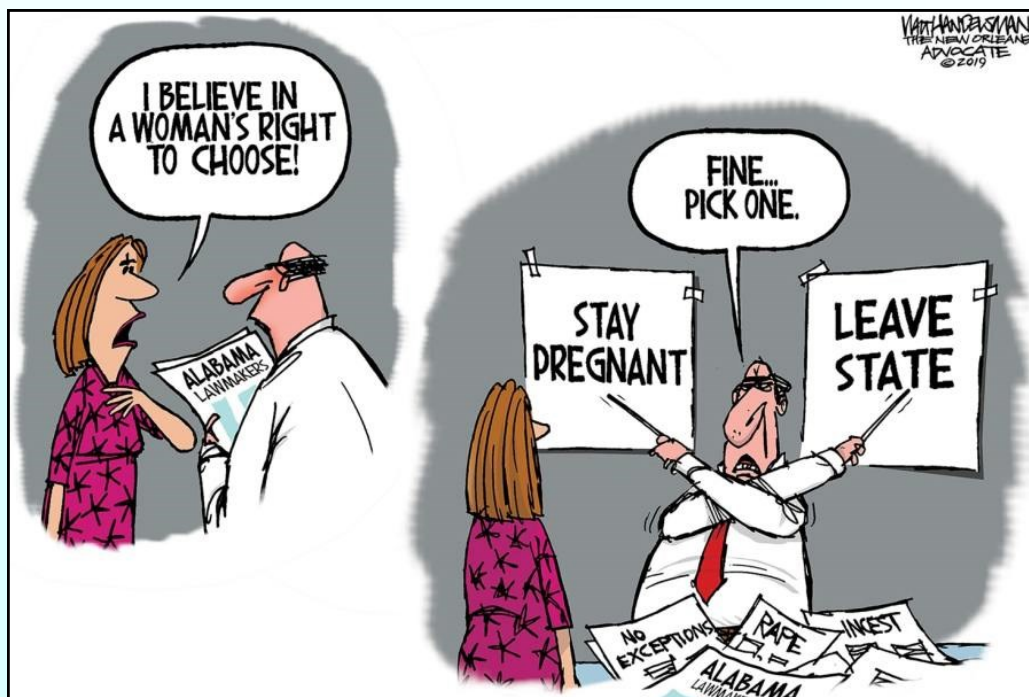




# Abortion: a choice or a crime?

By Laura Jones

Abortion was legalised in the United States in 1973. Meaning that all abortions up to the point of viability (where the baby can survive outside the womb, generally between 24 to 28 weeks) were legal. So far this year more than 20 states have introduced or proposed some form of restriction on abortion. In May, Alabama approved a near outright ban on abortion even in cases of rape and incest, and 7 other states (North Dakota, Iowa, Missouri, Ohio, Kentucky and Mississippi) have passed heartbeat laws which ban abortion as soon as a heartbeat is detected (around 6 weeks) - at this point many women do not even know they are pregnant. Doctors face 10 years in prison for attempting to terminate a pregnancy and 99 years for carrying out the procedure (longer than the sentencing for rape).

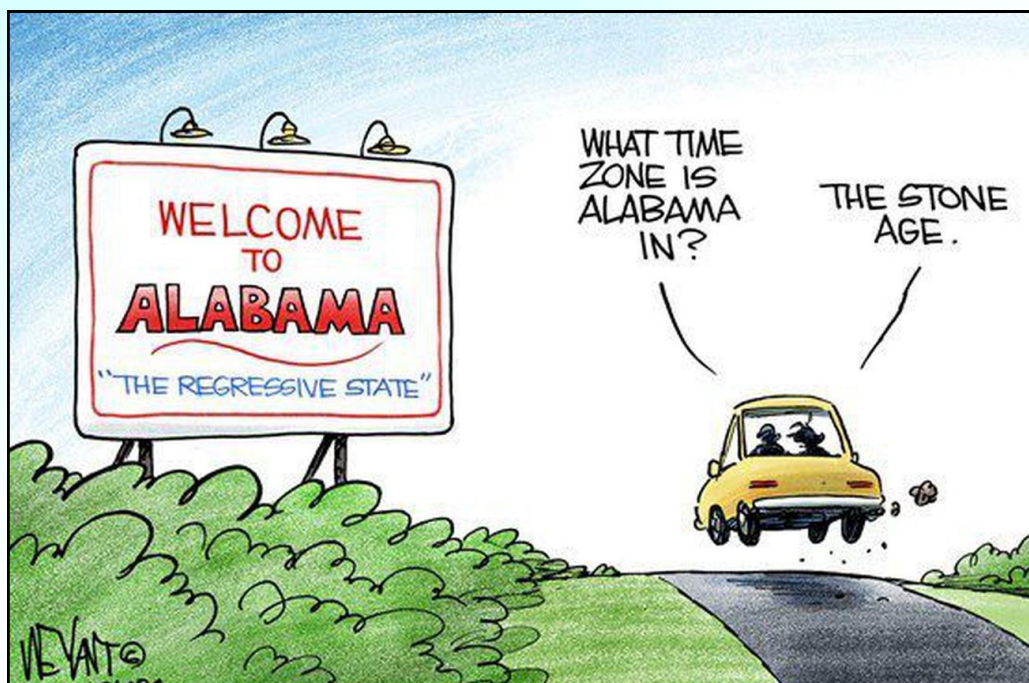


***'heartbeat laws ... ban abortion as soon as a heartbeat is detected (around 6 weeks) - at this point many women do not even know they are pregnant'***

Only male Alabama senators voted to pass this incredibly restrictive law, and the state senate approved this law by 25 votes to 6. This has caused outrage across the world as many women feel it is unfair for men to make decisions on what happens to women's bodies, especially women that have fallen pregnant due to rape or incest. President Trump appointed 2 strongly anti-abortion justices to the Supreme Court, giving Conservatives a 5 to 4 majority, making it more likely that this restrictive law will

be allowed to stand. Very few women spoke in the debate, although the few that did highlighted the fact that this decision about women's bodies was being made by men. One female lawmaker introduced a 'sure-to-fail amendment' to the bill to make it illegal for men to get vasectomies, at which the gallery and overflow watch room upstairs burst into laughter. When the amendment failed, the lawmaker made her point saying 'We have never policed men's bodies the way we do women's.'

'Pro-life' advocates take the stance that everyone has a right to life, and in fact the very first inalienable right that is guaranteed in the US Declaration of Independence is the right to life. And as babies are the most vulnerable members of the human family, they should be protected at all costs. However, Alabama is one of few states in America that still utilises the death penalty and currently has 191 inmates on death row (the 4<sup>th</sup> highest number in America) so it seems incorrect for anti-abortion supporters to blanket themselves with the phrase 'pro-life'. The murder of George Tiller, a doctor who performed late term abortions and was shot dead in Wichita Kansas in 2009, further illustrates that the main argument put forward by anti-abortion supporters is invalid. Does the right to life not apply to criminals or doctors simply carrying out the requests of their patients?





# Clarence Thomas Believes Abortion is Being Used for Eugenic Goals - he's wrong

By Maya Sharma

Following the Supreme Court's 9-0 decision to decline a ruling on an Indiana law signed by Mike Pence as governor in 2016 that outlawed sex-, race- or disability-selective abortions, Justice Clarence Thomas produced a separate 20-page opinion in which he argued that abortion and birth control are being used in pursuit of 'eugenic goals'. In the document, Thomas wrote that 'from the beginning, birth control and abortion were promoted as a means of effectuating eugenics', a movement heavily associated with the Nazi regime and obsessed with the genetic superiority of the white race. In American history, eugenic policies have been presented through laws mandating involuntary sterilizations for certain sectors of the population that were deemed unfit - for example, those who were mentally ill or physically disabled or had criminal records - passed in 32 states during the 20th century.

***'[Thomas] argued that the decision to open a birth control clinic in Harlem, an area of largely African-American population, in 1921 was an attempt to decrease the size of the black community'***

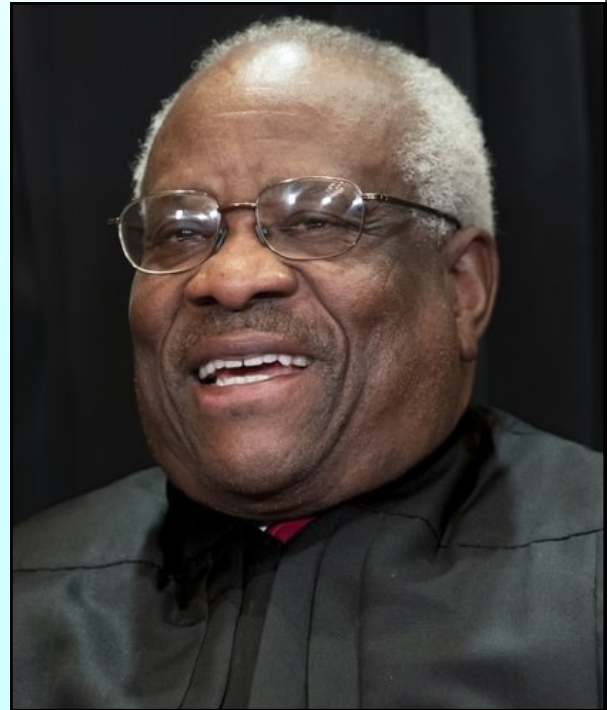
One of the main flaws in Thomas's argument here is the distinction of choice. The pro-choice movement as a whole is concerned with, not a woman's motives for an abortion, but instead that it is her choice as an individual whether to obtain one or not. In direct contrast to this, as demonstrated by the compulsory sterilization programs in the 20th century, eugenicists place no emphasis on choice in favour of their pursuit of a desirable population. It can therefore be argued that anti-abortion sentiment,

rather than the pro-choice movement, finds more common ground with eugenic reasoning with a shared belief in state-controlled reproductive rights. In fact, most eugenicists were opposed to birth control on the grounds that it could be used by wealthy white women, decreasing the population that was perceived to have positive characteristics. Abortion was even less popular-recognised as 'murder' by The American Eugenics Society.

Thomas also cites a higher abortion rate among black women than white women to support his claim 'that eugenic goals are already being realized through abortion', failing to acknowledge that black women in America face multiple barriers in accessing quality, affordable health care, which leads to higher rates of both unintended pregnancy and abortion.

Furthermore, in this opinion document, he ignores the fact that black women are four times more likely to die in childbirth than other women as was pointed out by state Rep. Cora Faith Walker (D) in a floor debate over Missouri's strict new abortion ban.

Another point of attack for Thomas is the eugenic views of Planned Parenthood founder, Margaret Sanger, who promoted the use of birth control to shape a more desirable population). He argued that her decision to open a birth control clinic in Harlem, an area of largely African-American population, in 1921 was an attempt to decrease the size of the black community. However, once again Thomas is focusing on the wrong fact. Through the introduction of birth-control clinics, Sanger gave women control of their lives and a degree of sexual autonomy they had previously been denied - particularly black women



who saw it as a 'vindication of black womanhood' following a long history of oppression [Ayah Nuriddin, a PhD candidate at Johns Hopkins University].

In a time when a woman's right to an abortion in America is increasingly under threat with *Roe v Wade* - the landmark Supreme Court ruling in 1973 that such a right is guaranteed by the constitution - being attacked from all angles by new controversial restrictions, these unsupported statements by such an influential figure are highly critical

These claims of a eugenic conspiracy with sexist, racist and ableist motivations projected on women who choose abortion come from a man who opposed the Affordable Care Act when it came to the Supreme Court in 2015. His views can be seen to be blatantly propelled by underlying misogyny as he seeks to place blame on Planned Parenthood and women who choose abortion while simultaneously failing to improve the root causes of unwanted pregnancies which include America's deeply flawed healthcare system, pervading rape culture and the education system.



# Can the Democrats win in 2020?

By Jack Arrowsmith

Trump's recent victory in negotiations with Mexico is another sign that he is delivering on his campaign promises. Mexico's decision to send 6000 troops to the US border to help prevent illegal immigration validates Trump's use of tariffs (derided by supporters of free trade in his own party), and his confrontational negotiating style. It also emboldens Trump in the ongoing tariff negotiations with China, suggesting a breakthrough which is favourable to the United States is possible. Further, Trump's stimulus package of tax cuts has arguably contributed to the US economy's sustained 3% growth rate. It doesn't matter that Trump has racked up \$1 trillion dollars to the US National Debt as a result of the tax cuts, fundamentally betraying his tea party base. Politically, he is in a strong position for re-election.

Whilst Trump's tariffs policy has hurt the industrial communities in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin who gave him the White House, Democrats appear unable to tap into this resentment, instead focusing on matters of identity politics. Candidate Pete Buttigieg was the latest to repeat the widely debunked claim that Stacey Abrams is the rightful Governor of Georgia, and only lost the 2018 Gubernatorial Race due to widespread voter suppression. Minority turnout in Georgia in the 2018 elections saw a four point increase to 40%, the highest in the state's history. Richard Hasen, an election law expert at the University of California, said there was 'no good evidence' to reinforce Abrams' claims. Preoccupation with these ideas by the mainstream of the Democratic Party contributes nothing towards defeating Trump in 2020, and arguably serves only to alienate the white working class in rustbelt states, whose support they need to recapture.

However, a little-known presidential candidate, businessman Andrew Yang, is choosing to address the economic grievances in rustbelt states that got



Trump elected. His platform is centred around the introduction of Universal Basic Income, dubbed the Freedom Dividend, guaranteeing every American over the age of 18 \$1000/month. Yang's justification for this policy is that 4 million manufacturing jobs have already been automated away in rust belt states, meaning Universal Basic Income is needed to offset the impact on employment. In fact, 44% of American jobs fall into either repetitive manual work, or repetitive cognitive work, making them especially vulnerable to automation in the future.

***'if Democrats actually want to remove the President in 2020, they need to start by regaining the disaffected rustbelt voters who supported him in 2016'***

The Freedom Dividend would arguably increase the dynamism in the American economy, allowing low wage America time to find jobs with better wages, by giving them a degree of economic

security. This includes allowing them to retrain and join the more lucrative service sector. The effectiveness of retraining low skilled workers can be seen in Pittsburgh, where the old coal and steel industries has largely been usurped by a thriving healthcare sector, providing higher wages and better working conditions for its workforce. However, this kind of economic transformation can only begin to occur in rustbelt states with the safeguard which Yang's Freedom Dividend provides.

Democrats are rightly outraged by President Trump's character and ideology. His Conservative appointments to the Supreme Court have triggered sweeping curtailment of abortion rights in US states, contradicting the Liberal values the Democratic party was founded upon. But if Democrats actually want to remove the President in 2020, they need to start by regaining the disaffected rustbelt voters who supported him in 2016. This can only be done by following Yang's lead, in giving clear policy proposals that will provide them with tangible improvements in their economic circumstances.



# Venezuela – a country in crisis

By Toby Bagshaw

In Venezuela two rival politicians, President Nicolas Maduro, and opposition leader Juan Guaidó are claiming to be the country's legitimate leader, while millions of people are starving in a humanitarian and economic nightmare. From 1999 to 2013 the leader was Hugo Chávez who was very popular with the people due to his sweeping social reforms. The problem with these reforms was that Venezuela was over-spending and was accumulating huge debt. Currently it owes about \$65 billion US in outstanding bonds, in addition to \$150 billion US of other debts owed by government and state companies.

90% of Venezuela's exports are oil, and the drop in oil prices which began in 2008 have made it much more difficult for Venezuela to maintain a stable economy and pay off its debt. Foreign demand for the Bolívar to buy Venezuelan oil crashed, the currency's value plummeted and the Venezuelan economy has been in freefall ever since.

The government solution was to print more money. However, as the oil price continued to fall, international investors began looking elsewhere, driving the value of the Bolívar even lower. In these conditions, printing more money simply added to the supply of currency, pushing the value down even further. This cycle is what causes hyperinflation.



To protect themselves, Venezuelans started to convert their savings into a more stable currency, like the US dollar. This lowered the value of the Bolívar even further. The government responded by issuing currency controls and made it difficult to get permission to exchange Bolívars into US dollars. However, US dollars were still available on the black market and as the crisis deepened more and more Venezuelans looked to switch

their Bolívars into US dollars. In 2018 Maduro devalued the Bolívar by 95%, the largest currency devaluation in modern world history, and tied the new currency to the price of oil. Maduro's government hoped Venezuelans would believe in their own currency and not exchange it for dollars. But within weeks of the devaluation it was clear ordinary Venezuelans had not been convinced. They had no reason to be, given the government's increasing authoritarianism, including interfering with the constitution and elections, signalled it was not to be trusted.

Meanwhile, in Venezuela...



At the prospect of another six years of Maduro government and with the economy in freefall, the head of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, declared himself interim president on 23 January 2019. Mr Guaidó argues that Mr Maduro is a 'usurper' and that the presidency is therefore vacant, in which case the constitution calls for the head of the National Assembly to step in. The two sides have been locked in a stand-off since January with Mr Guaidó trying to sway the military, a key player in the country, to switch its allegiance. On 30 April 2019, he called on the security forces to join him in the 'final phase' of the removal from power of Mr Maduro, a move the government said was 'an attempted coup'. Currently Mr Maduro remains in power, but only just.



# Marginal Gains

A PolSoc publication

marginalgains@solsch.org.uk

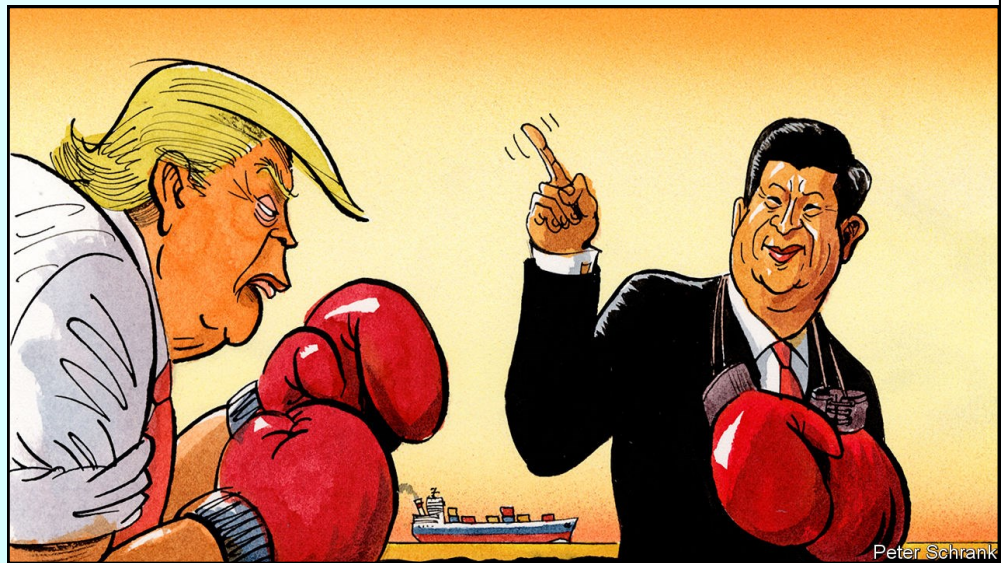
June 2019

## Are China and the USA destined for war?

By Henry Davies

The publication of 'Destined for War' 2 years ago seemed to endorse the growing perception that a second Cold War has started between the world's two most powerful superpowers, China and America. Destined for war was written by Graham Allison a Harvard trained veteran of US national security policy who coined the phrase the 'Thucydides trap' in this publication. This put forwards the idea that war is inevitable when a rising power threatens to displace a ruling power. He derived this idea from an ancient Greek historian's observation that war was inevitable between Sparta and Athens because of the growth of Athenian power and the fear this caused in Sparta. But are we in the same predicament at this present moment?

The trade war President Trump launched last year is about more than unfair trade policies and the loss of large sections of the US manufacturing sector. It was

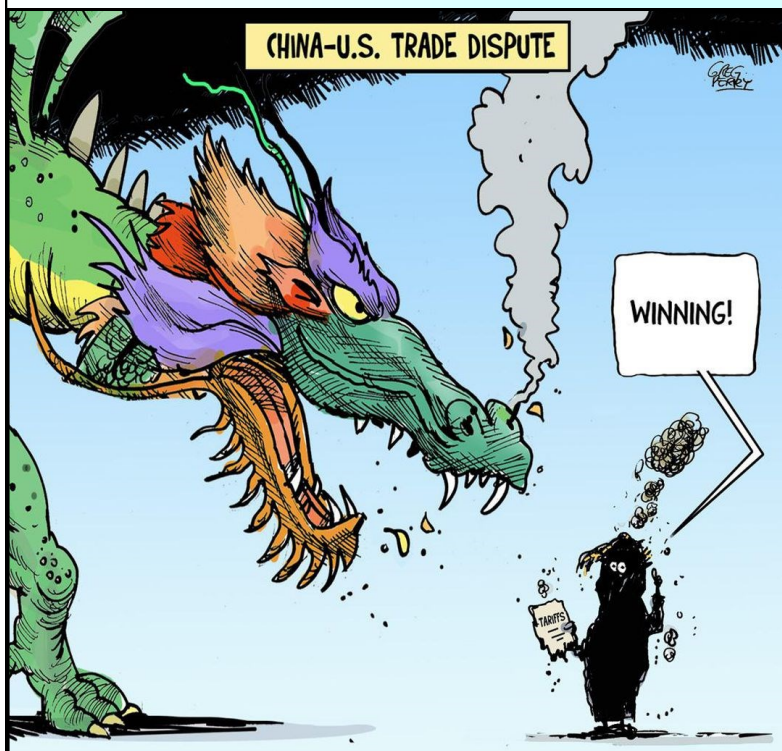


recently escalated further when he imposed new tariffs on Chinese goods after failing to reach an agreement over trade. It highlights the ongoing competition between the 2 countries. Various US administrations hoped that once China opened up and grew

5G networks, artificial intelligence and even quantum computing. Supremacy in these areas will likely lead to dominance over the other in the future.

On top of this there is also an old-fashioned arms race going on, with China stockpiling next generation carrier sinking missiles, building up its arms industry, developing next generation weaponry like hypersonic missiles and also building up carrier strike groups. This worries US officials who fear that a rising China is undermining the USA's ability to project power and therefore remain the dominant global superpower.

But what worries the majority is that China is now a match for America in terms of GDP, as I saw with my recent visit to China where I witnessed their sprawling economy. The USSR, the former adversary of the US in a Cold War never got close, but China seems a much more formidable antagonist than the USSR ever was, both demographically and technologically. Whilst it was not inevitable that the West would win the last Cold War, it remains far from clear whether it will win this one or even if a winner will emerge.



economically the growth of middle class would help ignite reform and change for the better, so therefore as a result conflict between the two nations would not occur. But this has not been the case, and as a result the issue on how to deal with China is one of the rare issues that often receives bipartisan support in the US. The US and China are now in a tech war over