

# Rights, wrongs and reconciliations

Audio or video recordings of most British Academy events are made available via the Academy's website shortly afterwards ([www.britishacademy.ac.uk/events/](http://www.britishacademy.ac.uk/events/)). The wide range of recordings available is demonstrated by two events held on 8–9 June 2016, in the British Academy's season on 'With Great Power: Political leaders, popular legacies': Professor Joseph Nye FBA spoke on 'America's role in the world – an election year appraisal'; and the discussion entitled 'Thinkers for our time: Mary Wollstonecraft' considered the enduring influence of the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

In addition, some specially recorded conversations involving Fellows of the British Academy have been made available via the Academy's SoundCloud page (<https://soundcloud.com/britishacademy/>). Three examples are discussed further below.

## UK and European Convention on Human Rights

In a conversation recorded in March 2016, Professor David Feldman FBA (Rouse Ball Professor of English Law, University of Cambridge) talked to Professor Colm O'Connell, Professor of Constitutional Human Rights Law, University College London. They discussed the UK and the European Convention of Human Rights – including the ideas that have been floated recently for replacing the Human Rights Act with a Bill of Rights, or even withdrawing from the European Convention itself. Professor O'Connell said: 'That [idea of withdrawing] is often seen as a diplomatic nuclear option. That would be the UK repudiating a major international human rights treaty which has shaped and positively influenced the development of the protection for human rights across Europe and the wider world for decades. ... It's very difficult to point to an instance of a well-established democratic country choosing to repudiate an international human rights treaty instrument.'



## Tom Devine on Scotland past, present and future

Sir Tom Devine FBA, Sir William Fraser Professor Emeritus of Scottish History and Palaeography at the

University of Edinburgh, was interviewed by Alun Evans (Chief Executive of the British Academy) about his book *Independence or Union: Scotland's Past and Scotland's Present* (Allen Lane, 2016). The conversation reveals how the omission of a 'devo max' option on the Scottish referendum ballot paper was a tactical error by the British government. Recorded just before the Scottish Parliament elections in May 2016, the discussion correctly anticipated that the Scottish Labour Party would be squeezed into third place, and analysed what has gone so wrong for Labour in Scotland. Sir Tom asked: 'Where does Labour go in terms of political response to this horror? They can't go left, because those clothes have already been stolen by the SNP. And they know – given Scotland's conservatism – that they aren't go too far left. ... Don't forget that, if you look at the whole of the 20th century, the Conservative Party was clearly and unambiguously the most popular party in Scotland. Once the memory of what occurred in the 1980s and early 1990s starts to fade, there is no reason why they [the Conservatives] should not flourish.'

## David Porter on Reconciliation, Identity and Faith

In March 2016, Professor Marianne Elliott FBA (former Director of the Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool) recorded a conversation with Canon David Porter, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Director for Reconciliation (pictured). They talked about the Northern Ireland peace process, and about David Porter's current role. To set the context of the latter, he explained: 'The reality is that 80 per cent of Anglicans live in situations of conflict or post-conflict societies. The average Anglican is a 30-year-old African woman, with three or four children, living in a village in the bush, probably with a husband who is off fighting in a war or is dead or is an economic migrant, and she is a subsistence-level farmer. We look at the Church of England and all its grandeur – Westminster Abbey – and we forget that that is the average picture of an Anglican in this global community of 85 million people, and many of them face these situations of conflict.' ■