

'Decline and Fall of the West?'

We are in danger of forgetting the lessons that made Western Europe one of the most prosperous and energetic regions on earth, according to Ewen Stewart in an article for *Global Britain* – one of our Affiliated Organisations.

The freedom to think for ourselves is rapidly giving way to more and more intrusive government, squeezing out individual enterprise, endeavour and responsibility in the process.

Worryingly, the drift towards big government is as pronounced in the UK as it is anywhere else. Part of the reason for leaving the European Union was to arrest this slide towards endless, ongoing centralisation. Sadly the very reverse appears to be happening.

If the British government cannot trust people 'to take back control' of their own lives then what was Brexit for? Government after all is only the manifestation of the collective will of millions of individuals.

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"Today our debate fixates on the minutiae of regulation and the detail of centralised control and the false God of egalitarianism which so stifles innovation and creativity."

Only by setting people free do we stand a chance of re-capturing that sense of hope and optimism which propelled Europe to the top of the international league in the first place.

The article can be read in full below, with a link to the original beneath it.

We must remind ourselves the origins of wealth do not happen by accident

By Ewen Stewart

A FREE SOCIETY is a society where the members are, within agreed norms, pretty well able to live their lives as they see fit. That agreed norm does not mean tyranny of the majority, or more likely tyranny of the machine. Keynes believed that a state of over 30 per cent of GDP was incompatible with freedom. For once he was right!

This should not be controversial. We are all different. Some people like to live in river boats, others like the colour pink and others like cricket. In my street of 30-odd houses every door is a different colour. Every single door, all lovingly selected by the owner. It is a microcosm of humanity. That difference should be celebrated and encouraged, not harmonised, or controlled as regulation, tax and central spending generally does.

In this land, as in much of the western world, we have generally been fortunate that for centuries our rulers have normally let us get on with our own lives with relatively low levels of interference. It has been a mutually beneficial contract providing stability, relative happiness and a degree of prosperity largely unmatched elsewhere.

When we start to consider why the continent of Europe, that cold rather underpopulated place in medieval times started, during the Renaissance, to become the world's pre-eminently

prosperous region we must ask why it was thus from such an unpromising start.

China comprised a reasonably unified empire a thousand years ago with a massive population, similarly southeast Asia had the population advantage, while the technically advanced Arab world was far ahead of Europe in terms of mathematics, understanding of science and art. Europe did not seem in the running.

How then did it come to pass that the continent of Europe became the world's most prosperous, architecturally beautiful and artistically and scientifically the undisputed leader for centuries? Was it luck? If it was not luck what were the lessons and how are they being applied today?

Medieval Europe enjoyed a strange tension with cultural similarity and understanding but with political decentralisation. Some states were well run, others less so.

Europe was unified under Christendom but it was not politically unified. Quite the opposite. It comprised a myriad of competing states and principalities. Renaissance Italy was a hotchpotch of city states all bidding to outdo each other in architectural splendour, art, glory and occasionally the latest techniques of warfare.

As time went on the baton passed from Italy to Portugal then to Spain. France tried hard and at times marched across the continent but Holland and then Great Britain become paramount. Since 1920 and certainly since 1945 the US, which historically comes from the same roots, took over the leadership role. Today it remains thus, but with increasing uncertainty and fading authority and confidence. It seems like around 460AD.

The dynamic competition and often specialisation between principalities and nation states led to advancement and prosperity. It aided trade and the transfer of ideas. Blessed with an overarching set of moral rules the private and

commercial sphere was left to individual endeavour. It flourished.

Perhaps some innovation came down to patronage from the local monarch but increasingly post-Renaissance a merchant class grew followed by an overwhelming global lead in science, philosophy, art and culture. This unpromising continent came to dominate world thinking in almost every sphere from science to art, from medicine to warfare, from legal systems and the rule of law to philosophy.

Today some seem embarrassed by this, claiming we imposed our will on others and exploited them. We must therefore recant or even pay reparation. How silly. Well of course there were some terrible things but the gift of art, science, medicine, the rule of law, an impartial judiciary and free markets to a world where the base position for many centuries was one of conflict, arbitrary power and often grinding poverty has been immense.

Western Christendom has made the world a better place, with the balance sheet aiding global human prosperity being hugely positive. Indeed some of these states are beginning to learn the lessons of what made the West successful and are applying them increasingly successfully themselves. There is no question, however, the West's lead is in structural decline.

Today it is not obvious our lead will continue. With alarming speed we are unlearning the great legacy which has been given to us. We are tossing the common rule book based loosely on traditional Christian values away, we are weakening the power of the family and increasingly interfering in the business and personal sphere. Our political elites centralise at both the micro and macro level and they believe they know best.

The degree of failure of Governments is staggering in almost every respect. Perhaps it has always been thus but at least in the 19th century Government largely did not interfere in the

personal sphere. Taxes were low, families were sovereign, able to believe what they wished to believe and act within a very loose framework as they saw fit. This rules-based Darwinism resulted in extraordinary energy and creativity, with the vast majority benefiting. Witness the rise of the great Cities and civic society throughout the UK.

Today more and more are dragged into the clutches of the state which seeks to order and control lives to *their idea* of what is right, not yours. It so obviously goes against human nature but our power-crazed politicians constantly think they know best.

I have just spent a couple of days around Westminster. I had the privilege of meeting a number of splendid people who 'get it.' I am sorry to say the vast majority don't, not remotely; and we are now faced with our policy makers panicking trying to right their previous errors with ever more extreme measures. The more they try with their centralised approach the more the ship lists.

So, not content with increasing the size of the State from a third to a half over the last 20 years, increasing the national debt five-fold over the same period and debasing our coin through money printing, let's look at some of this week, just this week's, crazy ideas.

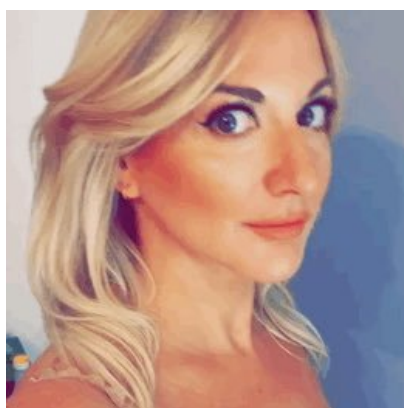
The attempted destruction of one of the country's few remaining centres of excellence, private education through egregious proposed taxation, and then quotas discriminating against the best and brightest for so-called contextual offers; proposals to direct private pension fund investment to the next crazy Government idea of *net zero* infrastructure projects; directions to banks when to foreclose or not; proposals to increase council tax in Scotland for the higher brackets by over 22 per cent, proposals to charge people with bigger gardens more for their water even when water is already metered – and all that was just this week.

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Today our debate fixates on the minutiae of regulation and the detail of centralised control and the false God of egalitarianism which so stifles innovation and creativity.

We are tossing aside the pillars that made us free, affluent and prosperous – for the whims of policymakers fixated by short term expediency and cowardice. As others create and grow we urgently need to rediscover the bedrock of what made our civilisation prosper so mightily. The message is not complex. It is simply to create an environment where the people are free to choose their own path within the constraints of the civilised rule of law, to encourage competition and creativity – and the rest will follow.

– By Ewen Stewart for Global Britain, 14/07/23



‘The Independence Documentary’

Together with our partners at Facts4EU.Org, we’ve organised a TV-style documentary with a stellar line-up of well-known politicians and all kinds of interesting people, young and old, men and women, white and ethnic origin, presented by Alexandra Phillips. Alex will be known to many readers as an

ex-GB News presenter and a frequent sight on everything from Question Time to Talk TV. We have finished filming – now we have the long task of editing, if we can get some extra funding. This is going to be big!

Please help today if you can: [click here to read more](#)

About the author: *Ewen Stewart is a City economist whose career has spanned over 30 years. He is director of Global Britain and a co-founder of [Brexit-Watch.org](#).*

The original article can be found [here](#).

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