

## The Scottish Enlightenment, 30 years at the UN, and human rights in today's world

*Talk given by Andrew Gilmour at Panmure House, Edinburgh, January 16<sup>th</sup> 2020.*

Thank you for that kind introduction. What a pleasure it is for me to be in Edinburgh. Though I've never actually lived in the city, I feel in a sense I'm coming home. As a family, we were here for long time. My father is buried just up the road in the roofless chapel at Craigmillar Castle, alongside his father, grandfather and many other Gilmours. The principal joy of leaving the UN, after 30 years, just two weeks ago, is the knowledge that we'll be spending far more time at our home in Dumfriesshire and indeed here than we could ever do before.

But there is also of course something very special about being in this beautiful house. I've always felt a certain degree of kinship with Adam Smith. His Scottishness; his tutoring of an ancestor of mine; his *Wealth of Nations* being a set text at university and which I dutifully slogged through; and indeed that we were both at what was historically the Scottish college at Oxford, Balliol, that was established by the mother and father of one of our least successful kings. Though I'm afraid we at Balliol in the early 80s weren't on the whole huge fans of Smith. Not that it was his fault, and I will come to that in a minute.

More importantly, for him, Balliol and he didn't exactly hit it off at the time. In his 2018 book, *Adam Smith, Father of Economics* Jesse Norman wrote that Balliol became an academic and political powerhouse in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but it was far from that then. In Smith's day, Balliol was "Jacobite, Tory, factional, costly and Scotophobic; and Adam Smith was Presbyterian, Whiggish, sociable, impecunious and a Scot. It is perhaps surprising that he lasted there as long as he did."<sup>1</sup>

But why didn't we think that much of him 250 years later? As I've said, it wasn't his fault. I think that probably the two most famous books ever written on Scottish soil – in this house and on Jura respectively – were Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, and George Orwell's *1984*. Strangely, other than their global renown, they share something else. Each over time has been hijacked by right-wingers in the US and UK for their own purposes, and surely provoking a grave-turning reaction in each case. *1984*, despite the socialist sympathies of its author, by ferocious Cold Warriors, neo-conservatives and Reaganites (though I won't add Trumpsters as I doubt many have read him). And *Wealth of Nations* by some pretty heartless factory-owners, free-marketeers and monetarists.

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<sup>1</sup> Jesse Norman, *Adam Smith, Father of Economics*. Basic Books, New York 2018. p. 24

Indeed, in the 1980s, Mrs Thatcher told the Scottish Conservative conference, “I’m sometimes told that the Scots don’t like Thatcherism. Well I find that hard to believe – because the Scots invented Thatcherism, long before I was thought of”. She was thinking primarily, of course, of the distinguished tenant of this fine house. And the frequent invocations of Smith by her, and also by her economic gurus (Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman) explain why Smith was far less of a hero at Balliol, traditionally the most left wing of Oxford colleges, when I was there – which coincided with a time of major social tension in the UK, mass unemployment, the miners’ strike, and a full-blown assault on the trade unions, the NHS, universities, local government and the railways – often justified by Smith’s writings on the desirability of limited government. (What Mrs. Thatcher didn’t say was that she and Smith had something else in common, which is that Oxford refused to give them honorary degrees. Which in Smith’s case was a travesty.)

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But right-wing eulogies of Smith and his fellow Scottish Enlightenment philosophers are misplaced. They – and he – played a key role, and one that is largely unrecognized, in the development of ideas that have contributed to human rights thinking and practices as we know them. Smith and David Hume are the most renowned of the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, but it was Gershon Carmichael, 51 years older than Smith, who did most to advance thinking in what we call human rights (and he called Natural rights).

Two months ago, a distinguished former colleague and friend of mine, Bertie Ramcharan, gave a lecture here in Edinburgh on the human rights idea in the philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment.<sup>2</sup> This is not my primary topic today, though I was asked to speak a bit about it. So I will quickly summarize the contribution of these men: they were well ahead of their time.

For instance, they denounced slavery in clarion terms that make good reading even today – as an abhorrent violation of the dignity and rights of fellow humans, and excoriating the utter hypocrisy of slavery’s supporters who claimed to be such good Christians. Their arguments were later used by William Wilberforce and others who achieved the abolition of the slave trade in 1807.

These Scottish thinkers were advocates of universal rights (men, women, children, nationals, foreigners – even of criminals). They saw the role of society as being to secure

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<sup>2</sup> Lecture at the Royal Society of Edinburgh, 20 November 2019 by Bertrand Ramcharan. I am indebted to him for much of the section that follows, especially on Gershon Carmichael.

justice and rights for all, and realized that the protection of rights depended on law and the legal system. He balanced the rights and liberties of individuals with the duties owed by those individuals to society, insisting on that. (And I can't help noting the contrast between Smith and his friends' emphasis on the importance of society with Mrs Thatcher's most well-known, or infamous, quotation: "There is no such thing as society.")

Smith in particular introduced new perspectives on freedom, combining liberty with an emerging commercial society and the rise of democratic capitalism. But his views on capitalists were far more complex than his admirers and detractors understood and depicted them. By a "strange injustice"<sup>3</sup>, the man who warned that grasping 18<sup>th</sup> Century industrialists "generally have an interest to deceive and even to oppress the public" came to be quoted in efforts to block almost every effort to reform the atrocious working conditions of the time, such as the shackling of children to factory machines for 12 hours, on the grounds that passing laws to end such practices somehow interfered with the sacrosanct free market.

Brought up as so many of us were in the traditions of Scottish exceptionalism (Wallace and Bruce, or Scott, Livingstone and Fleming) or its British counterpart (Alfred the Great, Francis Drake, Nelson and Churchill) – and then lived for decades in many other countries all of which insist on their own heroic exceptionalism – I have no desire to promote it still further. Having said that, I do think there is good reason for us to be seriously proud of the Scottish Enlightenment philosophers for their far-sightedness, decency and progressiveness in advancing human rights. Including even some rights that don't appear in what for me is the noblest document of all time, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, signed in 1948 (ironically at the exact moment Orwell was composing his dystopian nightmare on the island of Jura).

One example of their far-sightedness that surpassed even the Universal Declaration two centuries later was on the rights of future generations and the protection of the environment, with Carmichael stressing "the right to prevent anyone from needlessly spoiling things provided by nature for human use, particularly if others might enjoy the long use of the right in question".<sup>4</sup>

Before leaving our highly civilized friends of the past, I'd like to make one more point about Smith. I'm not claiming he was a great clairvoyant – after all he didn't even foresee the Industrial Revolution, even though one could say it was rather his subject, and even though its first buds (if that isn't too bucolic a term for those "dark satanic mills") were appearing even as he wrote *Wealth of Nations*.

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Heilbroner, *The Worldly Philosophers*, New York, (revised ed 1980), p.54

<sup>4</sup> Ramcharan *op cit*

But in some broad-stroke ways, one could actually claim that he envisaged the colonial empires, their rise and fall, decolonization since the 1960s, even post Second World War mutual deterrence, and the United Nations. Listen, please to this extract from his most famous book. At the time when the Americas and East Indies were discovered, “the superiority of force happened to be so great on the side of the Europeans that they were enabled to commit with impunity every sort of injustice in those remote countries. Hereafter, perhaps, the natives of those countries may grow stronger, or the Europeans may grow weaker, and the inhabitants of all the different quarters of the world may arrive at the equality of force which, by inspiring mutual fear, can alone overawe the injustice of independent nations into some form of respect for the rights of one another”. That seems to be extraordinarily visionary. And it brings me to the second part of what I was asked to talk about tonight: the UN and how it has changed.

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30 years ago, I started working for the UN – it happened to be the precise week of the fall of the Berlin Wall, which ushered in the end of the Cold War. The Cold War led to horrendous proxy hot wars, while the UN Security Council was paralysed by Cold War rivalries from doing what it was supposed to do in terms of preventing and ending conflicts. For a brief moment – as I occupied the organization’s bottom rungs – there was great optimism as the UN contributed to ending some of those hot wars in Central America, Southern Africa, and South-East Asia.

But this was soon followed by a series of disasters in the 1990s. The collapse of Yugoslavia, war in Bosnia and massacre of Srebrenica. The famine and intervention in Somalia, which led to a botched US special forces operation that led to many casualties, and for which the US unjustifiably and inexcusably blamed the UN – which had a long-term negative effect on popular American perceptions of the international organization. And worst of all, the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, when the members of the Security Council took the decision to withdraw peace-keepers just at the start of the frenzied mass killings. Then Iraq was a source of conflict at the UN long before – and long after – the disastrous US-UK invasion in 2003. And it now appears as if the wheel has almost turned full circle, back to the divisions of the Cold War era, with the Security Council dangerously paralysed on a whole host of issues, unable to take meaningful action to end or prevent crisis and conflict.

I am often asked what is the best thing to have happened at the UN since I joined in 1989. And I always tend to reply that the best thing is represented by the fact that UN peace operations have vastly increased their ambit. Beyond merely patrolling cease-fire

lines and carrying out some local confidence building measures (as in Southern Lebanon, the Golan Heights, or Cyprus) and towards a more active political stance, also involving development work, capacity-building of the civil service, police and justice system, and the promotion of human rights. And also a particular mandate for protecting civilians – most notably in December 2013 when UN camp gates were opened to allow tens of thousands of South Sudanese civilians desperately fleeing military or militias intent on killing them – a decision I was proud to have played some part in, and which led to the direct saving of more lives than any other single decision taken in the UN’s history.

And the least positive development I’ve witnessed at the UN in my 30 years? I would say it’s the current global trend against human rights, which, regrettably, isn’t confined to the UN. To give it some background, I joined Amnesty International in 1979, when it was the only global human rights organization, and I was doing O-levels. Obviously I had no idea at the time that the world was on the cusp of what amounted almost to a slow revolution and the flourishing of human rights in many parts of the world. This picked up after the Cold War ended, and much progress was achieved, with European countries, and sometimes the United States, generally playing the role of global rights champion.

But that progress ground to a halt about 10 years ago. I would say that the causes for this were a combination of 1) the financial crisis, and resentment about austerity and rising economic inequality; 2) terrorism and the counter-terrorist reaction, the latter often even worse in terms of human rights violations than the former; 3) flows of migrants and refugees and the hostility this provoked; 4) the rise of China, the growing assertiveness of Russia, and recent change of attitudes in the USA.

At the UN, we see this backlash against rights taking many forms. The first is the shutting out of human rights voices in various UN fora, especially the Security Council, where for the past two years it has been far harder for my colleagues and me to brief Council members on human rights, despite the clear linkages between human rights violations and the conflict issues on the Security Council’s agenda. Other manifestations include the cutting of budgets for human rights activities; the preventing of some human rights advocates from civil society being able to participate in UN activities or at times even enter the building, and the inflicting of harsh reprisals against people who have cooperated or shared information with the UN on human rights situations.<sup>5</sup>

And perhaps worst of all, we see the further politicization of human rights, which does so much to weaken the entire rights agenda. Some examples. The UK, US and

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<sup>5</sup> “UN official: Past decade has seen human rights ‘backlash’”. Associated Press, December 27, 2019 <https://apnews.com/1d7e80128857308743224aaaf28cd5f8>. (Interview with Andrew Gilmour.)

France quite rightly blast the horrific abuses of the Syrian government, which are enabled and supported by the Russians. But by comparison they appear remarkably silent when it comes to violations carried out by Saudi Arabia and its allies in Yemen. China and Russia, on the other hand, protect violations of rights by Syria, North Korea, Myanmar, Burundi and elsewhere, while the US now gives a 100 per cent carte blanche to any violations committed by Israel.

Arguments advanced by those governments (Russia, China, Egypt, Cuba and others) who consistently try block discussions about human rights come in various guises. It is claimed that human rights in fact mean imposing “alien Western values” on traditional societies (by which people generally mean LGBTI rights and women’s sexual and reproductive rights). Some also make the claim that human rights are really designed to promote “regime change”, and those who make this charge are able to cite Libya, where the just decision to intervene militarily to prevent a massacre in Benghazi by Colonel Ghadaffi in 2011 soon transmogrified into the overthrow of Ghadaffi’s entire regime – which has led to appalling violence and instability in Libya ever since, and further deepened distrust of western motivations.

Some African countries implicitly accuse the West of using human rights to engage in a “new colonialism” – a charge that appears to be given more credence when it is precisely the government of the respective former colonial power (whether the UK in Zimbabwe, Belgium in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or France in Cote d’Ivoire) that is the most vocal critic of human rights violations in a given country. And many governments (especially their security forces) the world over believe that human rights criticisms “aid and abet terrorists” and are an attempt to tie the hands of security forces against terrorists. We heard those arguments in the UK during the 70s and 80s too, regarding Northern Ireland. Finally, countries such as China accuse anyone who mentions human rights in China as “violating the UN Charter” because, according to them, this constitutes an intervention in internal matters.

Unfortunately, Western governments give credence to these various claims made against human rights by being so hypocritically selective about which violators they choose to get hot under the collar about. After all, it’s a truism that if you only care about human rights when violations are carried out by your enemies, then you can’t claim you do actually care about human rights.

What I’ve been talking about relates to how the human rights crisis is reflected in the UN. But the problem is much broader than that. One obvious manifestation is the rise of populist authoritarian nationalists. Trump and Putin, Erdogan of Turkey, Bolsonaro of Brazil, Duterte of the Philippines, Orban of Hungary and many others. Almost invariably they seek a scapegoat for their society’s ills – usually alighting on a

group that is already highly vulnerable, against whom they whip up even harsher resentments. Whether Muslims, migrants, refugees, Mexicans, Roma or gays.

A particularly dangerous variant of this is the rise of what is called “majoritarianism”, whereby only the rights of the majority are to be fully respected, with minorities coming in for significant discrimination, not just in practice but even in law. Where we have seen this most strongly is in Myanmar, where the Rohingya have been so brutally dealt with; in India, where the ruling BJP is targeting Muslims in many ways; and Israel (not the Occupied Palestinian territories) where the Arab minority has far fewer rights in practice.

The abuses carried out under the mantle of counter-terrorism has been a major source of problems. I have often been struck by the frequency with which governments that claim to be fighting terrorism then carry out measures that almost appear designed to lead to the creation of more terrorists than there actually were when they started fighting them. Iraq is just one example. Under the egregious Saddam Hussein, there was very little in the way of Islamist terrorism. But after the invasion to overthrow him (which involved spurious charges that he was involved in 9/11), we saw – in my case from a ring-side seat as I was posted there for two years during the war – the creation of Al Qaida in Mesopotamia, and later the Islamic State. Guantanamo Bay has been used, and incredibly is still being used, to carry out major human rights violations, in many cases against people who were guilty of no wrong-doing whatsoever other than being in the wrong place at the wrong time. “Terrorism” is also used to justify the killing and imprisonment of journalists, and the closure of civic society space – with many countries in the last few years following Russia’s lead in passing laws to prevent the functioning and funding of NGOs, especially human rights ones.

Other manifestations of the human rights crisis include the reappearance of a term I didn’t expect to see in connection with today’s world. I refer to “concentration camps” – now being used (though with shrill denials from the governments responsible) in connection with the extraordinary massive scale of “re-education” camps in China’s Xinjiang province, and also (on a far smaller scale) with how Central American refugees, including tiny children, are treated on the southern border of the US.

In addition, we are witnessing a rise in hate speech in many parts of the world; excessive force against largely peaceful demonstrators; a backlash against recent progress in rights for women and LGBTI persons.

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What we have at the moment is a series of interlocking global crises. The first and most significant (though it's not my topic today) is the planetary environmental crisis: global heating; biodiversity loss and extinction; pollution and plastics. Second is the rise of the populist authoritarian nationalists I referred to, stirring up hatreds against minorities and undermining rule of law, attacking judges, journalists, NGOs, and parliamentarians (especially congresswomen of colour) who have different opinions to their governments. And we have the continuation and often intensification of wars and mass atrocities. Whether the wars in Syria, Yemen, Libya, South Sudan, DRC. The expulsion and mass rape of 700,000 Rohingya by Myanmar in 2017<sup>6</sup>; the treatment of the Uighurs; and the unremitting harsh and illegal occupation or siege by Israel of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza – which has lasted without respite for 52 years and represents a violation of almost every single human right spelled out in the Universal Declaration.<sup>7</sup>

But we see today a push-back not just against human rights, international laws, democracy, and truth by politicians. There's also a push-back against, and a crisis of, multilateralism. I've already mentioned the divisions in the Security Council, but there's also a spirit of antipathy towards other institutions too. With key countries denigrating and leaving the Paris Climate Agreement, the Iran nuclear deal, the Human Rights Council, or the European Union. These global institutions – however imperfect – were designed to help handle the crises that no country, or even a small group of countries, can handle on their own. And it seems especially ridiculous – not to say tragic – that these international organizations are being undermined at the very moment when they are needed most.

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What about British influence? The UK is one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, a status achieved (and even maintained) merely by being one of the victor powers at the end of the Second World War. As Adam Smith himself predicted, the European empires would one day decline in power, and indeed this has occurred since 1945. British influence – kept alive at the UN by adept diplomats who focus much of their energies on drafting and negotiating important resolutions that promote

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<sup>6</sup> For Rohingya refugees, imminent surge in births is traumatic legacy of sexual violence - special report <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/05/1009372>.

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Gilmour, final comments to the UN regarding the Palestinian question, 13 November 2019. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25303>



humanitarian and human rights solutions – hasn't depended on raw power or threats to veto (as the US, China and Russia throw about almost with abandon), but rather on carefully crafting a reputation for competent, collegial and responsible diplomacy in the larger global interest.

In the UK, it seems that nobody seriously questions the British role at the UN, or wants to see it diminished. There isn't an anti-UN feeling comparable to what we see in some sectors in the US; though of course we do have the extraordinary antipathy to the European Union, similarly whipped up, that we need to contend with. Nationalists and Europhobes see it as enabling the UK to play out its "global Britain" fantasies, separately from the EU, and as the justified heritage or hold-over role for a country which once had an empire "on which the sun never set". And internationalists appreciate the role at the Security Council because, operating within the context of "values", the UK exercises constructive multilateral leadership in addressing global challenges.<sup>8</sup>

Though the causes of declining UK influence were structu and inevitable, the decline has gathered momentum by the truly colossal act of self-harm that we recently inflicted on ourselves. And I can tell you that at the UN, there is no debate on this whatsoever. I've not encountered one official from any other country or organization who does not feel this. The only difference of opinion I have detected is whether they are pleased or not. Those diplomats or countries that don't care for the UK, and wish its influence to be diminished, are delighted by the mess. *Schadenfreude* may be a German word, but it's not a German sentiment, at least in this context. Countries that are allied with the UK and appreciate its role are simply mortified by what we are doing.

Some people in the human rights community and at the UN have an additional concern, which is that the British Government will be confronted with what it sees as the need to show its electorate that they weren't lied to, when they were repeatedly told that it would be a piece of cake to negotiate dozens of extremely complex bilateral trade deals, necessitated by leaving the EU, which has the highest global standards when it comes to regulations. And, as a result, the Brits will be tempted to drop human rights and other issues (social or environmental) in order not to complicate still further those trade negotiations. I hope this isn't the case, but do feel we need to be vigilant to the importance of maintaining human rights standards in trade deals.

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I am aware that I've been painting a fairly bleak picture this evening, with the human rights crises, and all the other crises I've been talking about. And the fact that the

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<sup>8</sup> "Brexit and the UN Security Council: declining British influence." *International Affairs* 95:6 (2019), by Jess Gifkins, Samuel Jarvis and Jason Ralph.

UK apparently chose this particular moment to reduce its capacity to play a constructive role in addressing those problems.

And indeed it's a pretty bleak picture right now. But nothing is pre-determined. I was never convinced by Lord Macaulay's "Whig view" of history, which has us coasting along on an ineluctable tide of ever-expanding human progress. Equally, we do not need to believe that the current reversal of progress means it always has to be in that direction either. There are a number of actions that different people can take. One area that I consider very important is for the human rights community to create new alliances with people who have not traditionally supported human rights.

Two projects that I've devoted much energy to in the past two years may illustrate that. One is an attempt to get the security forces of the Sahel region across Africa to confront violent extremism in ways that involve far fewer human rights violations by government forces; and for them to see that it is in fact in their interests for them to change their practices according to a human rights compliance framework – because not only will it make it easier for the EU and others to provide funding for their security efforts (if the donors can have more confidence that their funds won't be used to carry out awful measures), but it will also make those security forces more professional while at the same time contribute to winning over the hearts and minds of the affected civilian populations – who otherwise can be driven into the arms of those seeking to radicalize them as a response to brutal government measures against their communities.

The second area where some of us in the UN have been trying to create a new alliance is between the human rights and the interrogation and law enforcement communities – historically seen as adversaries. It's always been clear that telling the latter groups that torture is completely illegal or immoral (as indeed it is) won't generally have the slightest impact. But try telling them that there is a massive amount of evidence pointing to the fact that it is also ineffective and counter-productive, then it might make a difference. And it is counter-productive because people undergoing torture will often say anything in an effort to stop the pain and the humiliation. Plus, it is also proven that people under stress genuinely can't remember with accuracy what it is they are being interrogated about. So they are liable to say things that have no connection to reality, which means that law enforcement goes charging down the wrong rabbit-hole, wasting time and resources, instead of going after the real threats or those who were guilty of terrorism.

Technological advances are liable to bring great benefits to mankind. But they also pose immense threats too – with artificial intelligence, undermining of privacy, censorship (the Great Firewall of China), astonishing levels of surveillance, mass hate speech (Facebook's role in the Rohingya catastrophe), and even in the future killer robots. There is a desperate need for governments, academics, NGOs and the private

sector (especially the internet companies) to find and agree on ways of regulating technological advances so that the worst effects are mitigated.

We are seeing some positive examples of people's power. For me, the best story of 2019 was the collapse of the deeply unpleasant government of Sudan in the face of massive peaceful protests involving men and women, older generations and youth. The rise of massive popular protest in many different parts of the world is an important story, even though many governments have met these protests with disproportionately violent repression.

One area where there absolutely has to be progress, and where I think we will see it, is forging a stronger alliance between environmentalists and the human rights community. Historically, they have not worked as closely as they could have. But the human rights implications of climate change will be vast. Rising sea levels and temperatures, burning lands, and biblically extreme weather pose the greatest threats ever conceived to the whole spectrum of rights – whether the rights to food, health, water, livelihood and housing, or to civil and political rights. The latter would be threatened when – as I think is likely – the realization of the enormity of climate change (once world leaders finally admit it) leads governments to declare “states of emergency”. Such states of emergency always violate human rights by putting aside individual freedoms, and justifying the strengthening of state powers and harsh state measures. We need to guard against this, but to do so, the two movements – environmentalist and human rights – need to start cooperating far more. I have an article being published on this next week, and plan to do a study of it at Oxford later in the year.

One area of optimism I have is the mobilization of youth. Their generation has been seriously let down by ours, and it is encouraging to see how far they are mobilizing when it comes to climate change. Greta Thunberg has had an enormous impact. Two other young women have had a big role in promoting human rights issues: Malala, on the right to education, and Nadia Murad publicizing the mass rape of the Yazidis in Iraq and Syria by ISIL. Youth need to be empowered, but perhaps they also need to be galvanized. We saw in the Brexit referendum how remain-leaning youth did not bother to come out and vote in the numbers of leave-leaning elderly voters, even though the impact is going to be far more long felt by the former.

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In all of this, Scotland need not be – and I'm happy to say isn't – an international backwater when it comes to human rights issues. I said near the beginning of this talk

that the Scottish Enlightenment philosophers were way ahead of their time in espousing progressive positions on human rights, and that we should be proud of the legacy they have left for us to build on. At a time of such full-on challenge to human rights, when the biggest countries of the world are not just not playing a role in finding a solution but are in fact greatly contributing to the problem, there is all the more need for smaller countries to step up to the plate. And perhaps Scotland in particular, given that we may be entering a time (I hope I'm wrong) when the UK Government may be, at best, merely distracted from focusing on rights issues, as it concentrates on forcing through the implementation of a process almost nobody has yet grasped the full complexity of. And at worst may be tempted to placate, or throw red meat to, the least progressive sectors of the electorate (e.g. the DUP, but not just them) and the right-wing press barons, especially on trade deals.

The Scandinavian countries have shown how much small countries can stand up for human rights both at home and in a global context. Full independence is not a prerequisite for playing such a role. And by its voice and its example, another thing I've been proud of over the past few years, in addition to our Enlightenment philosopher ghosts of this evening, are a series of statements and policies from the Scottish Government and First Minister on a variety of human rights issues. I have every confidence this will continue.

It has been a true honour for me to speak at this lovely house this evening, and to be able to suggest to such a distinguished audience that we should pick up the mantle bequeathed by the host and attendees at similar soirees of a bygone era, building on the contribution of those giants from Edinburgh and Glasgow. Which is why I'm deeply grateful to Caroline, Heather and Richard for giving me this opportunity. And to all of you for having had the patience and forbearance to listen to me.