

[The established media peddle plenty of alternative facts](#)

It is fascinating to see the traditional media wrestling with other ways of looking at the world. They don't seem to like competitive opinions. It is high time some of their own alternative facts were exposed to criticism.

The media regularly tells us that the Conservatives in government cut public spending. If you look at the figures you find that it climbed in real terms from £249bn to £292 bn under Mr Heath, from £326 bn to £437 bn under Mrs Thatcher and Sir John Major, and has risen again under Mr Cameron. (2011-12 constant price basis). The OBR forecasts further real growth this Parliament. The media instead usually takes a figure about the proportion of National Income, so that if the private sector grows faster than the state sector they can call this a cut! They never use the cash figures because these have surged.

The media also regularly tells us Sir John Major's government fell because the party was split on Europe. If you look at the polls you see the Conservative ratings plunged when the economic damage of the European Exchange Mechanism became clear when we were forced to abandon that crazy policy and never picked up. All the rows over Maastricht and the Euro made no difference to the poll ratings.

The media often present Treasury and Other consensus economic forecasts as if they were reality. They rarely ask why these bodies failed to forecast the Exchange Rate Mechanism recession, the Banking Crash recession or the Euro crisis. Now they should ask why these bodies did forecast a 2016-17 recession for the UK which visibly is not happening.

The media love running Big business threatens to pull out stories about their presence in the UK if we resist features of the EU. They ran these stories when we decided to stay out of the Euro and were wrong then. Now they run them about leaving the EU, and were wrong about the short term impact and will doubtless be wrong about the long term as well.

[Amid unprecedented needs, UN and partners launch \\$1.6 billion aid appeal for South Sudan](#)

13 February 2017 – Against the backdrop of dramatic deterioration of the humanitarian situation in South Sudan due to a combination of conflict,

economic decline and climatic shocks, the United Nations together with relief partners have appealed for \$1.6 billion to provide life-saving assistance and protection to 5.8 million people across the country.

“We are facing unprecedented needs, in an unprecedented number of locations, and these needs will increase during the upcoming lean season,” said Eugene Owusu, the Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan in a news release issued by the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Humanitarian organizations estimate that some 7.5 million people across South Sudan are now in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, including some 3.4 million people who had been forced to flee their homes since conflict began in December 2013.

While disturbing accounts of violence and atrocities, including sexual violence, continue to be reported, food insecurity and malnutrition have skyrocketed. Furthermore, the risk of famine looms over thousands of people in conflict-affected communities and food deficit areas.

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“With needs rising rapidly, we have rigorously prioritized the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan to target those who most urgently require assistance and protection,” added Mr. Owusu.

Under the Plan, 137 aid organizations, including 62 non-governmental organizations (an increase of 55 per cent over the number in 2016) aim to respond to the most urgent life-threatening needs of the target population. The objectives include:

- Saving lives and alleviating the suffering of those most in need of assistance and protection
- Protecting the rights and upholding the dignity of the most vulnerable
- Supporting at-risk communities to sustain their capacity to cope with significant threats

Swift action during the dry season essential

According to OCHA, delivering supplies in the country depends, in a large part, on good weather conditions.

Humanitarian organizations strive to maximize the window of opportunity provided by the dry season to deliver supplies by road. Once rain set in – usually in May – most roads become impassable and supplies must be delivered by air, multiplying the cost of the humanitarian operation, which is one of the largest and most complex in the world.

“It is imperative that this appeal is funded early, and funded fully, so that the aid workers deployed across South Sudan can respond robustly and

rapidly,” said Mr. Owusu.

“I appeal to the international community, which has given so generously to this young country, to support us now. If we fail to act swiftly, lives may be lost.”

[UN and partners launch multimillion dollar appeal for DR Congo](#)

13 February 2017 – The United Nations and humanitarian partners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have appealed for nearly \$750 million to aid 6.7 million people this year.

“It is vital that the world does not forget the urgent and massive humanitarian needs,” said Rein Paulsen, Head of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the country.

The 2017 appeal is for \$748 million, as part of a new three-year action plan “to respond to the humanitarian needs of millions of civilians affected by one of the world’s most acute and protracted crises,” according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The three-year strategy aligns with development plans created by national authorities, the United Nations system, the World Bank and other bilateral partners.

The appeal also targets the needs of more than 2.1 million displaced people, including half-a-million of children under the age of five suffering from acute malnutrition, according to OCHA. Hundreds of thousands of people are also facing measles, cholera and other diseases.

“While over 60 per cent of the humanitarian needs are located in the eastern part of the country, western and central provinces suffer from generalized poverty that calls for solutions that go beyond humanitarian assistance,” OCHA said.

In addition to the needs of the Congolese, violence in the country is also affecting refugees from South Sudan living the north-eastern part of the country.

PM extends greetings on World Radio Day

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1,000 drones perform spectacular formations in Guangzhou



Drones get ready to take off for a performance in Guangzhou, capital city of south China's Guangdong Province, on Saturday, Feb. 11, 2017. [Photo: ycwb.com]

A record number of 1,000 Chinese drones performed stunning formations in Guangzhou of south China's Guangdong Province on Saturday night to celebrate the Lantern Festival, the last day of the Chinese New Year holiday.

According to local news portal ycwb.com, the drones formed six different formations during a 15-minute performance against the night sky near Guangzhou's landmark Canton Tower. The performance was held concurrently with a concert.

All the drones were made by Chinese producer EHang and controlled by only one computer.