

# **The Commonwealth Transformed**

**A two-decade Document Pathway up to and beyond the  
Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting to be held in  
London and at Windsor, April 2018.**

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## **Preamble and Introduction.**

*'But, it will inevitably be asked, how can such a disparate and scattered grouping possibly be a force and a weight in these dangerous and contentious times? Who will take the lead? It can never be a trade bloc. Where is central control going to be?*

*To understand the answer to these questions requires the biggest shift of all between the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the 21<sup>st</sup> century mindset, a shift which many still find it impossible to make.*

*In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the solution had to be in terms of blocs, consolidated organisations, centrally controlled in the name of efficiency, organisational pyramids, perhaps with some delegation, but basically radiating down from a superior and central point.*

*All this has now been invalidated, not only in business but in governmental affairs and in relations between countries and societies. Thanks to the extraordinary power and pervasiveness of the information revolution we live in an era now not of blocs and pyramid tiers of power and management but of networks and meshes, both formal and informal.*

*By accident as much as design the Commonwealth emerges from a controversial past to take a perfect place in this new order of thinking and acting.'*

(Extract from a speech to the Royal Commonwealth Society, 25 Northumberland Avenue. 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2001)

This is a story of an idea awakening from slumber. It is an account, from one personal viewpoint and through a series of speeches, lectures, published articles, books, letters, notes and memoranda over

two decades – of failure ,failure, failure, and then at last some glimmerings of success.

There is no final triumphant moment, no completion, just the discovery, after years of banging heads against a brick wall, that the wall has a gateway. The ice of total disinterest , especially in Whitehall, Westminster and the media generally, has at last began to melt and the first spring streams of interest support and recommitment are beginning to flow.

I am talking about the enormous Commonwealth network which spreads across half the earth's landmass and just under one third of humankind , about its total transformation to something almost entirely new and about evolving British attitudes towards it.

Once long ago, in the post war years of the last century, the Commonwealth was a major British concern, the centre of thinking about Britain's future position in the world.

Then the concern faded, was marginalised, almost forgotten. Now, decades later, and for reasons which in some quarters are still not fully grasped, interest and concern are returning at the very heart of the British government . It is truly a case of Commonwealth Redux.

One further word of warning - it may not work. The great new markets and the smaller nations of the Commonwealth maybe not that interested when Britain comes back to them. After all Britain has been away a long time. Both its visa arrangements and its policy towards students from Commonwealth countries remain unwelcoming. Much will depend on acquiring the habit of treating giant India (half the Commonwealth) with the profound respect it merits. New relationships will have to be carefully forged and old scores carefully buried.

On November 22nd, **1995** the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons at Westminster issued a report. The report contained a revolutionary message. The message was that the Commonwealth, far from being redundant organisation (a spent force and a leftover from imperial glories), was transforming itself into a modern network of enormous potential, both economic and political.

(The full conclusions are attached as the appendix to this collection of papers).

The report concluded that "the Commonwealth is acquiring a new significance in a rapidly emerging world". Policymakers, it urged, should bring this major change to the forefront of their thinking.

From the UK point of view it argued that this offered new opportunities which should be recognised and seized, and indeed exploited with vigour and imagination.

The view that Commonwealth relations had become the Cinderella in the shaping of British foreign policy and the promotion of British interests, although refuted by ministers who appeared as witness to the inquiry, seemed all too clear to the Committee. The report urged a stronger emphasis on the Commonwealth dimension right across the government as a whole.

The message went nowhere. A tepid response came from the government, some six months later, assuring the Committee that Ministers would 'discuss the priorities', that they were 'conscious of the advantages which the Commonwealth links could bestow on British companies and institutions, and would examine how these links 'could be used to best effect'.

But that was it. The rest was silence. Hardly any of the recommendations from the committee were put into effect. Within the

Whitehall hierarchy the Commonwealth remained a fractional part of its concerns. The Commonwealth Office had long since vanished, as had the post of Commonwealth Secretary. Inside the Foreign & Commonwealth Office a handful of officials were still struggling bravely to keep the issue alive at all, barely succeeding. Indeed, within a few years trendy voices in the Foreign Office would be actually arguing that the name of the department should be changed and the word Commonwealth dropped forever from its title. Fortunately they were frustrated.

Soon after the report the government changed and the preoccupations of the new administration turned elsewhere. Some speeches about the Commonwealth were made by the Labour government's eloquent new Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, but he was almost alone in Government. Little or no action followed. Minds were elsewhere as New Labour discovered its new found interest in the European Union and addressed European issues with the zeal of converts. In effect the Commonwealth sank from sight, or at least from the sight of policy-makers, opinion-formers and the Westminster world.

From one source almost alone came the steady reminder that the modern Commonwealth was a hidden asset, That source was H.M. The Queen and members of her family.. While Ministers in successive governments looked the other way her insistence ,in line with her very first vows as monarch, was that it would prove to be the face of the future, not the past.

Today the situation has changed beyond recognition. In place of a lonely group within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office there is now a lively Cabinet Office Unit focussing entirely on the issues and preparations for a major Commonwealth Summit, or Heads of

Government meeting ,to be held in London in April 2018. Between 60 and 80 officials now work where six struggled before. For the first time in history both Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle are opening doors for conference activities. Meetings of Commonwealth Trade Ministers have been revived. Commonwealth Education Ministers meet regularly and generate new ideas. After more than twenty years the Commonwealth is beginning to be viewed from London , and across the nation, as it was urged to be in vain all that time ago. The contrast between the nineteen-nineties and today could hardly be greater.

How has this extraordinary , if very belated, change come about? For some, it is the culmination of years of persistent argument, advanced through many channels to a hitherto largely disinterested media, that a great opportunity was being missed. For others the trigger has been the British decision to leave the EU. Without a doubt this has led to a sharp revival of Whitehall interest in wider global networks of which the Commonwealth is undoubtedly one, possibly the biggest..

But in truth the build up to the new mindset has been taking shape spasmodically over many years, driven by a number of forces bigger than any government . This collection of speeches, articles and papers, is intended to help illustrate , how , year by year and event by event, opinion slowly began to evolve from total disinterest to renewed commitment .There is some repetition since in this age of information overload messages have to repeatedly again and again.

But one thing they also show clearly is that this has been all along not just an argument about the Commonwealth. Behind it now lies an even bigger story. Down the years a case has grown for a

fundamental change in Britain's foreign policy strategy and in the way Britain views itself in a rapidly changing world landscape. Long before Brexit it had become increasingly clear that for Britain to see its main destiny as lying within Europe was simply no longer enough in the new conditions of the 21st century.

The staggering expansion of communications technology, the rise of Asia and the extraordinary changes in the past two decades brought about by what has been labelled the fourth industrial revolution, or the second wave of globalisation, were all conspiring long before Brexit to impel Britain to rethink its world position.

One other seemingly pure chance was the decision made at the Commonwealth heads of government meeting in Malta in November 2015, to locate the next heads of government conference in London early in 2018, at which point Britain would take over the chairmanship of the Commonwealth itself, previously held by Malta and before that by Sri Lanka.

The decision at Malta that Britain should be the next Commonwealth Heads of Government host had nothing at all to do with Brexit and was made at a time when few before very many people foresaw the Brexit decision as at all likely. How it came about is not clear, although there were certainly some articulate voices urging this course. Perhaps it should be put down to pure serendipity. Indeed, that the Commonwealth leaders were meeting at Malta in the first place, rather than Mauritius as earlier intended, was due to a chance conversation in an aeroplane. The tumble of events and their the outcome provide a classic example of the way in which factors can coincide by chance, and in doing so alter the pattern of history.

The Commonwealth connection is by no means the only answer to Britain's post-Brexit role in the world. At the risk of repetition we now live in a world of expanding networks driven by algorithms of unimaginable power and influence, and the Commonwealth is only one network amongst them, large, admittedly not strong in every sinew and very widely misunderstood. Its potential derives not from any central authority or government strategy but from almost the opposite - namely that power now lies increasingly with the crowd, with the grass roots and with the myriad impulses of markets, interests, professions, civil society groups of almost every kind and individuals, as well as with cities as much as states.

This is an entirely different world, a web rather than a diplomatic chessboard, and it just happens, by nobody's plan, that the Commonwealth structure has evolved in a manner uniquely suited to it and is continuing to do so.

Every prejudice will find a little on which to feed in the Commonwealth story. Those who look back and see much good in the old British Empire clash with those at the other extreme who see only a legacy of colonialism and oppression. Some see in it a secret plot to frustrate EU integration, when it is nothing of the kind, an organization of an entirely different nature. Some sneer at it as pure nostalgia, without seeing that everything has changed. One misguided official even tried to label the new interest as Empire 2.0.

Across the Commonwealth monarchists vie with republicans, historians with historicists, old Commonwealth hands blind to its obvious faults line up against hostile columnists blind to its potential. And all the while the media hovers, looking only for a punch-up, a scandal somewhere, a deviation, a nastiness on which to swoop. All who survey an association covering a third of the world's population are bound to find something, somewhere to satisfy their viewpoint.

But when all is said and done the message here is that the forces which are now pulling the Commonwealth together are getting stronger, much stronger, than the forces and voices pulling it apart.

The last piece in the book, delivered in Autumn 2017 at the Royal Overseas League, is entitled 'The Mother of All Networks'. That is what the Commonwealth, so long shunned, ignored and downgraded in the list of British interests, is about to become.

*Autumn of 1997. After the dismal reception for the Commons Report it was hard even to raise the subject of the Commonwealth. Many people lost heart. The most positive thing I can find from this low period was from a draft of a new book I was writing called 'The Edge of Now'. The book actually appeared in 1999, published by Macmillan. It's a good starter because it opens up the main theme of many of the items ahead, namely that the digital revolution was going to reinvigorate the whole Commonwealth network – not a bad guess in 1999, when the great social media engines had hardly been invented, and nobody had ever heard of Facebook, let alone blockchains! Here it is, from Chapter 26, entitled the Real New International Order*

### **1997/8. Extract From The Edge of Now**

The new premium on network relations favours some organisations which seemed less useful in the past. A typical example is the Commonwealth (former British Commonwealth) whose members now form the perfect inter-governmental and voluntary network and under whose umbrella literally hundreds of non-governmental and semi-official Commonwealth bodies create a web of common purpose unequalled in any other global arrangements.

These connections stretch right across the regions and hemispheres into fifty three nation states and also right into the everyday life of millions of people in thousands of local communities. Yet where is the political philosophy, or the policy or programme derived from that philosophy, which even recognises their existence, let alone their growing role?

A nation with a developed 'global' outlook and policy, geared to today's conditions, ought to give immense attention and encouragement to this kind of network pattern of international

relations. It is clearly the most effective way to project national concerns, defend national interests and address international issues in a globalised environment.

Yet the policy-makers have been curiously slow in grasping this. The Commonwealth network potential has barely been recognised by British officials and international experts, while the old instinct, which is either to leave international tasks untackled or to delegate them upwards to unaccountable international bodies, has remained dismally resilient.

There can be no question that the list of tasks and duties requiring a global approach is getting much bigger - from financial regulation to environmental control and from security, both internal and external, to health and safety standards. Nor can it be contested that these issues have to be handled by organisations larger than the nation state.

But the question is 'what sort of organisations?'. The answer in a wired up, privatised world of decentralised government and informed electorates is network organisations, linking all part of the global system, not narrower regional blocs or exclusive alliances. This is the kind of international relations which the public in many countries already understand and operate. It is part of their lives. It is well past the time when opinion-formers and leaders should be on the same coach.

*2000. A year later I find a letter replying to the renowned Professor David Dilks, who had kindly sent me his highly constructive ideas on Commonwealth development. I have to say that most academics were fairly unhelpful on Commonwealth matters, being mostly of what can be called the Chatham House tendency – namely that our destiny was in Europe and that Commonwealth connections were of not much interest. Professor Dilks was one admirable and expert exception to the general apathy.*

*I emphasize that this changed considerably over the subsequent decade.*

Dear Professor Dilks,

Thank you so much for letting me see your paper on the proposed Commonwealth report, which I read with great interest.

You ask for my comments, so here goes:

If I may say so, what is missing from the paper is *the basic case* for having a Commonwealth policy – an outline, if you like, of why it is not just desirable, but actually *necessary* in terms of British interests, to have an across-the-board policy commitment to strengthening and developing the Commonwealth network and Britain's involvement in it.

None of the admirable things you adumbrate is going to happen unless officials, policy-makers and opinion formers actually wake up in the morning sensing that the furtherance of Commonwealth policy in some shape or form is essential to their purposes and interests.

Putting this more precisely, it has to be clear to them as to why the Commonwealth can do for their policy goals what the UN cannot do, what the EU cannot do and even what NATO cannot do.

Of course there can be no suggestion that the Commonwealth is somehow a substitute for any of these bodies, but it could be an answer to some of the very obvious deficiencies in their present structures and performances. In other words the case FOR the Commonwealth has to be made against a frank evaluation of the weaknesses and strengths of the rest of the international system.

Thus, if, rather oversimplifying, one lists British headline foreign policy goals as a) preserving Britain's security, b) promoting Britain's prosperity, commerce and business interests, c) contributing effectively to global stability and security, this then becomes the backdrop against which to argue that the Commonwealth can deliver on these fronts (if it can) in ways that other international institutions and frameworks cannot.

Taking the three above in turn – UN, EU and NATO – I think a good case can be made for saying that the UN's effectiveness in organizing humanitarian interventions (the new currency) is going to be increasingly constrained, and the UN generally is becoming an ever more unsatisfactory forum in which to address common questions amongst nations about human rights, good governance etc. For smaller states it is really quite hopeless, while at the Security Council level it remains paralysed by Chinese and Russian awkwardness.

This is not an anti-UN statement – on the contrary UN reform is vital. But it makes a clear case for some less-than-universal but trans-national forum, which is just what the Commonwealth offers.

Similarly, we are in, and must make the best of the EU. But it fails totally to satisfy Britain's wider global interests, does nothing for our enormous investments outside Europe and, although it is supposed to be our trade voice, is not even very good at getting us the best deal in the global trade system. By working with some of the Commonwealth

states – Canada, Australia, rapidly emerging India, recovering Malaysia, South Africa – we can surely develop powerful new opportunities and entrées into the evolving global economy which EU membership simply does not offer (or actively prevents in some cases).

As to our security and wider global stability generally it might be thought (and still is, by our sleepy foreign policy establishment) that NATO, plus the ridiculous new European Defence Force, give us all the protection and wider security we need.

Not so. NATO is in turmoil, American security policy is in transition and the ERRF, if it ever gets off the ground, will operate only in the European region. Yet the major security issues of the future will probably lie and the near and far east and in Africa. The closest possible military liaison with Canada (which anyway wants to balance its US closeness with other links), with Australia, with India, with Malaysia, with Singapore, with South Africa and others will therefore be essential. The Commonwealth provides the ideal vehicle and envelope for these developments.

We can see that France has no hesitation about using its far slenderer linguistic and cultural links overseas to further French influence and increase its own leverage in all international institutions (as well as unblushingly forcing the interests of its former colonies to the top of the EU agenda). We should be doing the same – on an even bigger and a much more solidly based scale – and not just for greater glory, à la française, but because in the new global conditions it is absolutely essential for a network player and financial engine such as Britain to be wired into the sort of system the Commonwealth offers.

Once our dozy Foreign Office gets that message they may actually stir themselves, expand their Commonwealth section and begin developing a really positive Commonwealth policy and interface, not just on aid and development questions but right across the range of British interests and concerns.

With best wishes,        David Howell

*2001. The Changing Role of the Commonwealth. A Neglected Colossus Emerges as an Ideal Model for International Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This was a speech to the Royal Commonwealth Society a year or so later – from which the extract at the beginning is taken. It is long but it does bring together the whole interrelated set of arguments and trends which were beginning to revive the Commonwealth ‘case’ - at least from Britain’s point of view. Begins:*

The idea of the Commonwealth as a marginal international institution, doing good works, uttering virtuous aspirations and blessing a host of unofficial organisations is now completely redundant.

We now face entirely new international conditions and in these the Commonwealth should shed its past diffidence and prepare itself to take a lead in setting the global agenda.

This will require the Commonwealth to raise its game all round, expand its ambitions and activities and forge new links with non-members. It needs to demonstrate boldly its new significance both in the promotion of world trade and investment (building on the role it has already begun to carve out in the WTO debate) and on the wider geo-political stage.

This in turn depends, of course, upon its leading member states. Until they wake up fully and understand the staggering potential of the new Commonwealth network, as an ideal model for international collaboration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the backing needed will not be there. This means persuading Commonwealth Governments to give place and recognition to the Commonwealth network in their foreign and overseas economic and development policies at a level which, for various reasons (mostly now outdated), they have hitherto failed to do,

the big exception being India, which almost alone, with its new flair and dynamism, has recognised the Commonwealth as ‘the ideal platform for business and trade’

So, the first task is to bring home to a half-interested world a few new facts about the Commonwealth system which have clearly escaped them.

**First**, far from being a run-down club, held together by nostalgia and decolonisation fixations, today’s Commonwealth now contains thirteen of the world’s fastest growing economies, including the most potent emerging markets. Outside the USA and Japan, the key cutting edge countries in information technology and e-commerce are all Commonwealth members. The new ‘jewel in the Commonwealth Crown’ turns out to be the old jewel, dramatically re-polished and re-set, namely booming India, the world’s largest democracy with a population set to exceed China’s.

This presents a picture so far removed from the old image of the Commonwealth, bogged down in demands for more aid and arguments about South Africa (or latterly Zimbabwe) that many sleepy policy makers find it simply too difficult to absorb. The unloved ugly duckling organisation has grown almost overnight into a true swan. Or to use a different metaphor the Commonwealth of today and tomorrow has been described as ‘The Neglected Colossus’. It should be neglected no longer.

**Second**, it has been recently estimated that in the new information age context the Commonwealth’s commonalities of language, law, accounting systems and business regulations gives a 15 percent cost advantage over dealing with countries outside the Commonwealth.

As for finance, the market capitalizations of Toronto, Sydney and London alone, combined, exceed New York's. The assets of the financial services sectors of the Commonwealth group of nations are actually now larger than those of the whole EU.

**Thirdly**, on the economic and commercial front it should be noted that recent detailed academic analysis has identified a growing 'Commonwealth effect' – namely a perceived reduction in what is termed the psychic distance between Commonwealth member state, and a consequent increased propensity for Commonwealth states, especially the smaller developing ones, to engage in increased trade and investment activity between each other in preference to, and prior to, trade and investment elsewhere in the global community.

### **A Wider Role than Trade**

But the new story should not just be about bread and butter matters and new economic opportunities staring the world in the face. The Commonwealth needs to be re-assessed in terms of its real weight in securing world stability, in balancing the dialogue with the U.S. giant, in linking rising Asia and the West, in helping to handle the prickliest of issues such as the Middle East and Iran, in promoting better development links, in bringing small and larger nations, poorer and richer, together on mutually respectful and truly friendly terms and in bridging the faith divides which others seek to exploit and widen.

In all these areas the Commonwealth, reformed, reinforced, built upon and enlarged, offers, as the Indian Industry Minister Mr, Kamal Nath, wisely perceives, 'the ideal platform'.

It will, of course, inevitably be asked, how can such a disparate and scattered grouping possibly be a force and a weight in these dangerous and contentious areas? Who will take the lead? Where is central control going to be?

To understand the answer to these questions requires the biggest shift of all between the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the 21<sup>st</sup> century mindset, a shift which many still find it impossible to make.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the solution had to be in terms of blocs, consolidated organisations, centrally controlled in the name of efficiency, organisational pyramids, perhaps with some delegation, but basically radiating down from a superior and central point.

All this has now been invalidated, not only in business but in governmental affairs and in relations between countries and societies. Thanks to the extraordinary power and pervasiveness of the information revolution we live in an era now not of blocs and pyramid tiers of power and management but of trans-national networks and meshes, both formal and informal.

By accident as much as design the Commonwealth emerges from a controversial past to take a perfect place in this new order of thinking and acting. The fact that the Commonwealth now has no dominant member state, or even a coterie of such states, far from being a weakness is now a strength.

Because the Commonwealth is founded on respect for nation states, each following its own path, yet recognising the imperative of interdependence, constant adjustment can take pace to new challenges, with partnerships and coalitions being swiftly tailored to each new scene.

This answers three dilemmas.

The **first** is that people want more than ever in an age of remote globalisation, to develop their own identities, to have countries and localities to love and defend and take pride in. They recognise the fact of interdependence but they long equally for ownership and a degree of independence. Superior ideas of supra-national government and super-states, along with sweeping dismissals of the relevance of the nation state, can play no part in resolving these deep and competing needs, and indeed utterly fail to do so when imposed by well-intentioned integrationists, as in the case of the EU.

**Second**, rigid bloc alliances cannot keep up with the kaleidoscope of change. The more that the European Union tries to draw its members into a rigid and unified political and military bloc the less effective it becomes. The more that the world is seen as clinging to a structure of blocs established in rivalry to each other the more the real criss-cross network of bilateral linkages between nations is neglected. Yet it is just this new and more flexible pattern which provides far the best guarantee of stability and security.

**Third**, the new texture of international relations is made up not just of inter-governmental and official contacts but of a mosaic of non-governmental and sub-official agencies and organisations. This takes time to grow, but grow it has under the Commonwealth canopy into an amazing on organizations and alliances between the professions, the academic and scholastic worlds, the medical, educational, scientific and legal communities and a host of other interest groups linked together across the 54 nation Commonwealth Group.

## **Filling a Dangerous Vacuum**

The tragic collapse of America's 'soft power', reputation and influence almost across the entire globe is leaving a dangerous vacuum. Into this vacuum, cautiously, subtly, but steadily are moving the Chinese – with cash, with investment projects, with trade deals and deals to secure access to oil and gas supplies in an energy hungry world, with military and policing support and with technology.

This is a gap which ought to be filled not by the Chinese dictatorship but by the free democracies of the Commonwealth, from both North and South, banded together by a commitment to freedom under the rule of law and ready to make real and common sacrifices in the interests of a peaceful and stable world and the spread of democratic governance in many different forms.

The Commonwealth possesses the vital attributes for dealing with this new world which the old 20<sup>th</sup> century institutions so conspicuously lack.

It stretches across the faiths, with half a billion Muslim members; it stretches across all the Continents, thus by its very existence nullifying the dark analysis of a coming clash of civilisations. Better still if a more confident Commonwealth now reaches out and makes friendly associations with other like-minded nations, both in Europe and Asia. Japan, with some eleven percent of the entire world's GNP, and with its confidence and dynamism now restored, is ready to make links with the Commonwealth, especially with India and Britain together. Poland and some other Central European nations long to have association with a grouping less parochial than their own local European Union. Even Russia, despite its prickly inward-looking mood and latent nationalist sentiments, (not helped by gratuitous criticism from the U.S Vice President), could yet emerge as suitable

democratic partner of like-minded nations inside the Commonwealth club.

The need now is for the Commonwealth Secretariat to be encouraged by its members to grow wings. That is to say, it should develop in a much more powerful way than hitherto, the capability to address global policy issues. Perhaps it should begin by having a nominated high official to work with the Secretary General and act as the Commonwealth's High Representative.

An enhanced Commonwealth should also spread its wings on energy issues. At present there is no global forum in which a variety of free nations, rich and poor, but all faced with the same problems of staggeringly high oil prices, all faced with energy security challenges and all faced with the much longer term need to curb carbon emissions and create a greener and cleaner long term environment, can meet together in an informal atmosphere, exchange views and technologies, and develop some common clout in face of OPEC and the other giant producers. The Commonwealth should fill that gap, too.

Make such a more active and strengthened Commonwealth a central platform of the international future and there will then be an enlightened and responsible grouping on the planet, ready to be America's candid friend, but not its lapdog - a serious and respected force, both in economic and trading terms and in terms of upholding security and peace-keeping.

### **A Key UK Priority.**

This is the body the strengthening of which the UK should now make its key foreign policy priority and together with which it should rebuild its own foreign policy priorities. It should do so because this

route offers far the best way both for a nation such as the UK, with its history and mix of experience and skills, to make a maximum contribution to meeting the world's many ills.

In particular the UK should consider transferring the administration of that part of its overseas development effort which at present goes through the EU from that unhappy channel to the Commonwealth system, and encourage both other Commonwealth members to do likewise and the Secretariat to develop the full capacity to handle this role. The current bias in EU programmes towards the Francophonie states could thereby be usefully corrected.

This single move would give the Commonwealth huge new prestige and resources, as well as directing aid efforts far more effectively to poorer Commonwealth member states, to whom the richer countries owe the strongest duty.

So when the British Prime Minister calls for children to be taught a 'greater sense of British identity', that should read 'British and Commonwealth identity'. That alone conveys the broader and outward-looking sense of interdependence and duty which is the true message with which young British children should carry in today's world.

Of course the UK must continue to be the best possible local member of our European region in which geography places it – as, incidentally it nearly always has been, shedding more blood than most in the cause of saving Europe from itself and securing its freedoms - although some people forget this.

But Europe is no longer the world's most prosperous region. The priority task now is to build up links, many of which – in Britain's case - were so strong in the distant past, with what are becoming the world's most prosperous and dynamic areas of the world , but also

with the smaller nations as well as the large ones, the struggling poor ones as well as the rapidly industrialising and increasingly high-tech ones .This is what an enlarged Commonwealth can deliver in a way that the European Union can never do , and never will do, and for which it lacks the reach and the right basic policy structure.

That is why Britain's external relations priorities deserve major re-alignment. And, as an afterthought, it is also why the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the home of Britain's able and widely admired diplomatic service, ought now to be re-christened the Commonwealth and Foreign Office – the CFO not the FCO. Little changes can signify a lot.

**2005** *Feature offered to the Daily Telegraph. -British Foreign Policy  
- Time for New Partners.*

The thumbs down from France and the Netherlands for the ill-fated EU Constitution should be an occasion not only for the more passionate European integrationists to pause and reflect. It should also be a time for the brains in our own Foreign Office to have a radical re-think about Britain's foreign policy.

'Working with our European partners' has been the mantra of FCO thinking for three decades. Broadly our foreign policy has been that while bilateral links between Britain and other countries remain important, and our links with America especially important (and given new life by the alliance over Iraq and the Blair-Bush bond), the big central thought has been Europe. That is where Britain's 'destiny' (a word used rather less recently) is supposed to lie and it is through the EU collectively that our relations with the world, including trans-Atlantic relations, are best worked out.

If there was a big wobble over the Iraq invasion, and another one over the Constitution fiasco, that central idea still seems to be alive and well in London, largely embodied in the concept of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CPRS), with Javier Solana, the EU's would-be Foreign Minister, as its herald and instrument.

But should it be so? The brutal truth is that EU common foreign policy, in so far as it exists at all, is not serving or protecting British interests in modern conditions at all well. Few would disagree that nowadays effective foreign policy needs partners and allies – more so than ever in this network age. Even the hardest line go-it-alone merchants in Washington now acknowledge that.

But does the EU provide us here in the UK with the right partners? As the centre of economic gravity in the world moves to Asia is the EU helping us in our relations with China? With India? With the turbulent Middle East? With Russia? With the unstable Central Asian republics? And above all, with mighty America, our traditional ally, seemingly so powerful and yet also so vulnerable?

The briefest reality check should tell us that not only is EU policy of little positive benefit in any of these areas, it has become a positive hindrance. The Trans-Atlantic relationship is particularly worrying. In EU hands it has now fallen to the lowest point for decades. Far from the EU calming and clarifying trans-Atlantic disputes by speaking with one clear voice, it seems to be amplifying them so that what were once containable second class differences are being elevated into damaging first class rows. This is not at all in Britain's interest.

For all its armed might America desperately needs real and trusted friends, not just to fulfil its awesome world responsibilities, to sort out Iraq, cope with the new would-be nuclear powers and handle rising China, but to deliver security to its own citizens.

However, true friendship and support mean more than tick-the-box compliance. True friendship means frankness, candour, criticism when appropriate (as long as its is basically constructive and not just born of ill will), compete mutual trust and respect and, even if occasionally, a restraining hand.

The EU does not get to Square One in any of these roles. The rhetoric of EU-US partnership may continue, but even if Javier Solana could articulate a common European policy towards the Americans, which he cannot, why should he get more than a cold nod from the Administration? Why should Washington give a respectful hearing to an entity which it sees – not without justification – as basically anti-

American, sounding less and less like a friend and partner and increasingly like a constantly hostile bloc – a transatlantic neighbour from hell, picking a quarrel on every issue, large or small.

Sixty years ago Britain fulfilled the steadying partner and friend role – at least up to a point, although as Winston Churchill found out, this became very difficult as America began calling all the shots in conducting Allied policy in World War Two. Then there was Kennedy's twin pillars idea in the Cold War context, although it was never a phrase that could stand too much analysis. NATO, too, was going to be the binding link of equals.

But now all that is history and the question to be answered is where we look for the partnership or grouping which the American giant really will listen to and work with, and from which the world, and especially Britain, would so obviously benefit.

The starting point is to identify the countries which are genuinely America's best friends, who are not all screwed up with anti-American resentments, and which would be comfortable with a solid-two-way strategic relationship with the great superpower, not in a poodle capacity but at an equal and full-trust level.

Britain obviously qualifies, despite its occasional poodle tendencies, as does nowadays a more 'normal' Japan – currently tying its expanding and increasingly well-equipped 'self-defence' forces closer than ever with the US (besides having very close ties with Britain).

Australia and New Zealand also belong to this club, with booming India soon qualifying as it develops steadily improving ties with the Americans. In Europe the front-runners are Poland, the brilliant little Baltic three, the Czechs and maybe the Italians, if they can keep their own house in order. Norway, too, small but probably now sitting on the biggest oil and gas reserves outside the Middle East up north in the

Barent Sea, also belongs in the group who are pro-NATO, pro-American, but not uncritically so, and uneasy about EU global pretensions.

Admittedly this would be a geographically scattered grouping, not the sort of regional alliance our history books used to talk about. But in the age of the internet who cares? As partners they are only one click away from each other. Sit down this big and powerful grouping round the table with America's leaders and one would immediately have a partnership of real equality, frankness and mutual respect, with enough influence and clout as well to restrain America's wobblier impulses.

This would be a league or network of willing nations, races and cultures, able to establish an effective framework for world stability in ways which the soured and discredited EU-US 'partnership' is no longer capable of doing.

Britain's foreign policy priority should now be to build up this new kind of alliance, instead of wittering on about pivots, bridges with Europe and the like. The British remain good Europeans, as they have been all along, having saved Europe from itself more than once. But when it comes to twenty first century strategic linkages and alliances, the time has come to think entirely afresh.

Salvaging common EU foreign policy from the Constitution mess and now trying to top it up with a single foreign minister and diplomatic corps will neither restore a healthy Atlantic relationship nor safeguard Britain's wider interests. We need to build on our connections with rising Asia and we need to construct a partnership with the US that really works. And that means we need a new foreign policy.

**2005** , *24th December - Article for Financial Times on The Commonwealth Now*

Ten years ago the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee issued an optimistic Report on the Commonwealth.

High hopes were expressed. In its conclusions the Report asserted that far from being a relic of the past the Commonwealth was evolving as the kind of network institution which suited the age of the information revolution. It went on to recommend a whole series of steps to strengthen both trade and investment ties between Commonwealth countries, and generally to put the Commonwealth more at the centre of British foreign policy.

Have these hopes been realised in the succeeding decade? Have they raised the profile of the Commonwealth as a significant global institution? And will they be reflected in the next Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, (due in Malta in a few days time), or in the Commonwealth Business Forum which immediately precedes it?

The realistic but gloomy answer to these questions must be ‘No’. Many worthy and worthwhile declarations on the world’s problems will no doubt emerge from Malta, and it is true that these bi-annual CHOGMS are friendly and, so many participants say, enjoyable occasions, quite unlike some other Summits one can think of.

But for the wider public, and the media who inform it, the Commonwealth remains at best a mildly useful talking shop and at worst a mere relic of past glories, supposedly binding its 53 member states together with common commitment to the rule of law and democratic values, but in practice marred by ugly rows over the distinctly undemocratic Zimbabwe – which has now walked out

anyway – and the less than perfect behaviour of one or two other member states.

Yet perhaps we are being blinded by these long established perceptions from seeing the Commonwealth institution in a rather different light. It could just be that with many of the world's twentieth century institutions performing so disappointingly a gap in the global institutional architecture has opened up which the Commonwealth model, if its leaders were ready to adapt it, could effectively fill.

The thought rests on both negative and positive global trends. On the negative side we have the UN with its members at loggerheads over fundamental issues and with severe internal problems to boot. We have the EU apparently 'stalled', or at least becalmed, with sharply divided views amongst its members on trade, on security and on world affairs. We have the WTO trying to avoid deadlock at Doha on farm subsidies, and those outside the existing trade blocs feeling increasingly frustrated at their still substantially barred access to the richer markets.

Turn to the Commonwealth and the scene looks far more positive. Intra-Commonwealth trade appears to be expanding, as are investment flows, and this is hardly surprising. The Commonwealth now includes six of the cutting edge countries, aside from the US, in information technology, e-commerce and the growth of the knowledge industries – India, Australia, UK, Canada, Singapore, Malaysia. Shared legal procedures, lack of language barriers (there are no interpreters at Commonwealth gatherings) and many common business 'habits' make life easier for direct investment flows between members.

More than that the Commonwealth offers – at least potentially – the kind of forum in which richer and faster growing countries and the poorer and smaller nations can speak on equal terms, in which the

faiths can sit down and discuss their problems calmly (there are 500 million Muslims in the Commonwealth) and in which almost all members are seriously committed to contributing to global peace and stability, rather than pursuing vendettas against America and the ‘the West’.

None of this may amount – at least yet – to the case for a Commonwealth Free Trade Area (an old idea tried attempted twice in the twentieth century, although in very different conditions). But it does suggest a pause for thought as to how this extraordinary network, with a reach stretching right across regions and continents, might, if it were strengthened imaginatively, do a better job than the existing battered international institutions in both opening up the world economy and uniting the more well-intentioned and responsible countries in facing up to the ugly dangers of terrorism, pariah nations, entrenched and paralysing poverty, corruption and rotten governance – to name a few.

Although countries continue to queue up to join the Commonwealth – which must say something for it – the question is whether in its present form it could ever carry enough clout to have a decisive impact on world trends and events.

A possible way forward might be to offer a much closer association, of not actual membership, to some other important countries who are outside the existing blocs or uncomfortable within them.

The obvious candidate here is Japan – a nation which is at last returning to what it terms ‘normal country status’ – which means, after decades of pacifism, a readiness to contribute to global peace and stability in a more decisive way and on a scale commensurate with its economic weight – which happens to be colossal.

A closely allied grouping which contained Japan, India, Australasia and the UK, for a start, would indeed be a common force of both wealth and power, entitled to a full hearing from the American giant and able to stand up for common values of justice and democracy in a way that no other international institution can currently do.

This would be a Commonwealth Mark Two which fitted neatly and constructively into the global conditions of the twenty first century. It is worth working for.

*2006 . 23rd January. Now we have got to 2006, when at last there seemed a spark of media interest.*

*Article on British Foreign Policy and The Commonwealth Published in The Yorkshire Post*

Britain urgently needs a re-orientation of its foreign policy to meet twenty first century world conditions. The present, predominantly Euro-centric approach ('we must work through our European partners' is the guiding mantra) is not serving us well. Our interests are not being protected and promoted as they should be, our contribution to global peace, stability and development is not nearly as effective as it could be and our own idea of ourselves and our purpose in today's world is blurred and diluted. People like to say that the choice for Britain is between Europe and America, that when it comes to global affairs we are condemned to choosing between being plugged fully into the EU bloc, ineffective and divided as it is on major issues, and being the lapdog of the United States.

But the antithesis is a false one. We certainly need partners in this highly interdependent world. The days of 'go-it-alone' are long past – for the Americans, as they have gradually come to realise, as well as for ourselves. Talk of 'a sovereign independent foreign policy' sounds fine on the platform but is actually quite meaningless.

But our partners must be the right ones. With the centre of world power shifting to Asia, and with the need to repair the battered trans-Atlantic relationship, it is crystal clear that the EU, while a valuable regional association, is not up to the job internationally.

On the contrary it seems to amplify, rather than calm, trans-Atlantic disputes. The Atlantic is growing wider, and that is not at all in Britain's or the world's interests.

So where should we look for like-minded friends and allies, and for a grouping which can maintain a friendly but firm dialogue with the Americans – basically supportive but not afraid to be candidly critical or even restraining - and listened to in Washington with respect when it is.

One answer is on our doorstep. Britain is a key member of a readymade network of enormous reach across continents, embracing many faiths and bound by common ties of amazing intimacy - cultural, legal, sporting, linguistic, scientific, both governmental and non-governmental. This network is the Commonwealth. This may understandably raise eyebrows because the track record of the Commonwealth as a force for peace, development and stability has not in the past been all that good. Is it not just really a history-based talking shop? Has it not fumbled vital issues like the Zimbabwe tragedy? And anyway, with all those impoverished Africa states as members, where's the economic or political beef in such an organisation?

But that could be yesterday's snapshot. The image of the Commonwealth has not yet caught up with some startling new facts. Today the Commonwealth contains six of the most dynamic economies in the world - India, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore and Canada – seven if we include the UK itself, although it is now slipping.

Forget the old ideas of primary producers selling to the richer West, or Western investment in the impoverished East or South. Today the growing capital flows are beginning to be south-south, or even West-East – as Indian (and Chinese) and other Asiatic enterprises nose their way into Europe the high tech wave is coming from the East, and from India in particular, scheduled by 2025 to have a national product

larger than the whole of Western European – the jewel indeed in the Commonwealth network of the future.

But despite all this some doubts remain valid. Can the Commonwealth as it stands really cohere on vital issues, deliver real weight and power, argue the corner of the smaller and poorer countries in a way that the EU most notably does not do, and present one front on the really key issues of democracy, rule of law, upholding of human rights, world policing and a general commitment to free societies and free enterprise?

The answer is that the modern Commonwealth certainly has the right underlying common values but if it is to be an effective platform the framework needs to be strengthened and enlarged.

In effect the Commonwealth should develop its own foreign policy. It should stretch out and work with other like-minded democracies who, along with many existing members, want to be pro-American but not subservient, and have their own perspective on key world issues, not an American-imposed one. Japan is one obvious example. But so, too, are countries like Poland, Turkey, Norway, the Baltic three, Thailand, and even some of the democratising Gulf states.

Put this group together with the existing membership and one would have a kind of Commonwealth Mark Two, a rallying point for the planet's 'good guys' and a coalition of real might (it would contain over a third of the world's GNP), size, experience and influence. It would also be vastly greater source of soft power and influence for Britain, the fons origo of the whole undertaking than anything on offer from Brussels – or indeed from the battered UN [ Even on issues like handling Iran, which is a matter for the Asian powers, plus Russia, just as much as for the West, ((perhaps even more so) , a strong and

wise voice from this greater Commonwealth would get a better reception than threats of force from Washington or the ignored diplomacy of the EU Three.]

A Mark Two Commonwealth is not the complete answer. But it could do better than anything forthcoming from the dated twentieth century institutions we have inherited. It would also be a golden chance for Britain to make her full contribution, in a way which our feeble current foreign policy just does not permit.

**2006 4<sup>th</sup> February.** *The Commonwealth and British Foreign Policy Proposed pamphlet for the CPS on the Commonwealth as an alternative platform for the conduct of British foreign policy and the protection and promotion of British interests in an interdependent world.*

**Britain badly needs a new foreign policy appropriate to the twenty-first century. Our interests are not being protected and promoted as they should be. Nor is our contribution to global peace, stability and prosperity being maximised or being as effective as it could or should be.**

To do better we need partners and allies in an interdependent world, but we need to acquire and work with the right ones. Specifically, our policy and international stance must become less narrowly Euro-centric and be adapted to make much more use of the amazing, more modern and far more adaptable Commonwealth network which is at our disposal.

Taunted recently by MEPs the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, angrily asserted, that ‘our future lies in Europe’. ‘They are our colleagues and partners’, he added

Of course he is right that geographically Europe is our region and neighbourhood, and he is right, too, if he means that the health, stability and prosperity of this wonderful Continent is very much in Britain’s interest. We must always be – and actually have nearly always been – good Europeans and we must make big sacrifices (as we have certainly done in the past) to this end.

But, alas, the Prime Minister means much more than that, and this is where the flaws and fissures in his stance, and in the whole shape of British foreign policy, begin.

What he believes, and many like him, is not only that our future lies in the European Union (not the same as, although easily confused with, Europe) but that our international stance, purposes and interests, should be looked after by the institutions of the European Union and subsumed in a broader common EU foreign policy.

‘We must work’ say the policy-makers, ‘through our European partners’. That is our destiny.

In other words he and others who think like him (and they exist in all three major parties) sees British foreign policy as being primarily to contribute to the larger EU positioning and to making that larger policy work effectively. This remains the central, collective belief as well of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The strategic priority, as set out in FCO documentation,<sup>1</sup> is to help make the EU foreign policy a reality, because that indeed is where our future is said to be.

‘Working with our European partners’ has been the mantra of FCO thinking for three decades. The essence of British foreign policy has been that while bilateral links between Britain and other countries remain important, and our links with America especially important (and given new life by the alliance over Iraq and the Blair-Bush bond), the main and central concern has been ‘getting Europe right’. It is to the Europe of ever closer union and deepening integration that Britain’s ‘destiny’ (a word used rather less recently than in the past) is supposed to beckon us and it is through the EU collectively that our

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<sup>1</sup> See for example the FCO paper ‘UK Strategic Priorities;The Role of the Foreign Office,2003. The Foreign Office White Paper on the Prospects for the EU’ during the 2005 UK Presidency (cm 6611, June 2005) makes even more dismal reading, with either negative or zero progress in seven of the eight declared UK priorities for ‘Europe’s role in the world’.

relations with the world, including trans-Atlantic relations, are best worked out, or so it is said.

If there was a big wobble over the Iraq invasion, and another one over the Constitution fiasco, that central idea still seems to be alive and well in London, largely embodied in the concept of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), with Javier Solana, the EU's would-be Foreign Minister<sup>2</sup>, as its herald and instrument.

But should it be so? The brutal truth is that EU common foreign policy, in so far as it exists at all, is not serving or protecting British interests in modern conditions very well. Few would disagree that nowadays effective foreign policy needs partners and allies – more so than ever in this network age. Even the hardest line go-it-alone merchants in Washington now acknowledge that.

But does the EU provide us here in the UK with the right partners? As the centre of economic gravity in the world moves to Asia, is the EU helping us in our relations with China? With India? With the developing world in an equal and friendly relationship? With the turbulent Middle East? With Russia? With the unstable Central Asian republics? And above all, with mighty America, our traditional ally, seemingly so powerful and yet also so vulnerable?

The briefest reality check should tell us that not only is EU policy of little positive benefit in any of these areas, it has become a serious hindrance. The trans-Atlantic relationship is particularly worrying. In EU hands it has now fallen to the lowest point for decades. Far from the EU calming and clarifying trans-Atlantic disputes by speaking

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<sup>2</sup> The proposed but blocked new EU Constitution creates the post of EU Foreign Minister.

with one clear voice, it seems to be amplifying them so that what were once containable second class differences are being elevated into damaging first class rows. The Atlantic is growing wider. This is not at all in Britain's interest.

For all its armed might America desperately needs real and trusted friends, not just to fulfil its awesome world responsibilities, to sort out Iraq, clarify its own thinking about geo-politics, cope with the new would-be nuclear powers and handle rising China, but to deliver security to its own citizens .

But true friendship and support mean more than tick-the-box compliance. True friendship means frankness, candour, criticism when appropriate (as long as its is basically constructive and not just born of ill will), complete mutual trust and respect and, albeit occasionally, a restraining hand.

The EU does not get to Square One in any of these roles. The rhetoric of EU-US partnership may continue , but even if Javier Solana could articulate a common European policy towards the Americans, which he cannot, why should he get more than a cold nod from the Administration? Why should Washington give a respectful hearing to an entity which it sees – not without justification – as basically anti-American , sounding less and less like a friend and partner and increasingly like a constantly hostile bloc – a transatlantic neighbour from hell, picking a quarrel on every issue, large or small.

Sixty years ago Britain fulfilled the steady partner and friend role – at least up to a point, although as Winston Churchill found out, this became very difficult as America began calling all the shots in conducting Allied policy in World War Two. Then there was Kennedy's twin pillars idea in the Cold War context, although it was

never a phrase that could stand too much analysis. NATO, too, was going to be the binding link of equals.

But now all that is history and the question to be answered is where we look for the partnership or grouping which the American giant really will listen to and work with, and from which the world, and especially Britain, would so obviously benefit.

One conclusion that must be ruled out is that America will listen to Britain alone. A time-warped conceit of the Blair Government has all along been that a special relationship can somehow be resurrected between London and Washington and that first with President Clinton, and then with President George Bush Junior a kind of personal chemistry can ensure the continuation of real British influence on American thinking.

A variant of this is the idea that Britain is some sort of bridge between the USA and Europe. Sir Christopher Meyer's readable but much criticised account of British Prime Ministerial and other visits to Washington<sup>3</sup> brings home the vainglorious absurdity of these dreams, describing vividly, as it does, the mixture of obsequiousness and awe-struck deference shown by the British visitors in Washington to the President and his entourage. As Sir Christopher implies, it only needed the over-eager Mr. Blair to promise undying, loyalty and unconditional commitment, to be 'with you at the first and we'll be with you to the last' for Washington policy-makers to conclude that capture was complete and little further attention to any 'conditions' or qualifications from the British was warranted, except, of course, the ritual diplomatic politesse. The Washington thought bubble has been

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<sup>3</sup> DC Confidential .Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005

easy to read all along. Nice to have the British on board, it goes, but no need to take much notice of what they say.<sup>4</sup>

Just as the United States has gradually discovered that it cannot go-it-alone on the new international scene, so the same applies even more strongly to the United Kingdom. Partners and allies are required in an interdependent world , and partners with sufficient clout and cohesion for Washington to want to listen to them and to have to listen to them. Neither condition applies in the case of the EU, whose basically anti-American stance makes them unwelcome visitors in Washington and worthless interlocutors, having divided views on almost everything, stagnant economies and a minimal force contribution to make to world policing.

A whole army of European leaders, experts, officials and apologists have wasted years, as well as forests of paper, chasing after a flawed belief that Europe can somehow be welded into a solid bloc that will carry weight on the world stage, counter-balance American hegemony and confront Asian challenges.

These people seem not to have grasped that networks have now replaced hierarchies and blocs. They seem not to have understood that the advent of the information age, the new era of globalization and the huge consequential dispersal of information and power make old-style central authority and governance redundant. People power has now been e-enabled, humbling high authority while making the whole business of government much more difficult and subtle, and

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<sup>4</sup> Sir Christopher also argues,(ibid), that Britain possessed, and could have used , more leverage with the Americans over its Iraq policy. I doubt it, although things might have been different if we had turned up with a few credible and heavyweight friends (i.e. not the EU).

transforming not merely governments but relations *between* governments as well.

This applies as much to the EU as to the nation states within it. Trying to recreate the EU in the image of the 200-year-old United States was a foolish mistake<sup>5</sup>. It was worse, because it has distracted the Europeans from the real new tasks to which they should be applying their combined strength -- namely combating the rise of global terror, crime and the warped power of fanaticism, which also derives its dangerous growth from the information revolution. This is the dark side of globalization.

### **Our Real Friends**

Where then should the UK in the twenty first century be looking for real friends and allies on whom it can rely and together with whom it can make a truly effective input to global strategy and stability ? The neglected answer lies on its doorstep. The Commonwealth, a voluntary association of 54 independent states, operating on an advanced, ‘open’ system of co-operation and networking, both formal and informal, offers the basis for a structure of remarkable potential and relevance to the conditions of the twenty-first century .

The long-standing neglect of the Commonwealth, or perhaps more precisely the traditional mixture of boredom and disinterest, – both in the higher reaches of British government and part of the Foreign Office, the British media and the British public – had three origins.

First, the Commonwealth in days gone by seemed pre-occupied with bashing the UK, criticising its colonial and post-colonial role, demanding more aid and generally making the British the focus of

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<sup>5</sup> As proposed by former President Valery Giscard d’Estaing when presiding over the European Convention which gave birth to the draft Constitution.

blame for under-performance in numerous Commonwealth member countries, especially in Africa. To British opinion much of this criticism seemed unfair and unreasonable and ignored the record of relatively successful de-colonisation.

Second, the Commonwealth seemed to offer no obvious economic attractions, while the original European Community clearly did. The days of Empire preference were gone, emerging Commonwealth markets refused to emerge (with the exception of Singapore) and foreign investment looked elsewhere.

Third, the Commonwealth, whilst retaining the British Queen as its titular head, seemed to have no organisational hierarchy or drive at the centre. It appeared incapable of turning talk into real influence and action.

As we shall see, the first of these perceptions fell out of date in the nineteen-nineties or earlier. The second has more recently been overtaken by major shifts in the shape and direction of the global economy. The third view may be correct analytically, but is now metamorphosing into a strength, and not a weakness at all, in the network age. In a space of time seemingly much too short for the attitudes of the policy-making establishment to catch up the Commonwealth has changed almost beyond recognition. We are now looking not at a nostalgia-tinted grouping of slow-growing or stagnant economies but at one of the most successful and relevant collections of nations ever, with some of the central drivers of economic growth in its midst.

Aside from this utterly transformed economic scene, two billion people (31 percent of the world's population) are now linked together in the existing Commonwealth by broadly common legal systems, by countless cultural and sporting links (of which cricket and the

Commonwealth Games are the most obvious, by there are many more), by widespread use of British education syllabuses and exams and by a huge network of associations, exchanges and friendships – from the British point of view a treasure house of soft power, influence and opportunity.

That the British Government has failed so far to seize what sits on this global plate before it is regrettable. But it is not too late.

### **Ten Years of Disappointment.**

Ten years ago, in 1996, the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee produced a seminal report on The Future Role of the Commonwealth.

When it appeared this Report was greeted with loud praise because it seemed to be saying something new. Its central and explicit message was that the Commonwealth, far from being past its time, was acquiring a new significance in the modern world by virtue of its unique network qualities. The Report argued that the Commonwealth of yesterday, with its historic connections, had given way to something quite new and not yet fully appreciated. Here we now had not a fading and constantly whingeing talking shop but a real and dramatic resource for the future benefit of all its members, especially Britain, and of the whole globe – an organisation not just of history and superficial club congeniality, marked by regular gatherings and photo opportunities, and but of real value, passion, purpose and relevance.

Strings of recommendations for re-enforcing this new reality were added, some of which have indeed been implemented<sup>6</sup>.

Yet looking back one can only be profoundly disappointed. Somehow the grand new vision has not emerged. Indeed it could even be argued that the Commonwealth has lost still more of its shine over these last ten years, as it has struggled rather ineffectually with the Zimbabwe tragedy and as other great dramas have passed it by.

Was the Report therefore, although striking a new note at the time, being insufficiently radical and imaginative? Was it merely trying to build new hopes and new structures on old and weak foundations?

That is what I believe went wrong. The Commonwealth *concept* of shared values, customs, language and countless exchanges at both governmental and non-governmental levels, remains as valid as ever, or even more so, but the Commonwealth *framework* needs re-assembling on a somewhat more ambitious scale, to meet entirely new needs, not met elsewhere, in the transformed global conditions now prevailing.

Yesterday, ten years ago, we still saw the USA as the one dominant and, so we thought, invulnerable superpower. Our hopes for world peace rested, perhaps too heavily, on the United Nations. Yesterday we thought a united Europe could play a kind of bloc role in counterbalancing US might and protecting and projecting its member states' interests and influence.

Now we see that these perceptions were either wrong or too small. The new security challenges are totally global. Issues like terror,

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<sup>6</sup> See 72 recommendations for stronger Commonwealth co-operation, at both official and informal levels, in the 1996 FAC Report 'The Future Role of the Commonwealth'.

energy security , migration, disease control, climatic upheavals and disasters – all demand a world-wide network of approaches . Meanwhile the centre of economic gravity is shifting fast – away from the old West and into Asia, with the three super-giants, a resurgent Japan, China and India at the heart of the new order.

But the shift of circumstances is even more complex and deeper than this. The pattern of international capital flows is beginning to change. Investment which used to flow from West to East, from Europe to Asia , is going into reverse, with Chinese and Indian acquisitions in Europe, for example, mounting<sup>7</sup>. At the same time a ‘south-south’ stream of investment is building up, with India, South Africa, Malaysia and Singapore all becoming substantial suppliers of capital to other (mainly Commonwealth) developing countries.

An even more powerful, but barely yet understood, development is the supply chain phenomenon which enables producers to disaggregate and outsource crucial segments of the production process, whether services or manufacturing, to lower-cost operations in developing countries.

The alliances and groupings of the near future , to be economically comprehensive and efficient, need to consist of both advanced and developing countries, to take full advantage of supply chain economics. While it is true that the enlarged European Union has been able to benefit from low-cost operations outsourced to the newer central European member states (amidst many complaints about unfair, low-wage competition), and while it is also true that Western firms are busy outsourcing, despite the political risks, to China, the opportunities are far riskier than, and not half as reassuring and easy

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<sup>7</sup> Japan, of course, has long been ahead of the Asian game and investing in Europe, especially in Britain.

to take up as, those offered by the trans-continental Commonwealth network- a structure which entwines economies at virtually every level of the per capita income and wage scale, from the lowest to the richest and highest, in a network of common values , practices and legal procedures.

There is also the question of size. Small countries have proliferated in the last thirty years and, empowered by information technology, seek a more equal voice with the larger nations. In the EU they have been conspicuously denied this<sup>8</sup>, but in the Commonwealth forum it is a different story. There, thirty two smaller states speak on equal terms, and without being patronised, with twenty or so larger ones, with India as the giant, but a giant, nonetheless, among equals. Promoted by the Commonwealth Secretariat enormous efforts have been taken to understand and assist with the problems of smaller nations in today's world conditions, under the aegis special expert groups – creating an ambience of welcome to smaller states in stark contrast to the big-power dominated EU.

But the most striking 'new' Commonwealth feature of all is the rise of India. In terms of purchasing power parity India is now the world's fourth largest economy. Predictions and extrapolations always need a large pinch of salt, but what they are saying is that India's share of world GNP will rise from 6 percent now to 11 percent by 2025 . By 2035 India's GNP will exceed that of Western Europe. Together with America and China, India will form the third 'pole' of the global

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<sup>8</sup> Reference President Chirac's insulting injunction to the smaller nations of the EU that on the Iraq issue it was good time to keep silent. Unreconstructed British FCO policy has also been to cosy up to France and Germany, in an attempt to form some sort of Big Three domination, and ignore or even damage the interests of the smaller states, many of whom used to look on Britain as their champion.

economy . Currently India is growing at 8 percent, a fraction slower than China (according to official statistics). It has become one of the world's biggest producers and exporters of software.

Of course there are dark sides. One quarter of India's population still lives in abject poverty (it was half in 1978). Regional disparities are vast. But the new overall picture is undeniable. India has become an economic powerhouse. It is indeed the jewel not in the crown but in the Commonwealth.

Thus we have a ready-made and intimate network of nations, large and small, rich and poor, developed and developing, all embraced in the same wide web of linkages.<sup>9</sup>

Not only does this put side by side the most dynamic and fastest growing knowledge-based economies – not just India but Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Malaysia, Canada, Britain itself (in sharp contra-distinction to other West European states, as Gordon Brown is fond of reminding us) – with some of the poorest and most in need of support and friendship. The Commonwealth's official structure also provides a perfect umbrella for a mass of non-governmental affiliations and bonds<sup>10</sup> which give a substance and strength to international relations of a kind which official inter-governmental exchanges cannot provide.

What all this means is that the Commonwealth is a ready-made laboratory for the types of coalitions and alliances which are going to

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<sup>9</sup> Looked at in per capita terms, of the total of 54 states, seven can be categorised as high income, twenty three as mid-income developing and twenty four as low-income poor.

<sup>10</sup> The 1996 FAC Report on the Future Role of the Commonwealth put the number of unofficial Commonwealth organisations at 242. But the figure today may be bigger still.

work in the twenty-first century. As a channel for promoting the healthiest and most fruitful kinds of relationships between the richer and poorer world, and for poverty reduction and successful development it offers a far better prospect than any other institutions inherited from the past century. Above all, it is an open and voluntary system, excellently adapted to the age of the world-wide web, and requiring no heavy central institutions, or constitutions, or a massive central budget to make it work.<sup>11</sup> On the contrary, the Commonwealth maintains, on the slimmest of resources, a powerful momentum towards higher standards of human rights, towards deeper entrenchment of the rule of law and towards sound governance without the need for any large central bureaucracy or accumulation of powers.

By contrast, while being part of the biggest European club, the EU, may be useful it is not going to help us much in these new conditions. The difficulty is one of history. The EU is designed on traditional twentieth century lines of central institutional control and a hierarchy of powers (or competences). It was created in an entirely different world from the one that is now emerging. In the words of one of the star columnists of the Financial Times, hardly a Euro-sceptic organ, the EU has become ‘the wrong institutional platform to deal with globalisation’. (Wolfgang Munchau, 31.10.2005). We need something more to keep us connected, refreshed, in touch – and also safe.

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<sup>11</sup> The annual budget of the Commonwealth’s light central secretariat is 39 times smaller than the annual budget of the EU. A Commonwealth Mark Two might require some strengthening of the Secretariat to organise its new and stronger ‘voice’ and actually clout in world affairs. But it would still be a relatively small affair.

## **Towards a Commonwealth Mark Two**

On paper, today's Commonwealth has precisely the kind of spread needed for these new purposes. But the trouble is that it is not nearly wide enough, nor confident enough to use its weight and authority. For a start the old rule about confining the Commonwealth to English speakers and ex-alumni of the British Empire needs revising. In fact it has already been broken with the inclusion of Mozambique and Cameroon. English is anyway the language of the information age, the necessary universal second tongue. Actually first languages are getting more diverse, and that is welcome. America speaks almost as much Spanish as English. Old dialects and their cultures are being vigorously revived or preserved. Within the UK over 300 languages are regularly spoken and the Metropolitan Police alone prepare advice on emergencies in over one hundred languages.

So the English speaking world now means everything and nothing. The best approach is therefore to think in terms of bringing into this network of common wealth and interest all the nations interested in associating with Commonwealth values and objectives and which really are going to dedicate themselves in earnest or protect and promoting our common interests, security and democratic inclinations. That should be the focus of a truly contemporary British foreign policy.

Which countries should an enlarged and more ambitious Commonwealth embrace, and who should it leave out?

The exclusions should be the vendetta countries, the ones that hate America on principle, hate the advanced world on principle, are still

submerged in anti-colonial bitterness and prejudice, do not really care a jot about poverty reduction or the place of women or the dispossessed and do not want to join or strengthen the international system of trade and security.

The new inclusions should be the nations who have shed all this baggage, who see trade, entrepreneurialism and innovation as their guiding stars, who have no time for protectionist blocs and practices, who do not believe (as too many regrettably still do) that development is all a question of bigger aid donations, and who are prepared to do their full bit to preserve peace and resolve conflicts in a way the UN seems incapable of doing<sup>12</sup>.

So the injunction to the Commonwealth leaders should be to open their books and minds to like-minded and powerful countries, large and small, which broadly share these ideas and approaches. If outright membership seems too radical then there could easily be some looser form of association. One obvious candidate for this kind of relationship is Japan, a nation reviving economically, democratic, increasingly dedicated to helping world stability and peace, committed to open trade, albeit with a few shortcomings (but then we all have those) and seeking a relationship with the US which is supportive without being compliant or subservient – just what the world needs.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The cavalier belief that giving larger aid donations to developing country governments promotes development is still one of the most insidious and damaging convictions amongst aid campaigners. Years of evidence that aid flows actually paralyse development, prolong poverty and buttress mis-government are ignored.

<sup>13</sup> Canada, too, already a member of the Commonwealth and increasingly keen to strengthen it, is showing a healthy tendency to reassess its relationship with the USA on a less subordinate but basically friendly basis.

If it is asked whether there is room for accommodating more than one monarch in this expanded Commonwealth of nations the answer is that we already have this situation and of course it can be arranged and expanded warmly and gracefully<sup>14</sup>.

The greater Commonwealth of the future should not stop there. Of course it already includes the fast awakening colossus, India, as well as several of the world's fastest growing and most advanced and knowledge-driven economies, such as Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia. Thailand could be invited into the association network and we would need to add some good European members, too. Poland and Norway would be obvious and welcome members of the team, and Turkey, too – all instinctively on the side of innovation, open trade, strong Atlantic links and doing their utmost for peace and stability (although Turkey has many burdens on its doorstep). Then there is Russia, still feeling humiliated and much misunderstood, but the day could come when a renovated Russia, shedding all its past complexes, could join this kind of Commonwealth and play a truly constructive part in it. Nor should some Latin-American candidates be overlooked in due course.

At the other end of the size scale this Commonwealth Mark Two ought to offer a particularly attractive home for many more of the smallest nations in a dangerous world – much more favourable than they are currently finding whether in the EU or at the United Nations<sup>15</sup>. One can only admire the tremendous vigour and courage of states like Slovenia in the Balkans and the amazing Baltic three, including dynamic Estonia which has shown that it is not afraid to set

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<sup>14</sup> For instance, the Malaysian Tunku.

<sup>15</sup> At the last count 81 members of the UN were not democracies and had governments which did not believe in, or practise, democratic values – the price of universal membership.

its own path and add its own valuable voice to the international community, rather than be lost in big bloc politics.

Weave this kind of grouping together in a Commonwealth-plus and one begins to have a serious force of real weight, whose opinions would count decisively in the councils of the world. And this would be not just in high-sounding moral terms. Collectively within this grouping there is a vast wealth of peace-keeping experience, as well as of sheer economic power, technological strength and trading weight. (With Japan added, this Mark Two Commonwealth would command – today - just under 25 percent of the world's GNP). Those who say that such a grouping would all be too disparate geographically forget that inside a network it needs only one click on a computer keyboard nowadays to bypass all physical separation and bring allies into the same room<sup>16</sup>.

The might, size and reach of the new grouping, suitably coordinated, would give its members the chance to correct the most dismal feature of today's geo-politics, namely the collapse of American soft power throughout almost the entire world. It is a measure of American policy mis-handling that a recent survey of over a hundred states showed that ninety percent of them now put closer ties with China above ties with the United States – to the delight, perhaps even amazement, of Beijing.

A strengthened Commonwealth, committed to democratic reform and the rule of law, reaching across continents and faiths<sup>17</sup>, and also with

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<sup>16</sup> The new Commonwealth plus associates (including Japan) would have just under 40% of the world's population, 32% of the world's annual GNP at approximately \$10 trillion, slightly more than the USA and one fifth more than the EU. (Source World Bank Development Indicators).

<sup>17</sup> The Commonwealth currently includes 500 million Muslims.

a deep purse, should be able to do better. It should be able both to offer an alternative to China's fortuitous gain in reputation by default and hopefully in due course to give a helping hand in restoring America's battered credibility, although this may also require not merely a refinement of American foreign policy but also a re-opening of the United States mind to international perspectives, from which it has been woefully cut off in recent years. One Commonwealth could speak to another in terms of genuine equality and mutual respect which just do not exist at present.

### **A Fresh Foreign Policy for Britain**

The implications of all this for British foreign policy strategy are profound, positive and exciting. We should now abandon the misguided belief that our foreign policy can be conducted, or our interests protected and promoted, through our EU partners collectively. Their aims are not ours, their weight in the world is not sufficient and their relations with the US are hopelessly compromised. Besides, key world trade and investment issues are now truly globalised and best handled through the WTO forum rather than through Brussels or Washington, or raucous exchanges between the two<sup>18</sup>. Again, the new greater Commonwealth described here would carry a far bigger, and probably more unified, voice in world trade negotiations than the EU.

So it is this widened and more confident partnership which should be the foundation of Britain's foreign policy in the changed world of the

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<sup>18</sup> This is not the place to argue for a return to the old idea of a Commonwealth Free Trade Area. But the WTO breakdown demonstrates that the EU 'voice' is far from the most effective in advancing either British trade interests or the cause of poverty reduction and world development.

twenty first century. This new determination should be reflected in all international for a where Britain and other Commonwealth members have a voice.<sup>19</sup>

But the implications are not all on the external side. A nation's stance and standing in the world are directly linked to the cohesion and health of the society within. As Japan's highly successful leader, Junichiro Koizumi, put it recently 'Diplomacy is directly linked to internal affairs'.

Pollsters are fond of telling us that interest in foreign affairs comes well down the list of voter pre-occupations, way below health, education and crime .But this is because they are putting forward 'foreign policy' as a compartmentalised category and therefore asking the wrong question. Most people do not think in these terms. They can see, but may not express, how the nation's status and positioning in the wider world in practice is directly linked to their daily lives, to their jobs, their families' welfare and security, the local environment and countless features which determine their quality of life<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> At the November 2005 meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government a firm call was made for Commonwealth member states to present a common and robust front for a fair and balanced liberalisation package, and, in the event of WTO failure, for consideration to be given to the revival of the idea of a Commonwealth Free Trade Area. The Commonwealth Secretary General duly registered his disappointment at the WTO, and subsequent Hong Kong Ministerial meeting outcomes. But there was no sign whatever of British attempts to carry this alternative initiative forward, or indeed to support a strong common Commonwealth front at all on world trade issues.

<sup>20</sup> Not forgetting how to how many drugs their children have cheap access.

For example there have been well-founded complaints that our multicultural society in Britain has merely led to a mosaic of isolated ,and even hostile, communities with no common allegiance and no rallying point for their loyalties<sup>21</sup>. This is hardly surprising in a Britain which expresses its central foreign aims through sub-contracting policy to the EU. Make a re-designed Commonwealth the context for our international aims and hopes and Britain becomes a cause worth loving, respecting and working for.

In Britain we seem also to forget that in the last decade or so, whether by accident or design, the country has become a microcosm of the existing Commonwealth and this should be built upon as an asset in the next stage of Commonwealth development. Indeed, the ‘Commonwealth within’ could be a powerful network in an economic sense as well. The deep knowledge about, and contact with, the markets and business networks of almost every Commonwealth market – not just as the big corporate level but even more at the far more intimate (and often more dynamic) personal and family levels – must be a colossal new asset as yet unrecognised.

For everyone there is a need to have a country and to love it, however unfashionable it may have been in recent years to say so. There must for each one of us be a place to stand , a place to grow up. People, like plants, need soil in which to send down their roots. Those who say we can all live nowadays without a country, or content ourselves with trendy notions of the post-modern state and the international community, or even some higher European loyalty, are mistaken. Love of country is not a vague principle but an everyday necessity.

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<sup>21</sup> For example, by Trevor Phillips, Chairman of the Race Relations Board.

The genius of the Commonwealth is that it reconciles that necessity with the equal necessity for common action, without demanding any blank cheques of supra-national renunciation.

To summarize, we must first reform, enlarge and strengthen the Commonwealth, broadening the very concepts on which it was founded, and THEN, so far as Britain is concerned, place it confidently at the very heart of our foreign ,economic and security policies, while encouraging all other member states would do likewise.

This does not make us bad Europeans. Intimate regional cooperation with our European neighbours continues to be required in many vital areas. Nor does it make us lapdogs of the USA. On the contrary we would have the opportunity to shape a far more effective voice in dialogue with the Americans than the EU has come near to achieving. It does not make us neglectful of the UN. But the worst disservice that can be done to the UN, reformed or unreformed, is to expect and demand of it the purpose and unity which it can never, by its nature, deliver.

Finally, it does not make us compulsive builders of new international institutions in a world already overburdened by such bodies, some of them far less accountable than they should be. On the contrary ,given the tools of the information age, only the lightest structure of bureaucratic co-ordination is necessary to achieve rapid co-ordination and coherence.

So let us start moving towards a Commonwealth that can realise all those hopes of the FAC Report a decade ago and doing so in a manner which can have the happy consequence of providing Britain, the originating member, with a new and effective foreign policy with

real edge, in turn giving the inner nation and society the purpose and cohesion which it at present so demonstrably lacks.

## **Conclusion**

The choice for Britain is often said to be between Europe and America. Deeper reflection suggests that things are not so simple, and that this is not really the choice at all. It is the Commonwealth – potentially a global network of power, tailor-made for the 21<sup>st</sup> century– which is the neglected escape route from this bogus antithesis.

Consider the realities of the global situation that now have to be faced. Let us call them the Big Facts:

Big Fact No. 1: The United States is by far the biggest and most powerful military power the world has ever seen as well as the dominant, most successful and dynamic economy on the planet. (So much for all the fashionable and now discredited talk of a few years back about America in decline and so on). It is not a conquering imperial power, as some suggest, but it certainly sees itself as the guardian and promoter worldwide of democracy and freedom.

Big Fact No. 2: For all its size and power, America cannot manage affairs alone and without friends. Big is also vulnerable, especially when the enemy is not so much a state as a state of mind, a dedication to terror and killing that can strike anywhere.

Big Fact No. 3: These friends, if they are true ones, need to be not just compliant but restraining and constructively critical at times. Power

always corrupts and more than ever today America needs a friendly and respected peer group to keep it on track.

Big Fact No. 4: The European Union cannot fulfil this role. It is basically anti-American. Washington may make polite noises about partnership with Europe, but why should it listen to folk it knows to be fundamentally hostile? Even if European views were united on the main global issues, which they are not, the EU would not, and does not, carry any real weight with American policymakers.

Big Fact No. 5: China cannot fulfil this role either. China wants to rival America and be the dominant power in Asia. It is showing its teeth by building up its military weaponry, getting increasingly aggressive over Taiwan and by going out of its way to be friendly with every conceivable rogue regime round the world - including not only Burma/Myanmar and the murderous Sudan regime, where at least there are oil access justifications for being involved, but Mugabe's Zimbabwe as well, where there are none. Even though the Americans and Chinese currently need each other economically, and possibly in resolving such issues as North Korea, the two giants can never be friends.

Big Fact No. 6: Japan and Britain are indeed America's best friends today, along with Australia, New Zealand, India, Singapore, Canada and certain countries in Central Europe like Poland, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia,. They should work together, stick together and address mighty America in a friendly but frank way. Is there something familiar about part of this list? Yes – the non-Europeans are all part of the Commonwealth. Indeed the Commonwealth membership today contains six of the fastest growing, most advanced and knowledge-based economies in the world . This is the obvious platform on which to build a successful partnership with the United

States. Of course it makes sense for Britain to work ceaselessly for prosperous commerce in the European region where it is placed, for healthy investment flows, low tariffs and fair-trade rules. And, of course, it makes sense to have neighbourhood policing and close collaboration with neighbours on issues like the environment, crime and immigration. The EU can still partially fulfil these regional roles, despite its dated structure and procedures.

But it makes even more sense to recognize the undeniable fact of America's dominant power and to seek to influence the wielding of that colossal power in a friendly and constructive way, allowing Commonwealth to speak to Commonwealth on terms of unambiguous equality and genuine mutual respect.

This is something China will never do and the leading EU states have shown they cannot do. France has played almost no role at all in assisting American-led policy in Iraq and the Middle East (except recently over Lebanon). German leaders have fought a whole election on an anti-American ticket.

So, rather than facing a choice, the countries of the Commonwealth network, plus like-minded allies such as Japan, face a clear and constructive way forward. As America's real best friends, they should form a cohesive and intimate grouping - a permanent, reliable and sturdy coalition of the willing and the responsible. The platform and model for that grouping should be an open and forward-looking Commonwealth of nations, including both developed and developing, richer and poorer, but all on equal and friendly terms and linked not by patronising condescension but by common values and intentions. If some of mighty America's attitudes and policies worry them they should say so, and they will be listened to. They will have more influence than any other blocs, institutions or alliances.

That is now much the surest way toward global stability and balance in this dangerously unstable 21st century, and offers much the best guide for the re-direction of Britain's enfeebled foreign policy.

**2006 17th October.** *Global Strategy Forum A Post Neo-Conservative Foreign Policy Time for New Partners* . This was pulling together the whole set of arguments and themes of earlier articles, and putting the Commonwealth issue in the much larger frame of British geopolitical strategy (or absence of!) .

We might as well face it. British foreign policy is now in limbo. There it will remain until Tony Blair finally goes , until President Bush – or maybe his successor – somehow constructs a recovery strategy in America’s Middle East policy and until the ‘renaissance of thinking’ about Britain’s own position which Blair himself, in a breath-taking act of self-disassociation on a Walter Mitty scale, has called for - gets under way. Whether this happens once Blair is replaced we do not know, although there have been hints from the Gordon Brown camp that he might marginally distance Britain, in some unspecified ways, from the ever-receding Bush dream of ‘A New Middle East’.

Meanwhile, while General Sir Richard Dannatt may ‘say what everyone is privately saying’ British policy remains hooked to Washington policy in a way which does nothing for healthy Anglo-American relations. Soon James Baker, the former Secretary of State and Republican chairman of Washington’s ‘Iraq Study Group’ - trusted adviser to the Bush family - will complete his travels and no doubt have quite talks with the President behind closed doors. We will have to wait outside and then be told what has been decided in the way of what Mr.Baker has described as ‘the alternatives between ‘stay the course’ and ‘cut and run’.

This will be ,I suspect, some kind of ingenious Daytona-model conference on Middle East security to which countries will have to be invited, such as Syria and Iran, who were frankly not on Washington’s

original invitation list. Baker has reportedly been already talking to them. We'll have to see whether any of this is possible while Mr. Bush remains in the White House.

Either way we here must be near the nadir of our influence on these affairs. It is all very different from the hey-day of Bush-Blair togetherness. The original idea, it will be recalled was for Britain to be a bridge, (or was it a pivot?) between America and Europe. But the bridge, if it ever stood up for a moment, is now a crumbling heap of concrete on the river bed.

On paper it looked good, like so many Blair designs. Britain would be a fully signed up member of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy and at the same time numero uno in Washington, the unswerving friend from across the Atlantic, side by side with America in its democracy crusade. The bridge structure would wonderfully link the two.

The design was never going to work because the anchor points either side would never have supported it.

On the US side, for all the protestations that Britain was, or is, America's trusted and equal partner, that was never the Bush team's view. It was nice to have Britain on side and Blair was a great guy, and so on. But the Americans needed no middle man to interpret Europe to them. They could see for themselves the virulent anti-Americanism in 'old Europe' and they anyway believed – wrongly, as it turns out - they could manage alone.

On the European side there was – and remains – disunity. The rhetoric is plentiful but the reality is slim. The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, which leading EU Ministers continue to describe

daily as being essential to secure Europe's influence on the world stage and which our own Foreign and Commonwealth Office still seems regard as their foreign policy priority ('working through our European partners' etc) is a feeble instrument and anyway little concerned with protecting and promoting Britain's real interests, or enabling Britain to make its most effective contribution to global peace, stability and development .

Quite simply, while effective foreign policy needs partners and allies – more so than ever in this network age – our main European neighbours are the wrong partners and the CFSP ties us into the wrong partnership. If the capsized EU Constitution is dragged up and re-floated, as is clearly planned, the CFSP will be right there intact on the foredeck. Britain should stay as clear as it can.

The most obvious reason for this is that on most of the key international issues no coherent common EU position exists. With twenty five marvellously diverse nations, and twenty five different perspectives on the world, anything pushed through the CFSP filter is bound to be muffled , fuzzy and a fertile source of misunderstanding. This is so whether the issue is Iraq or Iran or Israel-Palestine or Lebanon, or Russia and how to handle Mr.Putin, or China and weapons, or Turkey and enlargement, or the UN, or above all, how to talk to the Americans.

Trans-Atlantic relations have now fallen to their lowest point for decades. Far from the EU calming and clarifying trans-Atlantic disputes by speaking with one clear voice, it seems to be amplifying them so that what were once containable second class differences are being elevated into damaging first class rows. Despite Peter Mandelson's protestations, and no doubt sincere efforts, the Doha round was sunk by the very existence of what the Financial Times

described as ‘thirteen or fourteen EU Member States , periodically orchestrated by France’. None of this was, or is, at all in Britain’s interest.

### **America Needs Friends, but not Lackeys.**

But there is a deeper reason for looking for something better than CFSP as a foreign policy vehicle.

For all its armed might America desperately needs real and trusted friends, not just to fulfil its awesome world responsibilities but to deliver security to its own citizens. Even the go-it-alone warriors in Washington are now coming to recognise this.

Less easy to swallow in Washington nowadays is the fact that true friendship and support mean more than tick-the-box compliance. True friendship means frankness, candour, criticism when appropriate (as long as its is basically constructive and not just born of ill will), compete mutual trust and respect and , even if occasionally, a restraining hand.

The EU does not get to Square One in any of these roles. The rhetoric of EU-US partnership may continue , but even if Javier Solana, the struggling would be EU ‘foreign minister’, could articulate a common European policy towards the Americans, which he cannot, why should he get more than a cold nod from the Administration? Why should Washington give a respectful hearing to an entity which it sees – not without justification – as basically anti-American , sounding less and less like a friend and partner and increasingly like a constantly hostile bloc – a transatlantic neighbour from hell, picking a quarrel on every issue, large or small.

Sixty years ago Britain fulfilled the steady partner and friend role – at least up to a point. Then there was Kennedy’s twin pillars idea in the Cold war context, although it was never phrase that could stand too much analysis. NATO, too, was going to be the binding link of equals.

But now all that is history and the question to be answered is where we look for the platform on which to gather a partnership or grouping which the American giant really will listen to and work with, and from which the world, and especially Britain, would so obviously benefit.

The starting point is to identify the countries which really are America’s best friends, who are not all contorted with anti-American resentments, and who would be comfortable with a solid-two-way strategic relationship with the great superpower, not in a poodle capacity but at an equal and full-trust level.

A structure is to hand which could at least form at least the underpinning for such a platform. This structure, or network, is the 54 nation Commonwealth, which far from being a marginal institution, full of good works and nostalgia, is now emerging as the ideal model for international relations in the new conditions the world faces

Today’s Commonwealth now contains thirteen of the world’s fastest growing economies, including the most potent emerging markets. Outside the USA and Japan, the key cutting edge countries in information technology and e-commerce are all Commonwealth members. The new ‘jewel in the Commonwealth Crown’ turns out to be the old jewel, dramatically re-polished and re-set, namely booming India, the world’s largest democracy with a population set to exceed China’s.

This presents a picture so far removed from the old image of the Commonwealth , bogged down in demands for more aid and arguments about South Africa (or latterly Zimbabwe) that many sleepy policy makers find it simply too difficult to absorb. The unloved ugly duckling organisation has grown almost overnight into a true swan. Or to use a different metaphor the Commonwealth of today and tomorrow has been described as ‘The Neglected Colossus’. It should be neglected no longer .

### **Trade, yes, but a Wider Commonwealth Role as well**

The new story should not just be about bread and butter matters and new economic opportunities staring us in the face. The Commonwealth needs to be re-assessed in terms of its real weight in securing world stability, in balancing the dialogue with the U.S. giant, in linking rising Asia and the West, in helping to handle the prickliest of issues such as in the Middle East, in Iran and Central Asia and in the Eastern Pacific, in promoting better development links, in combining global energy security with climate security, in bringing small and larger nations, poorer and richer, together on mutually respectful and truly friendly terms and in bridging the faith divides which others seek to exploit and widen.

In all these areas the Commonwealth, reformed, reinforced, built upon and enlarged, offers, as the Indian Industry Minister Mr,Kamal Nath, wisely perceives, ‘ the ideal platform’.

By accident as much as design the Commonwealth emerges from a controversial past to take a perfect place in this new order of thinking and acting. The fact that the Commonwealth now has no dominant member state, or even a coterie of such states, far from being a weakness is now a strength.

Because the Commonwealth is founded on respect for nation states, each following its own path, yet recognising the imperative of interdependence, constant adjustment can take pace to new challenges, with partnerships and coalitions being swiftly tailored to each new scene.

This answers three dilemmas which Britain faces. .

The first is that people want more than ever in an age of remote globalisation, to develop their own identities, to have countries and localities to love and defend and take pride in. They recognise the fact of interdependence but they long equally for ownership and a degree of independence. Superior ideas of supra-national government and super-states, along with sweeping dismissals of the relevance of the nation state, can play no part in resolving these deep and competing needs, and indeed utterly fail to do so when imposed by well-intentioned integrationists, as in the case of the EU.

Second, rigid bloc alliances cannot keep up with the kaleidoscope of change. This is what Tony Blair and his close colleagues have painfully discovered. The more that the European Union tries to draw its members into a rigid and unified political and military bloc the less effective it becomes. The more that the world is seen as clinging to a structure of blocs established in rivalry to each other the more the real criss-cross network of bilateral linkages between nations is neglected. Yet it is just this new and more flexible pattern which provides far the best guarantee of stability and security.

Third, the new texture of international relations is made up not just of inter-governmental and official contacts but of a mosaic of non-governmental and sub-official agencies and organisations. This takes time to grow, but grow it has under the Commonwealth canopy into

an amazing on organizations and alliances between the professions, the academic and scholastic worlds, the medical, educational, scientific and legal communities and a host of other interest groups linked together across the 54 nation Commonwealth group.

### **Enter Chinese power**

The decline of America's 'soft power', reputation and influence almost across the entire globe, dragging Britain down some of the way with it, is a tragedy. The dwindling of Pax Americana leaves a dangerous vacuum. Into this vacuum, cautiously, subtly, but steadily are moving not the Europeans, with their slow growth and their inward-looking mentality, but the Chinese – with cash, with investment projects, with trade deals, secured access to oil and gas supplies in an energy hungry world, with military and policing support and with technology. A replay in reverse of the fourteenth century is unfolding, when China retreated in on itself and Europe reached outwards to every corner of the planet.

Now it is exactly the other way round.

The Chinese have been quick learners about the use of soft power in this new world and about applying the strategy laid down over two thousand years ago by Sun-Tzu of 'winning without war'. If only the neo-con intellectuals had read that!

The vacuum is one which ought to be filled not by the Chinese dictatorship but by the free democracies of the Commonwealth and its like-minded associates, from both North and South, banded together by a commitment to freedom under the rule of law and ready to make real and common sacrifices in the interests of a peaceful and stable

world and the spread of democratic governance in many different forms.

The Commonwealth possesses the vital attributes for dealing with this new world which the old 20th century institutions so conspicuously lack.

It stretches across the faiths ,with half a billion Muslim members; it stretches across all the Continents, thus by its very existence nullifying the dark analysis of a coming clash of civilisations.

Better still if a more confident Commonwealth now reaches out and makes friendly associations with other like-minded nations, both in Europe and Asia. Japan , with some twelve percent of the entire world's GNP, and with its confidence and dynamism now restored, is ready to make links with the Commonwealth, especially with India and Britain together. The thread which binds the interests of these three nations together – Japan, India and the UK – is potentially a strong one, presenting us with untold new opportunities. We make a huge mistake in not building more strongly on our links with Japan, especially when it is dealing with its tricky and giant neighbour – a task which the new prime minister Shinzo Abe (incidentally very pro-British) is addressing with great skill and firmness

Australia and New Zealand also belong to this club, with booming India soon qualifying as it develops steadily improving ties with the Americans. In Europe the front-runners are Poland, the brilliant little Baltic three, the Czechs and maybe the Italians, if they keep their own house in order.

Admittedly this would be a geographically scattered grouping, not the sort of regional alliance our history books used to talk about. But in

the age of the internet who cares? As partners they are only one click away from each other. Sit down this big and powerful grouping round the table with America's leaders and one would immediately have a partnership of real equality, frankness and mutual respect, with enough influence and clout as well to restrain America's wobblier impulses.

This would be a league or network of willing nations, races and cultures, able to establish an effective framework for world stability in ways which the soured and discredited EU-US 'partnership' is no longer capable of doing .

Britain's new foreign policy priority should be to build up this new kind of alliance, instead of dreaming about pivots, bridges with Europe and the like. The British remain good Europeans, as they have been all along, having saved Europe from itself more than once. But when it comes to twenty first century strategic linkages and alliances, the time has come to think afresh.

Salvaging the CPRS and topping it with a single foreign minister and diplomatic corps will neither restore a healthy Atlantic relationship nor safeguard Britain's wider interests. We need to build on our connections with rising Asia and we need to construct a partnership with the US that really works.

To play a part in this the Commonwealth Secretariat should be encouraged to develop its external wing in a much more powerful way than hitherto and perhaps have a nominated high official to work with the Secretary General and act as the Commonwealth's High Representative. That will of course been bigger budgetary contributions from the member states. But make such an emboldened Commonwealth the central platform of the international future and

there will then be an enlightened and responsible grouping on the planet , ready to be America's candid friend, but not its lapdog - a serious and respected force, both in economic and trading terms and in terms of upholding security and peace-keeping.

### **Energy Security and Climate Security Issues**

An enhanced Commonwealth should also spread its wings on energy and climate issues. At present there is no global forum in which a variety of free nations, rich and poor, but all faced with the same problems of staggeringly high oil prices, energy security challenges and with the longer term need to curb carbon emissions and create a greener and cleaner long term environment, can meet together, exchange views and technologies, and develop some common clout in face of OPEC and the other giant producers.

The present energy and climate dialogue between the richer world and the developing nations is not at all healthy or constructive. The biggest developing countries , such as India and China, have remained predictably cool towards the idea they should now slow down their growth and use more expensive energy to compensate for all the carbon the already industrialised world has already dumped in the atmosphere.

India, China and America have half the world's coal reserves and they intend to burn them . Yet As the Indian Environment Minister was saying the other day 'We are developing countries. We cannot give any promise, any commitment to reduce further our carbon emissions'

The Commonwealth might be the forum – and no other exists – where these difficult divergences might begin to be reconciled.

## **A Key UK Priority.**

It is the strengthening of this expanded Commonwealth network which the UK should now make its key foreign policy priority and together with which it should re-build its own foreign policy priorities. It should do so because this route offers far the best way both for a nation such as ours, with our history and our experience and skills, to make a maximum contribution to meeting the world's many ills and , even more, because it is the best way to promote and protect our own interests world-wide.

In particular the UK should consider transferring the administration of that part of its overseas development effort which at present goes through the EU from that unhappy channel to the Commonwealth system, and encourage both other Commonwealth members to do likewise and the Secretariat to develop the full capacity to handle this role. This single move would give the Commonwealth huge new prestige and resources, direct our aid efforts far more effectively to poorer Commonwealth member states, who are our closest friends and to whom we owe the strongest duty and greatly strengthen the UK's own prestige and effectiveness in the global development process.

And when the Prime Minister calls for children here to be taught a 'greater sense of British identity', it should really be 'British and Commonwealth identity'. That alone conveys the broader and outward-looking sense of interdependence and duty which is the true message with which young British children should carry in today's world.

Mr.Blair is quite wrong to describe the British as 'reluctant global citizens' as he did in Manchester. We are outward looking by instinct and history. And his would-be successor Gordon Brown is comically

wrong in his narrow emphasis on ‘Britishness’. The whole secret of British influence in the world, which has been out of all proportion to our small size, has been to rise above nationalistic posturings and think, and teach our children to think, about a wider canvas.

Of course we must always be the best possible local members of our European neighbourhood – as, incidentally we nearly always have been , although some people forget this. I hope that the recently instigated Tory Movement for European Reform will mobilize all the huge stock we have of ideas for developing a more modern and flexible structure of European cooperation and for being good contributors to local and regional needs.

But Europe is no longer the world’s most prosperous region. It is our duty to build up our links, many of which were so strong in the distant past, with what are becoming the world’s most dynamic areas, to which both economic and political power are now flowing – and not just the bigger ones but the smaller nations as well , the struggling poor ones as well as the rapidly industrialising and increasingly high-tech ones .This is what an enlarged Commonwealth can do for us in a way that the European Union can never do and for which it lacks the reach and the right basic policy structure.

It as certainly not entered the minds of the Bush Administration that the USA is no longer the centre of the world, however many carrier fleets and missiles it may possess, and no longer the automatic ‘leader’ of the democracies - at the head of which it is so fond of setting itself. And I am not convinced it has entered the heads of policy-makers in London either.

Yet the member states of an organisation like the Shanghai Cooperation Group could now be as influential in resolving super-

sensitive issues like Iran, nuclear proliferation or North Korean behaviour as the Atlantic powers. Everyone keeps repeating that power has shifted to Asia, as it has, but the policy-makers seem unable to follow through the implications.

Well it is time we woke up to what is happening and subjected Britain's external relations priorities to a major re-alignment. And that is why a symbolic re-christen should now take place . The home of our able and experienced diplomats should be re-labelled the Commonwealth and Foreign Office – the CFO not the FCO. Small changes can signify a lot.

**2007.** *13<sup>th</sup> October Text of a speech on the Future of the Commonwealth, to a seminar at the Strickland Foundation in Malta .*

When I was asked to prepare this talk on the future of the Commonwealth, as a possible prologue to the great Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting shortly to take place on this historic island, I naturally went back to the seminal report on the Future Role of the Commonwealth written by the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee in 1996, a Committee which I had the honour to chair at the time.

When it appeared this Report was greeted with loud praise because it seemed to be saying something new. Its central and explicit message was that the Commonwealth, far from being past its time, was acquiring a new significance in the modern world by virtue of its unique network qualities. We argued that the Commonwealth of yesterday, with its nostalgic connections, had given way to something quite new and not yet fully appreciated. Here we now had not a fading talking shop but a real and dramatic resource for the future benefit of all its members and of the whole globe – an organisation not just of history and club congeniality, marked by regular gatherings, and but of real value, passion, purpose and relevance.

We added strings of recommendations for re-enforcing this new reality , some of which have indeed been implemented.

### **A Decade of Disappointment: New Radicalism Needed**

But looking back I remain profoundly disappointed. Somehow the grand new vision has not emerged. Indeed it could even be argued that the Commonwealth has lost still more of its shine over these last ten

years, as it has struggled with the Zimbabwe tragedy and as other great dramas have passed it by.

So I ask myself, were we being insufficiently radical and imaginative at that time ? Were we merely trying to build new hopes and new structures on old and weak foundations?

Yes, I sense that is just what was, and remains, wrong. The Commonwealth *idea* of shared values and countless exchanges at both governmental and non-governmental levels, remains as valid as ever, but the Commonwealth *framework* needs re-assembling on a vastly more ambitious scale, to meet entirely new needs, not met elsewhere, in the transformed global conditions now prevailing.

Yesterday, ten years ago, we still saw the USA as the one dominant and, so we thought, invulnerable superpower . Our hopes for world peace rested, perhaps too heavily, on the United Nations. Yesterday we thought a united Europe could play a kind of bloc role in counterbalancing US might and protecting its member states interests.

Now we see that these perceptions were either wrong or too small. The new security challenges are totally global. Issues like terror ,energy security , migration, disease control, climatic upheavals and disasters – all demand a world-wide network of approaches . Meanwhile the centre of economic gravity is shifting fast – away from the old West and into Asia, with the two super-giants, China and India at the heart of the new order.

Being part of the European club may be useful ,but it is not frankly going to help us much in these new conditions. We need something more to keep us connected, refreshed, in touch – and also safe.

The Commonwealth has the kind of spread we need for these new purposes, but it is not wide enough. So Lesson One for me is that we

drop the old nostrum about confining the Commonwealth to English speakers. That's ridiculous. English is the language of the information age anyway, the necessary universal second tongue. Actually first languages are getting more diverse, and that is welcome. America speaks almost as much Spanish as English. Old dialects and their cultures are revived or preserved. Within the UK, my own country, over 300 languages are regularly spoken and the Metropolitan Police alone prepare advice on emergencies in over one hundred languages.

So the English speaking world now means everything and nothing. Let's begin instead by bringing into this network of common wealth and interest all the nations that really are going to dedicate themselves in earnest or protect and promoting our values, interests, safety and democratic inclinations.

### **A Commonwealth Mark Two. Or it now Three?**

The exclusions from our enlarged Commonwealth should be the vendetta countries, the ones that hate America on principle, hate the advanced world on principle, are still submerged in anti-colonial bitterness and prejudice, do not really care a jot about poverty reduction or the place of women or the dispossessed and do not want to join or strengthen the international system of trade and security.

The new inclusions should be the nations who have shed all this baggage, who see trade, entrepreneurialism and innovation as their guiding stars, who have no time for protectionist blocs and practices, who do not believe (as too many still do) that development is all a question of bigger aid donations, and who are prepared to do their full bit to preserve peace and resolve conflicts in a way the UN seems incapable of doing.

So my first injunction to the Commonwealth Summit leaders is to open their books and minds to new and powerful members, as well as smaller nations, who share these ideas and approaches. The obvious major candidate is Japan, a nation reviving economically, democratic, increasingly dedicated to helping world stability and peace, committed to open trade, albeit with a few shortcomings (but then we all have those) and seeking a relationship with the US which is supportive without being compliant or subservient – just what the world needs.

If someone asks whether there is room for accommodating two monarchs in this expanded Commonwealth of nations the answer is that we already have this situation and of course it can be arranged warmly and gracefully.

My greater Commonwealth of the future does not stop there. Of course it already includes one of the fast awakening giants, India, as well as Australia, New Zealand, Singapore (Hong Kong), Malaysia. Thailand should be invited but we would need to add some good European members, too. Poland and Norway would also be good members of the team, and Turkey, too – all instinctively on the side of innovation, open trade, strong Atlantic links and doing their utmost for peace and stability (although Turkey has many burdens on its doorstep. Then there is Russia, still feeling humiliated and much misunderstood, I know. But the day could come when a renovated Russia, shedding all its past complexes, could join this kind of Commonwealth and play a truly constructive part in it. Nor would I rule out some Latin-American candidates in due course.

At the other end of the size scale I would like to see this Commonwealth Mark Two offer a particularly favourable home for the smallest nations in a dangerous world. Obviously I include your own Malta here, but I am also full of admiration for the tremendous vigour and courage of states like Slovenia in the Balkans and the

amazing Baltic three, including dynamic Estonia which has shown that it is not afraid to set its own path and add its own valuable voice to the international community, rather than be lost in big bloc politics.

Weave this kind of alliance together and one begins to have a serious force of real weight, not just morally but economic and military, whose opinions would count decisively in the councils of the world. There is a vast wealth here of peace-keeping experience, as well as of sheer economic power, technological power and trading strength. Those who say that such a grouping would all be too disparate geographically forget that inside a network it needs only one click on a computer keyboard nowadays to bypass all physical separation and bring allies into the same room.

### **Foreign Policy in a Changed World.**

The implications of all this for the foreign policy strategy of my own country are profound. We should now abandon the misguided belief that our foreign policy can be conducted, or our interests protected and promoted, through our EU partners collectively. Their aims are not ours, their weight in the world is not sufficient and their relations with the US are hopelessly compromised. Besides, key world trade and investment issues are now truly globalised and best handled through the WTO forum rather than through Brussels or Washington, or raucous exchanges between the two. Again, the new greater Commonwealth I describe would carry a far bigger, and probably more unified voice in world trade negotiations than the EU.

So it is this Mark Two (or should it be Mark 3) Commonwealth which should be the foundation of Britain's foreign policy in the changed world of the twenty first century.

But the implications are not all on the external side. In Britain we seem to forget that in the last decade or so, whether by accident or design, we have become a microcosm of the existing Commonwealth and this should be built upon as an asset in the next stage of Commonwealth development.

There have been well-founded complaints that our multicultural society in Britain has merely led to a mosaic of isolated, and even hostile, communities with no common allegiance and no rallying point for their loyalties. This is hardly surprising in a Britain which expresses its central foreign policy aims through the EU. Make a re-designed Commonwealth the context for our foreign aims and hopes and Britain becomes a cause worth loving, respecting and working for. Indeed, the 'Commonwealth within' could be a powerful network in an economic sense as well. The deep knowledge we have now accumulated about every Commonwealth market and how to connect to it – not just as the big corporate but even more at the small and growing enterprise level – must be a colossal new asset as yet unrecognised.

**In summary** we first reform, enlarge and strengthen the Commonwealth, broadening the very concepts on which it was founded, and THEN, so far as Britain is concerned, we place it confidently at the very heart of our foreign, economic and security policies. I hope that all other member states would do likewise.

This does not make us bad Europeans. Intimate regional cooperation with our European neighbours continues to be required in many vital areas. It does not make us poodles of the USA. On the contrary we would have the opportunity to shape a far more effective voice in dialogue with the Americans than the EU has come near to achieving. It does not make us neglectful of the UN. But the worst disservice that can be done to the UN, reformed or unreformed, is to expect and

demand of it the purpose and unity which it can never, by its nature, deliver.

Finally, it does not make us compulsive builders of new international institutions in a world already overburdened by such bodies, some of them far less accountable than they should be. On the contrary ,given the tools of the information age only the lightest structure of bureaucratic co-ordination is necessary to achieve rapid co-ordination and coherence.

So let us start moving towards a Commonwealth that can realise all those hopes of our Report a decade ago and which can have the happy side-effect of giving Britain, the originating member, a new and effective foreign policy with real edge, in turn giving the inner nation and society the purpose and cohesion which it at present so demonstrably lacks.

**2008.** Article for The Japan Times. Published September 11<sup>th</sup> 2008. A Welcome Shift in British Foreign Policy

David Cameron, the leader of the UK's Conservative Opposition, is highly likely to be Britain's next Prime Minister when the General Election comes in twelve to eighteen months time. He is in effect the Prime Minister-in-waiting.

His views about the international scene are therefore very important not just to the British but to Europe and, arguably, the whole world.

*Very recently he made a speech, while visiting Pakistan, of great significance. It indicated that the Conservatives are beginning to shape out a distinctive and up-to-date view on international affairs and British foreign policy. Far from being marginal to British politics his words contain the seeds of the truly 'big idea' that is needed to indicate that a Conservative Government has something entirely new and different to offer.*

What Cameron had to say about the dangers of trying to export 'democracy' as a package, or of imagining it can be 'dropped from ten thousand feet' on some erring populace, shows that just does not buy the simplified notions peddled by the outgoing Bush Administration to which the former UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair, was so partial – namely that 'democracy' is somehow 'the property of the West and a system to be 'imposed' on other cultures.

Set this realistic rejection of American notions alongside the parallel Conservative aim of reforming the EU into into a more flexible and less centralised bloc, with fewer pretensions to strut on the world stage, and we have the beginnings of a far more confident Britain,

ready to play an effective part in the new global network, building on its traditional world skills, its links with Asia and its pole position in the Commonwealth.

The message that flows from Cameron's insights is that the UK must not be hobbled in its international connections and contributions either by Washington's two-dimensional visions nor by the limp attitudes of our European partners, as they struggle in vain to reach a common foreign policy..

The whole starting point in EU thinking is wrong. Pooling foreign policy interests within the EU, far from bringing strength through unity, guarantees weakness through division and committee compromise. The reforming provisions in the recent Lisbon Treaty , (now becalmed by the Irish rejection) ,far from overcoming this weakness, would make it much more pronounced.

But the other equally important fallacy, embraced even by those who have accepted the above view on the EU's foreign policy role, is that the UK must therefore cosy up even closer to America, otherwise we will be 'isolated'. The significance of the Cameron comments is that the falsity of this argument ,too, is recognised. In a network world a nation like the UK, with its history and experience , and its connections, can be most effective if it works at a certain distance from *both* these blocks . 'Solid but not slavish' is the neat and correct summary by William Hague, likely to be Cameron's future Foreign Minister, of how UK-US relations should be.

This clearing of the air about where the UK should stand now opens the way for a vigorous and creative development of UK links and interests with the new players on the world stage - many of whom happen anyway to be Britain's old friends who in recent years have

been looking on with some dismay while British policy has neglected them in favour of the EU.

Top of the list come the rising nations to whom power, both economic and political, is fast shifting away from the old Atlantic axis . This is a trend about which one hears little from either US presidential candidate. Both still speak as though America automatically possesses international leadership . What neither they nor large sections of the US media have grasped, but what Cameron seems to perceive, is that while America is still a mighty economy, its size no longer delivers influence. New power centres and alliances have grown.

The vast network of the modern Commonwealth provides Britain with a quick way into these new alliances and interests, notably through links with India, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore and Canada - to name but a few of the new global players.

But the list of 'new friends' on which the British should be working much harder is not limited to Commonwealth members, close though they can be , thanks to common language and common values and ,well, sheer informal friendship.

Waiting for the British to craft much warmer and stronger links are, for example, the Japanese, who long for a restoration of the old early 20th century intimacy, the Middle East Gulf states who always admired the British and wonder where they have gone, and even some of the newer EU members who look uneasily at Brussels and remember Britain's old loyalty to Europe's smaller and more easterly states .

As for the other new giants like Russia, China and Brazil (the latter fast becoming, like Canada, a leading energy power) this is the time for the UK to establish its own distinctive relationships with these

countries, well away from American or EU preconceptions and postures.

So in sum the new British leadership lying just ahead will be guided by a bold and profound critique of American misunderstandings of the new world, and an equally bold critique of the wrong direction in which too many are still trying to take the EU . That in turn will open the way for a truly constructive UK interdependence with the global network, whilst remaining in its role as good club members of a reformed Europe, keeping a sound but carefully calibrated friendship with America, and sustaining its pivotal membership of the Commonwealth – which is emerging as the perfect model for 21st century global relationships.

Cameron's remarks open the gateway towards this uplifting prospect. It is only a start, but it is a very welcome one.

## **2008 The Globalisation Institute Perhaps they Have not Quite Realised**

*Easternisation revisited , a re-examination of the Atlantic role in global developments and a call for a new theme in British foreign policy.*

This is a story, a plea and a proposal.

The **story** is how British foreign policy lost its way in the early years of the twenty first century, seriously weakening Britain's reputation and influence , as well as the nation's internal sense of unity, security and purpose.

The **plea** is for our policy leaders to make a renewed effort to understand the deep forces which have changed the nature and pattern of international relations, and changed the way in which national security is safeguarded and influence projected – an understanding which has eluded not just minds in London but much of the Washington establishment as well , with visibly disastrous results.

The **proposal** is that without in any way betraying our friends, without ceasing to be America's good partner, without ceasing to be good Europeans, we find a restored place for Britain in this transformed global pattern, using our historical experience, instincts and ties, our position and our national talents once again to the full.

### **The Bridge of Dreams**

The theory of the Blair years was excellent. Britain would be a bridge between an America confident in its continuing task of leadership in

the age of globalisation and a Europe increasingly united, purposeful and dynamic.

This would put the British in – yes – a pivotal role , at the epicentre of world events, wonderfully positioned between Pax Americana and Pax Europa. Gone would be resigned or outright defeatist talk of Britain as the Athens to Washington’s Rome, so widespread in the days of Harold Macmillan. And gone would be fears of Britain as the isolated offshore island of Europe, the other great terror of the Macmillan era, and one which still stalks the corridors of the Foreign Office in London to this day.

To work in practice this vision would require a) that such a bridge was needed and would be used, b) that America remained firm and resolute in its global purposes, c) that Europe had a clear way forward as a cohesive and effective force on the world stage, and d) that the Atlantic alliance , linking the two continental entities (and their destinies) of the United States and the European Union, was still the dominant , agenda-setting partnership in global affairs.

Unfortunately, none of these conditions now apply. The bridge idea was perhaps fanciful from the start, a left-over vanity from history and the Second World War. What was much more reasonable to hope was that , despite fast-changing world conditions and new threats, and the terrible wound of 9/11, the United States would stay firmly and steadily at the head of the democracies , by far the wealthiest and mightiest nation in military terms, the natural leader with an experienced touch in turbulent times and dangerous new global conditions.

Surely this would be the safest assumption of all – that of all the nations on earth America would be the one that could and would adapt its outlook most swiftly and adroitly to the new global realities

and would understand most clearly where globalisation was now taking everybody and everything. After all, didn't the Americans more or less invent the idea?

And was not Wall Street the first to seize on its colossal financial implications – although London was nearly as quick off the mark? And have not a hundred Presidential utterances been peppered with references to the new global order (with the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, America's most trusted ally, doing his bit as well, especially after 9/11, with his vivid references to the kaleidoscope being shaken up and so on)?

### **The Cards Re-Dealt**

Yet for all the flow of words from both leaders it seems their heads were somewhere else. What they have both missed is a central and fundamental point about this latest phase in human affairs – namely that what applies to money and what applies to communications also now applies to power. The amazing revolution in all things brought about by the information age, the internet, the explosion of consequent networking technologies and the combined chemistry of all this with global free markets, has not only dispersed knowledge.

It has dispersed and re-allocated power and influence on a scale never before known. It is not just a question of capitalism recruiting billions of new adherents in booming Asia. The power to command and control, the power to create, and the power to destroy, have all been lifted out of hands of the old players. The cards had been re-dealt but the biggest players at the table seem fatally not to have noticed.

Nowhere on the surface are results of this apparent myopia more vivid and starker than in the Middle East imbroglio. In speech after speech

President Bush and his colleagues have explained how America leads, how American strategy will reshape the region and how American military might – by many times the greatest defence arsenal in the world – must and will prevail. America’s allies, notably Britain, will help. But with or without friends, America will overcome, America will ‘surge’ – the latest misleading verb – and America will succeed.

It is not just the White House and the Administration who still see things this way. The abused neo-conservatives by no means have a monopoly of misunderstanding in this area. Even the President’s harshest critics assume in their comments that America must lead the way out of the multiple crises which torture the Middle East (See for example the Iraq Study Group , which, while critical of the Bush strategy, is steeped in the same assumptions about America’s central role). And for those who have doubts, there is the hostile world outside to prove their point, a gigantic echo-box of anti-American sentiment. Does not all the noise from outside confirm what Americans already know to be so - that they are the hegemon, the hyperpower, and that, like it or not, the world expects them to take centre stage and stay there?

Unpopular – now almost universally – yes. But is this not the burden of world leadership? Has not a network of American-led alliances shaped the world since 1945 and who dares to say that America, with or without compliant allies in tow, should not carry on doing so as the ‘respected leader’ of nations?

### **Now Back Come the Answers.**

Well, the answers are now winging their way back and they are uncomfortable ones – so uncomfortable that it seems as though people just do not want to know.

What was obvious to some from the outset of the present era , although not , evidently, to now bewildered senior members of the Bush administration, nor to British Government leaders, was that democracy could not be delivered by overwhelming force, that ‘democracy’ was too variegated and subtle a concept to be packaged up and sent overseas and that overwhelming force could no longer overwhelm.

What remains much less obvious up to this very moment is why, beneath the surface, the entire structure of assumptions about America’s power to control and influence world events has become flawed – in ways which were always bound to lead to the Iraqi fiasco and to strategic failure in the Middle East. This is what has yet to be grasped by those around George Bush, as well as his American opponents, and by those around the outgoing British Prime Minister. For them it remains unthinkable. Yet it is beginning to seep into the debate – the awful cold reality which turns the American dream into the American nightmare.

And what is this reality? It is that America is no longer in charge, command or control. It is not in charge in Iraq, it was not in charge in the Lebanon last summer. It is not even in charge in the Israel-Palestine conflict, where so many commentators keep calling for it to ‘take a lead’ or ‘do something’.

Incredible? Surely America is the biggest and the best, the boss nation, just as it has been since World War Two. No, sorry. The world is no longer organised that way. There are no boss nations. Washington is not Rome because there is no Rome . And America is not at the centre of the world because there is no centre, or not in the old power political sense.

For reasons which are about to be explained and elaborated below the whole structure of relationships between nations and forces has moved on – from a vertical pattern of command and control – the big powers calling the shots – to a network pattern of connections and cooperation of infinitely greater subtlety and complexity.

In this new pattern power has been miniaturised. The microchip has put lethal force, as well as power for creative good, into a thousand hands where one government or institution stood before. Ever more miniscule and yet more dangerous weapons have empowered groups far below the radar screen of nation states, rogue or otherwise, and levelled the playing field of projected power in ways utterly baffling to traditional thinking.

On the one side - gigantic standing armies and arsenals of missiles and nuclear warheads: on the other side , e-enabled , e-coordinated terror teams, tiny groups with high-tech weapons by their side, suicide squads, plotters stretching out to get their hands on nuclear material, even single individual fanatics – all empowered and with the muscle to take on giants, and to do so on terrifyingly equal terms.

## **Twentieth Century Mindsets**

These are deeply difficult and complex changes to comprehend . They overturn the mindsets of fifty years past, indeed of the whole twentieth century. But until they are understood at the top , it will be not only American influence, reputation and foreign policy effectiveness which will remain hamstrung. It will be Britain's position as well. This is where the crucial changes have been missed, not just about the way foreign policy should be conducted by great powers but about the very latest phase in global affairs, which is quite unlike anything that has gone before.

Does the possession of a still enormous stock of nuclear weapons nonetheless give America the residual power to dictate global strategy and guarantee national security? So it might still be thought in Washington, despite the cruel evidence of 9/11 to the contrary. The reality is that nuclear warheads remain weapons of great danger but no longer weapons of power.

The prospect of their potential further proliferation is indeed one of the age's most serious issues.

But nuclear warheads are weapons of deterrence between states, and to the extent that power has now drained away from states into other hands they are guarding the wrong gates. Furthermore there is no such thing as an independent nuclear capability. The entire system of nuclear weapons ownership is interdependent. The only conceivable way of fighting nuclear terrorism is by establishing new alliances of the most intimate collaborative kind between both the existing nuclear powers, including obviously Russia and China, and the other 'declared' nuclear states, India and Pakistan, a category into which Israel, too, has to be pressed.

The former five 'existing nuclear powers' are now enmeshed in a network in which every move down or up, that is whether to decommission or to upgrade, has to be taken in total co-operation with others. Neither the Washington debate on America's role, nor the poorly-orchestrated debate in the UK on the upgrading of its Trident ballistic missile system seem to have taken any account of this new power distribution.

## **Asia the new Epicentre: Europe no Superpower**

If the American delusion is that size and military weight still mean global supremacy automatically, a similar kind of delusion distorts Europe's progress. The high vision is of the EU as an emergent bloc or superpower, both partner to and counterweight against the American behemoth, and all part of the grand Atlantic world, the Western world, the 'advanced' world

In a staggeringly short space of time this has been invalidated and turned to dust. 'Asia is the epicentre of global politics and economics' declares Professor Chung Min Lee, one of the most respected authorities on East Asian security, as he opens his Trilateral Commission essay on the region, stating in a matter-of-fact way what he assumes all but the blindest now accept. The empires of the Atlantic world are no more. That phase of history is over.

Armies of statistics now support the Professor's assumption. In 2006 the JACIKS (Japan, ASEAN, China, India and Korea) accounted for 30 percent of the world's GNP, up from 24 percent three years earlier, and about the same now as the EU. The region produces around 30 percent of the world's total exports. China now imports more than the United States, as its huge growth rate sucks up oil and raw materials on a swelling scale, as well as products for its fast expanding and already enormous consumer markets.

But this is not even half the story. The surging spread of free market capitalism has now brought, in the phrase of Clyde Prestowitz 'three billion new capitalists' into the world system as power and opportunity have shifted eastwards. Of course free markets were bound to spread anyway once the Communist bloc melted, and the old free world solidarity against Communism, which tended to bury commercial differences and restrictions, dissolved with it.

But it is the seamless opportunities of the website world which turn American-led capitalism into what Edward Luttwak christens turbo-capitalism and simply washes away America's high ground, making it a level player in the flattened scene.

The process goes much further. The wildfire spread of capitalism throughout Asia, mixing with Confucian and other ethics of saving, have produced a gigantic financing system which now directly supports the deficit-ridden West, and the United States in particular. Vast Asian dollar reserves, and a readiness to keep holding them and indeed carry on accumulating them, now underpins US economic growth. China's trillion dollar reserves, plus Japan's (\$800 billion), plus Taiwan's and Hong Kong's hundreds of billions, and others besides, keeps the world's financial system in balance and in credit. Asia now literally holds the purse strings. And he who pays the piper .....

That American leaders should lecture their creditors on governance, democracy and political values, or assume blithely that their past leadership role remains unchanged, would be almost comical if it was not intensely dangerous.

## **Easternisation**

Like it or not, power is shifting. It is shifting to Asia, where Chinese and India are about to become the strategic drivers of world affairs, and it is shifting even more to individuals at their keyboards and to the colossal opportunities for collaboration and initiative which have fallen into their hands. Of course, extrapolations and trajectory forecasts can often be wrong footed, it is true. When in the nineteen-nineties I described the coming rise of Asian power, not just in economic terms but in terms of superior moral and social cohesion, ,

in a pamphlet entitled ‘Easternisation’, the subsequent hiccup caused by the Asian currency turmoil crisis was seized on by jeering critics (notably in the Times) to prove that this was all wrong.

It was wrong for about six months, before the far more powerful underlying trends, driven by the new ultra-accessible internet platforms, sent the fortunes and intentions of billions of motivated Asians soaring skywards again.

The same sort of chorus came on stage again with the collapse of the dotcom boom in 2000. Actually this event had the opposite effect, enabling multitudes of smaller enterprises to scoop up cheap communications infrastructures, such as fibre-optical networks, opening new free platforms (so-called open sourcing) and unleashing a torrent of new collaborative applications and procedures across the entire planet.

The effects went even further. Thanks to instantaneous interactivity on the web, and the google-isation of just about every activity and idea known to humankind, an entirely new pattern of supply chains has developed across the world. This is not just a matter of outsourcing chunks of production and processes from Western bases to India and elsewhere. Nor is it just simply a matter of western business investors off-shoring their plants and assets into the new growth areas with lower labour costs.

What have now mushroomed in the last few years are supply chains of infinite complexity and with items and ideas flowing in both directions – to and from the new economies and feeding the swelling Chinese and Asian markets just as much as the Western and Atlantic ones. Hundreds of millions of new middle income Asian capitalists are now beginning to consume (as well as save) on a massive scale. Thus a single final product, whether a mere washing machine or an

Ipod or something as complex as an airliner, can be drawing in components and knowledge inputs from umpteen Western and Asian sources. National barriers and tariff walls are shrinking into insignificance and rearguard protective actions are now being fought through thinly disguised health and safety regulations (an EU speciality), desperately trying to catch up with the shuttle and swirl of transactions to and fro across the planet in every direction.

Self organisation and collaboration at every level of humanity decimate the power of governments and former unchallenged authorities, the governments of the Atlantic powers very much included, and the USA very much included. Into individual hands the world-wide browser has tipped the power and capacity to create personalised worlds and intimate communities virtually independent of traditional social and official structures.

This is the context, super-global and super-local, in which elected nation state leaders have now to carve out a continuing role. Down the ladder go notions of national or regional strategic supremacy -no-one being supreme in a network world. Down the ladder go impulses towards exclusive (ourselves alone) national security – all parts of the global network being vulnerable and an attack on any city or society being an attack on all.

Down the ladder also go notions of national energy ‘independence’ – an idea of breathtaking unrealism being much trumpeted by the Bush Administration, demonstrating yet again a deep ignorance of the now totally integrated nature of global energy supplies. And down the ladder go conceits about national and unilateral economic management and protection - all national economies now being interwoven and totally interdependent.

By contrast, up the ladder come demands on national governments to be completely open and transparent, to deliver basic domestic services with infinitely greater efficiency and sensitivity, to respect local diversity and initiative far more readily, to ensure personal safety and security, and discourage lawlessness and crime, much more comprehensively. On the geo-political front up comes the priority mission to join ranks in coalitions and networks which minimize threats to national security and maximize the contribution which any nation can make to global peace and stability, thereby maximizing also any nation's sense of purpose, self-esteem and inner cohesion.

### **Friedman's World**

Few better explanations exist of why and how this enormous transformation in the geo-political realities has taken place than that offered by the wonderfully perceptive writer, Thomas Friedman, in his book 'The World is Flat'<sup>22</sup>. Friedman has arrived, in a way that his countrymen high in the Administration have not. Friedman now understands that for a whole range of reasons the globalisation process, and the communications revolution driving it, which the micro-chip set in motion some twenty five years ago, has entered a third phase which changes everything.

This third phase is the one in which not only countries find themselves thrown into intimacy and interdependence on a scale never before imagined, as walls and barriers tumble, and not only in which companies and businesses everywhere finds themselves drawn into entirely new global networks of services and supply chains. Thanks to the development of more and more Internet-based applications and

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<sup>22</sup> The World is Flat. By Thomas Friedman. Penguin and Allen Lane, 2005

possibilities the building of coalitions, projects and movements, good and bad, now falls into individual hands. Power becomes dispersed and flattened to an infinite degree, leaving central policy-planners, authorities and governments bereft of old instruments of authority and confronted by the need to adapt to completely new ones.

Correction: none of this is entirely new. Over a decade ago seers like Manuel Castells were describing in immense detail how the informational (he called it) revolution would transform not only government but the whole structure of global relationships<sup>23</sup>. And to that some of us added our own warnings that as power was dispersed, and as capitalism became totally globalised (as predicted quite accurately long ago by Karl Marx), Western government ascendancy would pass to markets, to rising societies away from the Atlantic basin, as well as to malign and dangerous groupings in a near anarchic pattern<sup>24</sup>.

But the point is that Friedman has not only got there but is able to put the case to his peers with unparalleled punch and persuasion, which probably explains why he wins Pulitzer prizes, left right and centre, and this is surely a cause of cautious rejoicing – two cheers with maybe a third to come.

## **Yesterday's Europe**

The direct external implications for both Europe and for the United Kingdom of these fundamental re-alignments of power, of influence

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<sup>23</sup> 'The Rise of the Network Society' in Three Volumes by Manuel Castells. Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 1996

<sup>24</sup> 'The Edge of Now' – 'New Questions for Democracy in the Network Age', by David Howell. Macmillan 2000

and of trends in human affairs could not be clearer. We read that the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, wants to see the EU's rapid further advance towards a bloc common foreign policy which will have global impact, towards a single constitution and towards closer ties with the United States. These will apparently be the priorities for Germany's current Presidency of the Union and at the forthcoming EU Summit.

Against the background described above these three ambitions seem very wide of the target and rooted in yesterday's thinking, both for Germany and for the EU as a whole. No integrated regional bloc will hold together under the impact of the world-wide system of supply chain production and disintegrated power which the internet and the web have ushered into being.

If Germany, or any other European nation, wants security and protection of its civil society against terrorist attacks, if it wants energy security and real and lasting benefits for its citizens, as well as a fully restored reputation as a responsible global player, it should be looking not only at greater European regional co-operation on local issues, which is always desirable, and not only at good relations with the United States, which are always worth having. More important now than either of those goals is the need to burnish relations with the rising powers and markets of Asia, where the key decisions will be made which will make or break world-wide terrorism, stabilize the Middle East and lift tens of millions out of poverty fastest.

If Germany, or any other European nation, is concerned about climate security, as we all are, it should be looking to China and India for direct cooperation in fighting global warming, where decisions far more influential in cleaning the atmosphere than any carbon emissions trading scheme in Europe will have to be made.

If Germany, or any other European nation, wants bigger markets it should be looking at the already huge consumer power of South-East Asia, at Chinese markets and at internet markets. The mantra that the EU itself is the world's biggest market gets repeatedly asserted. It is no longer true.

If Germany wants more secure energy supplies it should look north to Norway, reduce its overdependence on Russia and resume nuclear power station building, with the latest and safest technologies, rather than put its faith in an EU common energy policy which will never happen.

The search should be on in every European nation for the new networks and linkages which will bring its citizens the most benefits in the new conditions. Time and energies spent trying to achieve unachievable ambitions for a united EU foreign policy and for a European state's place in the sun ( shades of Kaiser Wilhelm the Second) , or stretching for dreams of the EU as a new superpower are far better spent reaching out and associating with the nodes of powering in the new global network.

Amongst member states France has shown the most awareness of the new priorities – in Asia and elsewhere - whilst continuing with admirable dexterity to 'play' the EU scene and use the EU in ways best designed to assist France's aspirations (not least, to prevent the resurgence of an over-mighty Germany).

### **A Lucky Legacy**

But the most fortunately placed European nation of all is surely the UK , and this is certainly the almost universal view throughout the rest

of the Union's membership as they look enviously at the UK's position.

And what arouses this envy? Simply that the UK, like some lucky beneficiary of a large bequest, finds itself at the heart of a ready made network which, given a little development, fits perfectly into the new global environment.

This network is the Commonwealth. Here is a quite extraordinarily latticed association of like-minded states, trans-continental, multi-faith, embracing rich and poor and , which sits before Britain's eyes, almost virtually on a plate (or more precisely with its headquarters and secretariat in the heart of London at Marlborough House).

Far from being a run-down club, held together by nostalgia and decolonisation fixations, today's Commonwealth now contains thirteen of the world's fastest growing economies, including the most potent emerging markets. Outside the USA and Japan, the key cutting edge countries in information technology and e-commerce are all Commonwealth members. The new 'jewel in the Commonwealth Crown' turns out to be the old jewel, dramatically re-polished and re-set, namely booming India, the world's largest democracy with a population set to exceed China's.

By accident and luck, this is the kind of arrangement which is now almost perfectly tailored to fit into the new global scene, and offers both its members and the wider international community an ideal platform on which to work together in face of new threats and opportunities both as power passes to Asia and is scattered across Thomas Friedman's flatter world.

It might be thought that the obvious potential offered by the Commonwealth network model would be at the heart of thinking in London on Britain's need to re-position. One might have thought that

although today's actual Commonwealth secretariat is weak and underfunded the opportunities for the Commonwealth to raise its game and be developed into an instrument of huge benefit and relevance for all its members, but especially for Britain in view of past associations and present skills, would be central to ruminations and scenario planning in the corridors of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

One might also have thought that Britain would see the Commonwealth network, strengthened and expanded, as an ideal circuit by which to connect far more closely with the ASEAN nations and their markets.

But one would be quite wrong. No realisation is visible of the Commonwealth potential in the newly emerged world conditions. No official imagination has begun to focus on the possibilities and benefits. Not a single mention of the Commonwealth appeared in the most recent Report on the Work of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office – except in the unavoidable front page title! As for stronger interest in ASEAN, officials from Singapore and other dynamic Asian centres sigh and admit that they have failed to engage British interest in their region. The notice on the door says, “Gone to Brussels. Busy with our European Partners. Call Back Later”.

For a foreign policy thinking apparatus remaining locked in the world of blocs and alliances of the past, and still almost paralysed by the conviction that an integrated EU is ‘the answer’ and something in which Britain gets ‘left behind’ at its peril, the idea of building on the ready-made structure of the future which the Commonwealth offers is apparently beyond reach.

### **The New Platform**

Building up the Commonwealth model depends, of course, upon all its leading member states. Until they wake up fully and understand the

staggering potential of the new Commonwealth network, as an ideal model for international collaboration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the backing needed will not be there. This means persuading Commonwealth Governments to give place and recognition to the Commonwealth network in their foreign and overseas economic and development policies at a level which, for various reasons (mostly now outdated) , they have hitherto failed to do , the big exception being India, which almost alone ,with its new flair and dynamism, has recognised the Commonwealth as ‘the ideal platform for business and trade’.

### **Not Just Bread and Butter**

But the new story should not just be about bread and butter matters and new economic opportunities staring the world in the face as Asia becomes ‘the epicentre’. The Commonwealth needs to be re-assessed in terms of its real weight in securing world stability, in balancing the dialogue with the U.S. giant, in linking rising Asia and the West, in helping to handle the prickliest of issues such as the Middle East and Iran, in promoting better development links, in bringing small and larger nations, poorer and richer, together on mutually respectful and truly friendly terms and in bridging the faith divides which others seek to exploit and widen.

In all these areas the Commonwealth, reformed, reinforced, built upon and enlarged, does indeed offer, as the Indian Industry Minister Mr,Kamal Nath, wisely perceives, ‘ the ideal platform’.

It will, of course, inevitably be asked, how can such a disparate and scattered grouping possibly be a force and a weight in these dangerous and contentious areas? Who will take the lead? Where is central control going to be?

Here we are back to the Washington delusion of command and control.

By accident as much as design the Commonwealth emerges from a controversial past to take a perfect place in this new order of thinking and acting. The fact that the Commonwealth now has no dominant member state, or even a coterie of such states, far from being a weakness is now a strength.

Because the Commonwealth is founded on respect for nation states, each following its own path, yet recognising the imperative of interdependence, constant adjustment can take pace to new challenges, with partnerships and coalitions being swiftly tailored to each new scene.

This answers three dilemmas.

The **first** is that people want more than ever in an age of remote globalisation, to develop their own identities, to have countries and localities to love and defend and take pride in. They recognise the fact of interdependence but they long equally for ownership and a degree of independence. Superior ideas of supra-national government and super-states, along with sweeping dismissals of the relevance of the nation state, can play no part in resolving these deep and competing needs, and indeed utterly fail to do so when imposed by well-intentioned integrationists, as in the case of the EU.

**Second**, rigid bloc alliances cannot keep up with the kaleidoscope of change. The more that the European Union tries to draw its members into a unified political and military bloc the less effective it becomes. The more that the world is seen as clinging to a structure of blocs established in rivalry to each other the more the real criss-cross

network of bilateral linkages between nations is neglected. Yet it is just this new and more flexible pattern which provides far the best guarantee of stability and security.

**Third**, the new texture of international relations is made up not just of inter-governmental and official contacts but of a mosaic of non-governmental and sub-official agencies and organisations. This takes time to grow, but grow it has under the Commonwealth canopy into an amazing on organizations and alliances between the professions, the academic and scholastic worlds, the medical, educational, scientific and legal communities and a host of other interest groups linked together across the 54 nation Commonwealth Group.

### **American ‘post primacy’**

The failure in Washington thinking (as well as in London and Brussels circles) to understand what has happened, and tragic collapse of America’s ‘soft power’, reputation and influence almost across the entire globe is leaving a dangerous vacuum. A powerful new Pentagon study describes this as U.S ‘losing its position primacy’, Into this vacuum, cautiously, subtly, but steadily are moving the Chinese – with cash, with investment projects, with trade deals and deals to secure access to oil and gas supplies in an energy hungry world, with military and policing support and with technology.

This is a gap which ought to be filled not by the Chinese dictatorship but by the free democracies of the Commonwealth, from both North

and South, banded together by a commitment to freedom under the rule of law and ready to make real and common sacrifices in the interests of a peaceful and stable world and the spread of democratic governance in many different forms.

The Commonwealth possesses the vital attributes for dealing with this new world which the old 20<sup>th</sup> century institutions so conspicuously lack.

It stretches across the faiths ,with half a billion Muslim members; it stretches across all the Continents, thus by its very existence nullifying the dark analysis of a coming clash of civilisations.

Better still if a more confident Commonwealth now reaches out and makes friendly associations with other like-minded nations, both in Europe and Asia. Japan , with some eleven percent of the entire world's GNP, and with its confidence and dynamism now restored, is ready to make links with the Commonwealth, especially with India and Britain together. Poland and some other Central European nations long to have association with a grouping less parochial than their own local European Union. Even Russia, despite its prickly inward-looking mood and latent nationalist sentiments, (not helped by gratuitous criticism from the U.S Vice President, Dick Cheney) , could yet emerge as suitable democratic partner of like-minded nations inside the Commonwealth club.

The need now is for the Commonwealth Secretariat to be encouraged by its members to grow wings. The Commonwealth needs its own foreign policy dimension. That is to say, it should develop in a much

more powerful way than hitherto, the capability to address global policy issues. Perhaps it should begin by having a nominated high official to work with the Secretary General and act as the Commonwealth's High Representative.

An enhanced Commonwealth should also spread its wings on energy issues. At present there is no global forum in which a variety of free nations, rich and poor, but all faced with the same problems of staggeringly high oil prices, all faced with energy security challenges and all faced with the much longer term need to curb carbon emissions and create a greener and cleaner long term environment, can meet together in an informal atmosphere, exchange views and technologies, and develop some common clout in face of OPEC and the other giant producers. The Commonwealth should fill that gap ,too.

Make such a more active and strengthened Commonwealth a central platform of the international future and there will then be an enlightened and responsible grouping on the planet , ready to be America's candid friend, but not its lapdog - a serious and respected force, both in economic and trading terms and in terms of upholding security and peace-keeping.

### **A New British Priority.**

This is the body the strengthening of which the UK should now make its key foreign policy priority and together with which it should rebuild its own foreign policy priorities. It should do so because this route offers far the best way both for a nation such as the UK, with its

history and mix of experience and skills, to make a maximum contribution to meeting the world's many ills .

In particular the UK should consider transferring the administration of that part of its overseas development effort which at present goes through the EU from that unhappy channel to the Commonwealth system, and encourage both other Commonwealth members to do likewise and the Secretariat to develop the full capacity to handle this role. The current bias in EU programmes towards the Francophonie states could thereby be usefully corrected.

This single move would give the Commonwealth huge new prestige and resources, as well as directing aid efforts far more effectively to poorer Commonwealth member states, to whom the richer countries owe the strongest duty .

When the British Prime Minister calls for children to be taught a 'greater sense of British identity', that should read 'British and Commonwealth identity'. That alone conveys the broader and outward-looking sense of interdependence and duty which is the true message with which young British children should carry in today's world.

Of course the UK must continue to be the best possible local member of our European region in which geography places it – as, incidentally it nearly always has been , shedding more blood than most in the cause of saving Europe from itself and securing its freedoms - although some people forget this.

But neither Europe, nor the trans-Atlantic 'partnership' as a whole are now set to be the drivers of world prosperity. This is the change of

circumstances, the ‘reversal of fortunes’, to which psychological adjustment has to be somehow made. For European states, instead of concocting dreams of world influence, the priority task now is to build up links, many of which – in Britain’s case - were so strong in the distant past, - and not only with what are becoming the world’s most prosperous and dynamic areas in Asia and Latin America and the Russian-Asian neighbourhood , but also with the smaller nations as well as the large ones, the struggling poor ones as well as the rapidly industrialising and increasingly high-tech ones .This is the reach that an enlarged Commonwealth network can deliver in a way that the European Union can never do , and never will do, and for which it lacks the reach and the right basic policy structure.

Living by our wits on a small-ish, although still beautiful island, and its appendages, in a subtly evolved union of kingdoms which has grown over centuries and which only the most shallow and short-sighted want to pull apart, we can least afford to stay tied to the tramlines of past thinking about the international order and the nature and distribution of global power, and least afford to pass up casually the huge advantages which by good fortune have come our way from past legacies.

### **Foreign Policy and The Power of Identity.**

Pollsters and focus groups strategists tell us that that ‘foreign policy’ is a low category in the list of people’s concerns. Education, health, crime control and social policy come far ahead.

But this is to misunderstand what foreign policy means. It is not just another category. It is the central question for every society and nation

about its place and identity and purpose. There has to be a ‘certain idea’ of a nation, the way it should relate to other societies and the way it can best contribute to the larger common weal by which its own future stands or falls.

It is the primary duty of a nation’s leaders to articulate and refine that idea. This task has now become ten times more important as national security has to be re-defined, as the old power centres melt away, and as the control of so many parts of national life slips into remote hands or the anonymity of the markets vastly empowered by the information revolution.

At the start of this revolution, the more thoughtful and far-sighted could see, and duly predicted, that it would change everything. It has. Above all, it has changed the way we have to defend ourselves, our values, our societies and our environment.

Never was it more important to reject the old generalisations and cliché-ridden simplicities about ‘democracy’, ‘freedom’, ‘our values’, ‘our way of life’ and to unravel the inner meaning of these powerful phrases. Never was it more important to be on guard against the Terrible Simplifier (to use Jacob Burckhardt’s graphic concept) who would have us take cover behind stereotype thinking and yesterday’s mindsets. Never was it more important for a nation in Britain’s position to seek out and work in the right and respectful relationship with the right new partners in the utterly transformed global conditions which have emerged and now prevail.

Our old partners, or so we thought, were across the Atlantic and next door in continental Europe. Our new partners are going to be in East Asia, in near and central Asia and in South-East Asia. These are the regions where tomorrow is being shaped, both economically and

strategically. Indeed, are new partners are across the whole web-enabled, levelled planet.

That is the story of what, almost incredibly, has happened. This is the plea as to what must now be grasped and understood. This is the proposal about what needs to be done.

**2009. - 29<sup>th</sup> November. Japan Times - The Commonwealth's Growing Importance**

Every two years the heads of government of the fifty three states of which the Commonwealth has so far consisted, embracing almost a third of the planet's entire population and several of its most dynamic economies, meet to discuss issues of common concern.

Nothing unusual about that except that this year, at the recent gathering in Trinidad, (called CHOGM for short) there was a significant difference.

The familiar features were certainly there, with HMG Queen Elizabeth from the United Kingdom arriving as titular (and popular) head of the Commonwealth to preside at the ceremonies and quite a lot of internal wrangling about past, future and misbehaving members – notably Zimbabwe and whether it should now be invited back into membership. This was bound to be a difficult debate as long as the dreadful Robert Mugabe still clings to office.

But the big difference is that this time the Commonwealth heads of government were looking outwards and seeking to give the Commonwealth network a clear and useful place in the overall global agenda. They invited the President of France, Mr Sarkozy, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon, to address them and mingle with the membership.

This widening of the Commonwealth's embrace has never occurred in this way before and is thoroughly to be welcomed. It means that the Commonwealth is raising its game and developing a presence as a significant platform in the new global architecture.

This expansion of the Commonwealth's reach, which many have long argued for, is all the more remarkable when one considers that the two most notable new invitees to the meeting this year represented, in a sense, organisations directly rivalling the resurgent Commonwealth system.

France has long attempted to match the Commonwealth with its own union of former member states of the French colonial empire and former French-speaking dependencies, La Francophonie, even to the point of holding Francophonie games (this year in Lebanon) in exact emulation of the Commonwealth Games held every four years. Perhaps President Sarkozy will be inviting the British Queen to address the next Francophonie gathering in Paris. I doubt it somehow.

As for the United Nations organization, this lays proud claim to be the policing authority of the world and the chief forum of global ideas and ideals. Yet its failures have been many, the democratic values of many of its members are in question and its structure is out of date. The Commonwealth, providing a far more intimate and direct pattern of contact between rich and poor nations, large and small ones, is in many ways a standing rebuke to UN ineffectiveness and a reminder that a better global platform, a truer league of democracies and free states, is badly needed.

Of course there are those who dismiss the Commonwealth as a nothing more than a nostalgic 'old guys' club, or talking shop, of ex-British colonies and possessions, without the teeth to achieve anything very useful and bound only by a common language (English) and a love of cricket.

But such views entirely miss the point. It is precisely the 'softpower' qualities of the Commonwealth network which give it such relevance and resilience in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Together with the spread of

numerous sub-governmental, informal and voluntary linkages between Commonwealth countries it creates a vast web of common understanding, common values and mutual trust which offers the ideal ambience in which different types of democracy can flourish, investment can prosper and common global initiatives develop.

It is no surprise that several new countries, not all connected to the former British empire at all, are queuing up to become Commonwealth members. In fact the central African state of Rwanda, once French-speaking but now English-speaking, has now been formally allowed to join, making the 53 states into 54.

In everything from joint action on climate change (a key theme at the Trinidad gathering) to cooperation in peace-keeping and human rights safeguards, the existence of a firm Commonwealth initiative means more and has more practical chance of delivering results than many a lofty (and often empty) UN resolution.

The denigrators and sceptics miss an even more fundamental point. The Commonwealth momentum comes from the bottom up, from the individual member states joining willingly together. For those who still cling to the old ideas of great power blocs and clashing spheres of influence, this grass roots-driven network of peoples, stretching across all continents and most faiths, must seem very puzzling.

For example, a prominent Financial Times columnist was only recently asserting that we are being pushed back into an era of 'unsentimental Great Power politics', in which, so the implication goes, only nations bundled and strapped together by their political masters, will have the mass and weight required to make their mark.

No analysis could be more wrong-headed. The yearning for titanic super-power blocs, of which many people mistakenly want the European Union to become one, is a major error of our times. The

future belongs not to giant blocs and blueprints but to networks of independent states, gathering together out of local preference and choice in common tasks and constructions – exactly on the model which the Commonwealth is becoming .

The only disappointment at Trinidad has been that another of the world's great democracies, namely Japan, did not have a high profile presence. Japanese leaders at local government level have shown a strong interest in the Commonwealth's Local Government Forum , one of many such sub-governmental bodies with global relevance. It would have been good to see Japan represented at national level as well , to share experiences and develop new initiatives with the Commonwealth network and fifty three heads of government . That should be put right next time they meet.

**2010. Next Big Idea and a Modest Proposal. Paper to mark the New Year, for internal circulation amongst colleagues who kept asking, but where is the Big Idea? Here it is.**

***As far as possible we want to manage our economy independently and flexibly. But everyone knows that we are interdependent as well, in fact more so than ever nowadays. It is therefore a crucial part of sound economic policy to make sure we have the right external partners and to handle all the external influences on our lives and work in the right way.***

***But today we have the wrong partners and we are under the wrong influences. We have let our interest and our foreign policy dangerously diverge. We put our faith in our so-called European partners to promote and protect our national interests. But in reality they are doing us no favours at all – while our interests increasingly lie elsewhere. We proudly claim to be members of every conceivable international organisation and alliance, but this blinds us as to where our real interests lie.***

***It is time for Britain to review and alter her alliances radically and work much more closely with our true friends, which may not be the same thing as our geographical neighbours. Nor is it the same thing as obediently agreeing, poodle-like, with the Washington Administration. We are America's friends, but not its uncritical friends.***

***In India, Australia, New Zealand, in Japan, in the oil and gas-rich Gulf States, In Norway and the Baltic, in Poland and other parts of central Europe, our friends are waiting for us and people are asking 'where are the British?'***

*These are not only the countries that want to work with us, and think broadly like us about the world. They are the network of the future and the powerhouses of the future. Together with giant China they are the areas where economic dynamism flourishes and to which the centre of global economic gravity is shifting. That's where the action is going to be and that is where the British, with their long history of adventure and their vast global reach, should also be .*

*A Modest Proposal follows:*

### **Change Your Partners**

At the spot in the water where the EU Constitution capsized and went down there is a large piece of wreckage still floating , remarkably intact.

This is the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, which leading EU Ministers continue to describe daily as being essential to secure Europe's influence on the global stage, which even the remaining Europhiles in Washington support – quoting Kissinger's absurd dictum about one telephone number to call in Europe (could he ever really have said anything so silly?) – and which our own Foreign and Commonwealth Office still regard as their foreign policy priority ('working through our European partners' etc).

The briefest reality check should tell us that in practice, and when it comes to protecting and promoting Britain's real interests, the CFSP has been, is, and is likely to go on being , not only a disaster but a menace, and certainly not worth salvaging.

Quite simply, while effective foreign policy needs partners and allies – more so than ever in this network age – our main European

neighbours are the wrong partners and the CFSP ties us into the wrong partnership.

The most obvious reason for this is that on most of the key international issues no coherent common EU position exists. With twenty five marvellously diverse nations, and twenty five different perspectives on the world, anything pushed through the CFSP filter is bound to be muffled, fuzzy and a fertile source of misunderstanding. This is so whether the issue is Iraq or Iran or Israel-Palestine, or Russia and how to handle Mr.Putin, or China and weapons, or Turkey and enlargement, or the UN, or above all, how to talk to the Americans.

Trans-Atlantic relations have now fallen to their lowest point for decades. Far from the EU calming and clarifying trans-Atlantic disputes by speaking with one clear voice, it seems to be amplifying them so that what were once containable second class differences are being elevated into damaging first class rows. This is not at all in Britain's interest.

But there is a deeper reason which needs to be more delicately stated.

For all its armed might America desperately needs real and trusted friends, not just to fulfil its awesome world responsibilities but to deliver security to its own citizens. Even the go-it-alone warriors in Washington are now coming to recognise this.

Less easy to swallow in Washington is the fact that true friendship and support mean more than tick-the-box compliance. True friendship means frankness, candour, criticism when appropriate (as long as its basically constructive and not just born of ill will), compete mutual trust and respect and, even if occasionally, a restraining hand.

The EU does not get to Square One in any of these roles. The rhetoric of EU-US partnership may continue, but even if poor Javier Solana could articulate a common European policy towards the Americans, which he cannot, why should he get more than a cold nod from the Administration? Why should Washington give a respectful hearing to an entity which it sees – not without justification – as basically anti-American, sounding less and less like a friend and partner and increasingly like a constantly hostile bloc – a transatlantic neighbour from hell, picking a quarrel on every issue, large or small.

Sixty years ago Britain fulfilled the steady partner and friend role – at least up to a point. Then there was Kennedy's twin pillars idea in the Cold war context, although it was never a phrase that could stand too much analysis. NATO, too, was going to be the binding link of equals.

But now all that is history and the question to be answered is where we look for the partnership or grouping which the American giant really will listen to and work with, and from which the world, and especially Britain, would so obviously benefit.

The starting point is to identify the countries which really are America's best friends, who are not all screwed up with anti-American resentments, and which would be comfortable with a solid-two-way strategic relationship with the great superpower, not in a poodle capacity but at an equal and full-trust level.

Britain obviously qualifies, despite its occasional poodle tendencies, as does nowadays a more 'normal' Japan – currently tying its expanding and increasingly well-equipped 'self-defense' forces closer than ever with the US (besides having very close ties with Britain).

Australia and New Zealand also belong to this club, with booming India soon qualifying as it develops steadily improving ties with the

Americans. In Europe the front-runners are Poland, the brilliant little Baltic three, the Czechs and maybe the Italians, if they keep their own house in order.

Admittedly this would be a geographically scattered grouping, not the sort of regional alliance our history books used to talk about. But in the age of the internet who cares? As partners they are only one click away from each other. Sit down this big and powerful grouping round the table with America's leaders and one would immediately have a partnership of real equality, frankness and mutual respect, with enough influence and clout as well to restrain America's wobblier impulses.

This would be a league or network of willing nations, races and cultures, able to establish an effective framework for world stability in ways which the soured and discredited EU-US 'partnership' is no longer capable of doing .

Britain's new foreign policy priority should be to build up this new kind of alliance, instead of muttering about pivots, bridges with Europe and the like. The British remain good Europeans, as they have been all along, having saved Europe from itself more than once. But when it comes to twenty first century strategic linkages and alliances, the time has come to think afresh.

Salvaging the CPRS and topping it with a single foreign minister and diplomatic corps will neither restore a healthy Atlantic relationship nor safeguard Britain's wider interests. We need to build on our connections with rising Asia and we need to construct a partnership with the US that really works.

**2011.** *Commonwealth article for Opus project- THE COMMONWEALTH TODAY AND TOMORROW – THE NECESSARY NETWORK. This was drafted while I was serving as Minister for the Commonwealth in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office – a post which the Foreign Secretary, William Hague, had kindly (and of course I felt wisely) assigned to me*

‘The Commonwealth is in many ways the face of the future’ . These were the words of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth in her Christmas message of 2009. Scarcely attracting the attention of commentators at the time they are now , a few years on, beginning to be appreciated as a what they truly were – namely, a prescient glimpse of the future in a totally transformed international landscape, a beam of light suddenly illuminating a global future which even now may not be fully understood or accepted.

For what today’s Commonwealth is developing into is something quite different from the past. It is becoming **the necessary network** of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Very few planned or foresaw this . On the contrary a widespread view in the later decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was that the Commonwealth had lost its relevance. It was a club of the past, a family of yesterday , held together by little more than nostalgia.

Yet contrary to expectations what is emerging instead from the old pattern is something remarkably compatible with the future and the technological revolution in which the world is now caught up.

First, the Commonwealth today , far from being a backward-looking coterie of states, is proving , to the surprise of some, to be a living network of relationships and like-minded values and principles that stretches across all continents – Asia, Africa, Europe, the Americas – and across almost all religions at a time when global reach is essential to tackle global problems. The great themes of democracy, human

rights, good governance and the rule of law, the aspirations of all humankind, have found in the modern Commonwealth a fresh and resilient means of propagation in the network age.

Second, the Commonwealth, again to the surprise of some, is one of the fastest developing association of nations in the world – in some parts faster even than China – and contains at least seven of the most dynamic, knowledge-driven economies in the world . As the West’s trade and investment tilts away from Europe and the Atlantic and towards rising Asia and Africa, the Commonwealth network becomes more and more relevant for all its citizens in hard commercial terms, meaning jobs and investment in an age short of both.

Third, the Commonwealth survives and attracts new members when the world’s other multilateral organisations, designed for the 20<sup>th</sup> century, are failing us and in deep trouble. It provides scope for a real North-South dialogue on equal rather than patronising, terms.

Fourth, in an age of small states, many of them feeling by-passed by global trends and tossed in the storms of world economic volatility, the Commonwealth platform offers a life-raft of opportunity and influence, where smaller voices get a bigger hearing , and the problems of smaller states receive a genuine attention and consideration, notably in meeting the severe challenges of climate change, energy scarcity, food and water needs and other escape routes from poverty

At least potentially the Commonwealth is thus emerging as the kind of forum in which richer and faster growing countries and the poorer and smaller nations can speak on equal terms , in which the faiths can sit down and discuss their problems calmly (there are 500 million Muslims in the Commonwealth) and in which almost all members are

seriously committed – or under steady pressure to be committed – to good governance and to contributing to global peace and stability, rather than pursuing vendettas against America and the ‘the West’.

Fifth, the Commonwealth, unlike most other multinational organizations and combinations of states in today’s world, is an assembly of peoples, not just of governments. Its most visible aspect may be heads of government gathering together, but beneath the official layer lies a vast sub-structure of alliances and groups, interests and professional bodies, civil societies and voluntary associations, all proudly carrying the Commonwealth badge.

Mightiest amongst the non-governmental supporting pillars of the Commonwealth is the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, bringing parliamentarians and legislators together from every corner of the Commonwealth. Alongside this global Parliamentary convocation are the Commonwealth-wide organisations promoting parliamentary administration and techniques of accountability, as well as sharing lessons learnt, at Westminster and elsewhere, about the operation of committees of Parliament, not least the Public Accounts Committee.

Close behind come the other main ‘pillar’ organisations, such as the Commonwealth Business Council, thriving and expanding as never before as intra-Commonwealth trade and investment grows. Or there are the legal bodies underpinning the vital common law pattern of the Commonwealth, such as the Commonwealth Lawyers Association, or the Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges Association, all in turn spreading common standards of judicial administration.

The other professions – the doctors, accountants, surveyors, planners, nurses, educationalists, journalists, social workers – all have their

Commonwealth networks . Alongside these are the Commonwealth Local Government Association, active in many countries, the Commonwealth of Learning spreading teaching through distance learning on a world scale and of course the whole world of sport and the Commonwealth games administration. The list goes on and on, and grows with all the new professional skills, interests, specialisms and technologies the age produces.

Sixth , for nations like the United Kingdom, which seemed in past decades to lose interest in its Commonwealth connections, the entire network assumes a new and crucial significance, as the gateway to new markets and new sources of finance – the reversal of the nineteenth and twentieth century pattern. Not only have Commonwealth countries become new and demanding consumer marketplaces, ready for the highest quality goods the UK can turn out. Australia and the Pacific Commonwealth nations lead the way to Chinese markets, via the once-British and still welcoming Hong Kong. Oil rich Trinidad and Tobago, leads the way into Latin America, again mostly with welcoming and Britain-friendly consumer classes.

What has changed after recent decades to bring this amazing vitality to the surface?

If there is a single ur-explanation for what has occurred to galvanize the modern Commonwealth it probably lies in the microchip, meaning the the information revolution and the globalization process to which it is linked. Quite simply the Commonwealth network of countries, societies, interests and peoples has been brought to a new life by the phenomenon of instant global communication and connection.

This has occurred, and is occurring at all levels, from the individual to the governmental, and from the humblest group or organisation to the

largest state. The latticework of live associations and linkages described above stretching across the whole 53 nation Commonwealth network on a staggering scale, has become wired up as never before, enabling almost continuous dialogue and creative exchange – a kind of unending concerto of co-operation and common identification and purpose.

It is true that much of this extraordinary network was there before . A mid-nineties report from the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee\* pointed out how the changing Commonwealth was supported by a battalion of non-governmental organisations , covering a vast range of interests and activities. But in the new age of transparency and accountability world-wide, in which the web and the mobile phone-camera open almost every window of activity and social trend , this meshwork of contacts has been given a kind of blood transfusion . In effect the Commonwealth ‘badge’ has become a sought-after asset – an entrée to the community of trust , reliability and transparency which the world’s investors and traders constantly search for. This is certainly one explanation of the fact that countries with only a remote link with the old British sphere , or none at all, have either already joined the Commonwealth , or aspire to do so, or at least seek to link up with its various supporting groups.

Of course the global communications miracle is not the only transforming force in the Commonwealth network. It interacts closely with the other key binding factor – a common language , and embedded within it the DNA of common attitudes, assumptions, instincts, manners ,ideas of what constitutes humour and ways of looking at the world which a language contains and purveys.. Because the language is English the origins of many of these things go back to British traditions and values, but by no means all. The Britishness factor has long since become enriched by and interwoven with many other cultures, Asian ,African and Caribbean, in some

cases much older and more powerful than the traces of the British legacy.

There must be realism about the Commonwealth as it is developing today. Within any family there are differences, even at times quarrels. That is inevitable. So it is in the Commonwealth family where not all see eye to eye over either governance issues or world issues. With new patterns and doctrines of international behaviour being aired and proclaimed all the time - such a humanitarian intervention, the responsibility to protect, the right to intervene, a constant debate is hardly surprising. Sixteen realms, under the Queen, and thirty-seven (currently) republics and independent states are hardly likely to agree on everything. But the point is that if there are disputes they are not with 'foreigners', not lost in translation, but between members of the family, all viewing each other as closer than, and subtly different in feel and attitude from foreign states.

A second reality is that as the Commonwealth network evolves not all agree as to how standards should be enforced. That there should be high standards in terms of fundamental values and principles of behaviour and governance, to which all members should aspire to adhere is not in question. That is the distinctive nature of the club, that it requires certain standards to be matched. Not anyone can march the entry door.

But how those standards should be upheld, policed and even enforced is much more controversial. Responding to the times the Commonwealth leaders have sought, and continue to seek, new methods for ensuring principles are upheld in member states. This is work in progress, work to 'advance the Commonwealth's values', as the most recent Report and Recommendations on strengthening the Commonwealth 'brand' put it\*. It is work that is yielding growing results.

So what emerges from this compound and fusion of changes, motives and aspirations and enormous new opportunities as the technological revolution races ever faster ahead? Why is that royal insight so pertinent? And what is the real impact on the lives and hopes of its two billion citizens, now and tomorrow?

To understand clearly what is occurring, and how the evolving Commonwealth fits in, it helps to think in terms of a new kind of global equation. This can be presented as Values equals Trust equals Business and Development.

In essence the message is in this era of super-connectivity and transparency those countries and societies which adhere most openly to Commonwealth values are those which will be most attractive to investors and developers. The places where justice is likely to prevail, where commercial laws are familiar, where there is a serious aspiration to check corruption, if not stamp it out completely, are the places to set up new enterprises, invest new money and grow jobs and prosperity. Jobs and Justice ride together.

At the same time the twenty-first century world is seeing a remarkable reversal of roles. The capital which used to roll from west to east in the last two centuries, from the great industrialised nations to the developing ones, to build their infrastructures, is now flowing the other way. It is the high saving, fast-exporting nations of Asia, in particular, which have the wealth accumulations the West needs to meet its own requirements, square its budgets and update its often dilapidated facilities.

On top of that there is the question of natural resources and the wealth, if carefully managed, that it can bring to previously struggling economies. Revolutionary changes in raw materials potential and access have altered the picture heavily in the Commonwealth's

favour. The old resources were oil , coal and iron ore. The new resources are shale gas – accessibly now in vast quantities in Asian and African countries which previously had to import all energy – plus new ways of harnessing sun ,wind and the tide, plus precious metals and rare earths hitherto undeveloped or even discovered. Commonwealth countries who were resource poor and are beginning to see themselves as resource rich.

The there is the matter of new or would-be members of the Commonwealth family. The rigid requirement that membership demanded some previous association with the British empire has long since been relaxed. Mozambique, Rwanda and the Cameroons are now enthusiastic Commonwealth members. Others are knocking at the door or seeking to associate themselves with some of the pillar organisations at non-state level.

A careful balance has to be struck between the danger of dilution and the invigoration of new members entering the Commonwealth family. Either way, the fact that states and societies round the world are privately urging their Governments to consider applying, or are actually sending representatives to Commonwealth events, says something. It says that the Commonwealth is today's club of preference, the group that countries ambitious for improvement feel they should join.

In a much looser way the former British connection still exerts some pull. South Sudan has already applied to be a member. Burma and Yemen (once Aden) are still in the throes of political upheaval but could yet turn their attention to the Commonwealth. The Gulf States, again with historic links, have also shown an interest in being kept in close touch with Commonwealth activity.

Well outside the traditional Commonwealth orbit Japan has shown a close interest in Commonwealth activities, while informal voices have been heard in nations as far apart as Algeria , Gabon and Jordan , urging closer links with the Commonwealth. At a more general level, co-operation between the Commonwealth network and the fifty-six member state Francophonie has been discussed and welcomed on both sides, with Canada naturally playing a key bridging role in such a relationship.

The precise status or category of new member states matters not at all. Her Majesty is monarch, quite separately and independently of sixteen Commonwealth countries, the so-called Realms. The rest are republics or separate kingdoms .New applicants for that the Realm status seem unlikely although in this modern turn-turtle world of contradictions and reversals stranger things have happened. Fourteen other British Overseas Dependent Territories nestle in under British membership but aspire increasingly to have a bigger role at the Commonwealth table.

Today the UN struggles to reform but remains at loggerheads over its own reform, over fundamental issues and facing severe internal problems to boot. Nothing could replace it but something else seems to be needed in the twenty-first century. The various regional alliances and organizations are growing in power, but by definition lack the global spread the Commonwealth offers. The European Union is the biggest and potentially the most powerful regional bloc, but is beset by fearful current problems which hold it back and becalm its economic activity. The WTO still struggles to avoid deadlock at Doha on farm subsidies, while those outside the existing trade blocs feel increasingly frustrated at their still substantially barred access to the richer markets.

By contrast the Commonwealth scene looks somewhat more positive. Intra-Commonwealth trade appears to be expanding steadily, as are investment flows between Commonwealth countries. As a Bloc, the Commonwealth is historically one of the most successful collection of nations in world history. It represents a truly vibrant global family of cultures, economies, societies and stable political groups.

None of this may amount to the case for anything like Commonwealth Free Trade Area (an old idea tried attempted twice in the twentieth century ,although in very different conditions). That era is past. But it does suggest a pause for thought as to how this extraordinary network, with a reach stretching right across regions and continents and embracing a third of the world's population, might, if it can be strengthened imaginatively, do a better job than the existing battered international institutions.

In particular it is surely time to think how a more ambitious Commonwealth of Nations could become a distinct force in both opening up the world economy and uniting the more well-intentioned and responsible countries in facing up to the ugly dangers of the age – such as terrorism, pariah nations, entrenched and paralysing poverty, protectionism, inter-ethnic wars, corruption and rotten governance – to name a few.

Although countries continue to queue up to join the Commonwealth as it is – which must say something for it – the question is whether *in its present form* it could ever carry enough clout to perform this wider role. Is it firm enough and strong enough to meet and police its own high standards in terms of human rights, the rule of law and

democracy in its various forms ? That is the key issue on which the leading member states of the Commonwealth are focussing.

In addition one other way forward might be to offer a much closer association, if not actual membership, to some other important countries who are outside the existing blocs or uncomfortable within them, but plainly belong in the democratic camp.

An intimately allied grouping which embraced, even if loosely, Japan, India, Canada, Malaysia, South Africa ,Australasia and the UK, for a start, and had the good wishes of the Gulf states on board as well , would indeed be a network of common wealth, interests and power, able to speak on friendly but firm and equal terms with the American and Chinese giants and able also to stand up for common values of justice and democracy in a way that no other international institution currently seems capable of doing.

In a few short years the pattern of world capital flows, of trade flows and of economic expansion has shifted radically. Every nation is affected. At the same time peoples everywhere are acquiring a new sense of empowerment, sometimes seeing it translated into real progress and enlarged freedoms, sometimes finding their way frustratingly blocked.

The Commonwealth template stretches over this new scene, bringing a clear and calming prospect of betterment and common purpose . Its roots are old, stretching back into the histories of its original members but its character today is youthful – in the most literal sense. Half the two billion citizens of the Commonwealth are under twenty five. For women its declared aim is far better future.

Over it all presides Queen Elizabeth II , as she has done for sixty years past – an undeniably unifying influence, held in high affection and leading the way to the future with vast experience and skill. The

paradoxes are powerful – a monarch guiding the way to a new world order

**2012** *Commonwealth ,China and Trade - A New Phase Opens - By David Howell and Tim Hewish – Daily Telegraph, 2012*

David Cameron has been urging British exporters to find new markets in the Commonwealth. George Osborne has been calling for China to become our second largest trading partner. Do these two ambitions fit together?

Yes they certainly do. Both are part of a much wider vision that seems at last to have been grasped by the mandarins and the strategic planners of Whitehall - namely that despite their understandable preoccupation with EU renegotiation the big prizes for Britain in the future lie elsewhere.

It is in the vast new markets of Asia, Africa and even Latin America that our still woeful trade performance has to be reversed and in which Britain will either survive or succumb. And while China is obviously the colossus amongst these it gets much less noticed that the 53 nation Commonwealth, while it has many small and struggling states, also embraces some of the fastest growing economies and most lucrative new consumer markets on earth.

India, Australia, Malaysia, Canada, Singapore, South Africa, Nigeria may have their problems but they are the coming trade giants. And in turn they form the gateways to the other rising markets and new trade routes taking shape, and to the Indian Ocean and Pacific zones which have become the economic and business centres of the post-Western world. For instance the giant economies of Japan – still Britain's best friend in Asia- and India are drawing much closer.

It is true that the Commonwealth is not a natural trade bloc when viewed in conventional economic terms. And it is true that the bulk of our official trade policy is in the hands of the EU. But as Brussels

official slog away trying to put together elaborate trade deals with other regions a different world is unfolding round them which they hardly seem to recognise.

Thanks to the digital age and the stunning advances in almost total global connectivity modern trade is vastly more knowledge-laden and information-intensive than even a few years ago. The picture of export and import being solely a matter of giant container ships , manufactures and raw materials now has to be revised . Services of every kind and digitalised information now form a larger part of international business than ever before. International trade links and supply chains have grown infinitely and rapidly more complex , outdated and invalidating the 20<sup>th</sup> century pattern of trade blocs and protected areas.

Tariffs play a diminishing part in this changed world . Recently, for example, global trade in high tech products , including advanced microchips , telecom products and GPS navigation has seen all import duties removed. Exchanges in these products alone, at some \$1.3 trillion a year, surpass total world trade in textiles, iron and steel combined. The remaining barriers to surmount lie far more in poor understanding, different cultural approaches and practices.

To all of these new challenges the modern Commonwealth network is ideally suited, not by any imposed design but by evolution and adaptation. And it is of course the common language, understanding and sheer affinity of outlook between Commonwealth countries which links Commonwealth markets and significantly lowers barriers to the conduct of this new kind of business, to the handling of big investment projects and the arrangement of complex multi-sided deals. Study after study confirms that in these new conditions doing business within the Commonwealth family is just that much easier than coping with other foreign markets.

Intra-commonwealth trade which shrank steadily from the 1950s to the 1990s, is now rising, and there are strong grounds for expecting it to continue rapidly in these completely transformed world business conditions.

For Britain the importance of these new patterns cannot be over-emphasised. The great British strength nowadays, in the information age, lies in the immense ingenuity, novelty and sheer creative power of our service sector. Success in manufacturing and services are all woven together. In almost every professional field – from finance of all kinds to law to accountancy, from health administration to scientific research, from local government methods to Parliamentary practice, from journalism to professional sports, from land management to environmental and conservation techniques, from schooling right from the youngest level to university administration, from museum design to every kind of creative art and to every conceivable form of training – an extraordinary and dense weave of live, instant and continuous intra-Commonwealth relationships has now emerged, thanks to the universal use of English and the way we are all connected at the click of a button.

And as vital and rich new trade routes and supply chains open up, both maritime and snaking across the East and central Asian landmass, their protection, and the stability and friendliness of the regions they cross suddenly leap up the scale of importance for the security and defence dispositions of many Commonwealth states.

Open sea and air routes, anti-piracy, interoperability, intelligence sharing, anti-terrorism cooperation, humanitarian and disaster relief, and military training, are all finding their way onto the new Commonwealth network agenda.

For almost all of the 53 member states, covering just under a third of the human race, Britain very much included, the linkage mechanism which the Commonwealth offers in the digital age, with all its advantages and underpinnings , is becoming not just a matter of opportunities. It is becoming a matter of survival .

2013. 19<sup>th</sup> February. Nagoya, Japan. One more attempt to explain – to a Japanese audience- how the Commonwealth fitted into Britain’s future. But how WRONG I was about the EU prospect.

### **Britain, Europe and the Network World.**

We are witnessing the biggest transformation in the international landscape since World War Two. Democracy, of a kind, has shifted visibly to the streets. A totally new global energy landscape is emerging. New international groupings are gaining significance alongside the old 20<sup>th</sup> century structures.

For Britain a key network in making new connections of the right kind now needed is the fifty four nation Commonwealth, embracing just under a third of the human race fifteen percent of its GNP and a dozen of the fastest growing markets in the world . For both Britain and Japan the challenge is to adjust to new forms of intense interdependence .

#### **Background :**

- The information revolution, and the age of hyper-connectivity, mean that markets, wealth accumulations, influence and political power have all shifted
- .Network connectivity creates new degrees of immediacy and intimacy between states with which traditional diplomatic procedures cannot cope .Britain is adjusting to this novel global shift by developing markets outside Europe. Particular use will be made of the Commonwealth network of 54 countries with cultural and language affinities with the UK.

- Nevertheless Europe remains Britain's immediate neighbourhood and a settled and comfortable relationship must be found within it. The Cameron strategy on Europe is not just to secure a better deal for the UK with the EU, where we intend to stay, but to help the whole EU and ALL its member states, turn in more modern directions, with much less centralisation and more flexibility and dynamism.
- The British people will vote decisively to stay in this new kind of Europe. However it is the whole EU itself which has to end its present turmoil and find a new and more settled pattern in a changed world context.
- Far from the UK being 'isolated' from Europe , 'marginalised', or 'out in the cold' the opposite is more the case. In wanting new directions, and a move away from unrealistic degrees of EU integration, the UK has many allies in other European capitals. *Interdependence* is the inescapable condition for every country in the network age.
- It is not only in Asia that vast new consumer markets have emerged. The African story is taking an entirely new and more favourable turn.
- Also, Britain's ties with Latin-America , once so close, now need to be refreshed. The Falklands issue hinders progress but should not be allowed to poison it, even with the ill-led and ever quarrelsome Argentina.

- Finally the global energy pattern has undergone two successive revolutions in a decade – the first towards lower carbon and greener energy forms, on both the supply and demand side, the second towards shale gas and oil.

Forecasts tell us that most of the demand and market growth for the next two decades will come from non-EU sources . 60 % of global GDP already lies outside the US and the EU.

Furthermore if one looks at capital and investment flows the picture is tilting still further away from Europe. The main sources of inward project investment to the UK today are the USA (still by far the biggest) but with India, Japan, Australia, Canada and China coming on fast ,(source UKTI 2010-11 report).

Meanwhile, nothing seems to be going right in the Middle East. There is no end in sight to the killing and the horrors – especially in Syria but not only there – despite the high hopes of the Arab Spring. And back in Europe its bad news all round. The Euro will survive for a while but be prone to constant crises.

Yet there *is* a hopeful message to be distilled out of all this – a message particularly favourable to Britain – and I hope to Japan. . The essence of it is that we now live not in a world of power blocs and superpowers but in a world of intense connections and networks. Yet even this world-altering new scene is already being overtaken. A new revolution in resource recovery techniques is bringing oil, gas and minerals deposits within commercial reach on an undreamt of scale .

IN SUM: a new constellation of nations, powers, influences and forces has emerged. Even what it means to be a democratic state has changed in the instant communication age and e-enabled street protest. Generally, a vast global *bouleversement* is taking place. The

developing states are fast becoming the developed. The poor are becoming the less indebted while the rich, the so-called 'advanced' nations, are mired deeper in debt than ever before in history. The savings of the East and the South are coming to the rescue of the North and the West. .

ENDS

*2013. 23.07. Letter to Financial Times - Commonwealth has much to offer a troubled world.*

Sir, You have published a number of letters since carrying Gideon Rachman's provocative article "A Sri Lanka summit discredits the Commonwealth" (June 25) — the last very hostile one from Edward Mortimer ("Sri Lanka requires firm, principled line from the Commonwealth ', July 8). But the issue is so central to the evolution at British foreign policy and Britain's positioning in the new international landscape that the numerous misunderstandings and flawed perceptions cannot be left there hanging in the air unchallenged.

Mr Mortimer may know a lot about Sri Lanka — though not, I suspect, as much as Carl Wright of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (Letters, July 2), who actually operates at the sharp end on the ground in that country — but he clearly knows very little about the modern Commonwealth network. He draws his views from focusing on the government-to-government aspects of the Commonwealth, as did Mr Rachman. But they, of course,

are only the tip of a vast range of interlocking citizen-to-citizen Commonwealth activities — non- governmental, professional, educational, scientific, parliamentary,

judicial and business- and investment-related — which are not only thriving today but, thanks to the digital revolution, last wearing the whole Commonwealth network into an ever-closer system. It should be no surprise that several countries are queueing up to apply to join this "platform of the future", as HM The Queen has described it. Britain is only one part of this new pattern but a supremely well placed one, given that English is the working

language and given our hub position in communications and finance.

Mr Mortimer makes a number of statements about the Commonwealth that are not correct. He says that Sri Lanka will chair all Commonwealth meetings for the next two years. Not true. There will be dozens of Commonwealth meetings, hosted by such bodies as the Commonwealth Business Council, the Commonwealth Foundation and numerous other bodies where Sri Lanka may or may not be represented but will certainly not chair.

He says that the Commonwealth is “showering undeserved rewards” on the Sri Lankan regime. Not true.

He says that “any 'soft power' the Commonwealth possesses derives from its ability to set standards”. Not true.

Pushing for standards of behaviour by governments is certainly one of its aspects but its soft power derives from a far wider cross-pollination of links, ties, alliances and attitudes which together form a latticework of connections unmatched by any other world institution or network.

For Sri Lanka, the choice of which as the venue for the next heads of government meeting was put off four years ago for 2011 but agreed by a majority for 2013, the answer may well be a mixture of sticks as well as carrots. The pressure for that must of course come from within the Commonwealth — it stands precious little chance of coming from anywhere else. But to rubbish the whole Commonwealth system and family when one of its members errs badly seems to go flatly against Britain’s best interests, as well as showing scant understanding of what the modern Commonwealth has become and what it can offer to a very troubled world.

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**2013** *Article offered to The Daily Telegraph – Why the Commonwealth Now..*

The Foreign Secretary, William Hague, has said that he wants to put the C, for Commonwealth, back into the FCO.

But why bother, some ask. The Commonwealth may be a pleasant and genteel club of old friends, **they say**, mostly with some common history and attributes, but what has it got to do with Britain's prosperity and the promotion and protection of our national interests?

The answer is 'a large and rapidly increasing amount' – and for two very practical reasons.

First today's Commonwealth, unlike yesterday's, embraces at least six of the world's fastest growing economies and markets, and provides the gateway to still more of the emerging powers where wealth is accumulating and purchasing power is soaring. Stretching across continents and faiths and covering almost two billion citizens it is the soft power network par excellence that Britain needs to serve our interests in, and give us access to, the new global landscape.

Second, the Commonwealth is underpinned by a set of values and principles which give it a unique kind of cohesion and relevance, and which are not just fine in themselves, when adhered to, but increasingly go hand in hand with investment attractiveness and trade expansion. They are two sides of the same coin. Doing business with, or through, countries and economies which carry the Commonwealth badge and which are committed to democratic practices, upholding the rule of law, respecting human rights and gender equality, starts to command a tangible premium.

It is not just a question of a common language –English – but also an adherence to familiar legal standards, familiar patterns of commercial practice and law, familiar accounting and other professional practices and accreditations, and a dozen other business climate reassurances .

It is no surprise that , given this tangible Commonwealth premium, intra-Commonwealth flows of trade and investment are on the rise.

Britain can take clear advantage of this new milieu , although here, as elsewhere in the policy field, some new mindsets are required. David Cameron **is right to say that says we need to think in a completely different way not only about our domestic society but also our external role and direction.** In fact the two aspects are closely related.

First we have to adjust to the fact that the new Commonwealth is no longer an Anglo-centric affair, or at least not nearly so much so as in the past . Just as power and wealth have shifted globally away from the West, so also within the Commonwealth system the new centres of influence are going to lie in Asia and its enormous markets.

Second, the promotion and safeguarding of British interests is going to require a new diplomatic agility and nimbleness. Where we can we will work closely with EU partners, but the Commonwealth network links us up not just with the big new powers but with numerous smaller nations who want a voice, have a contribution to make and deserve more respect and attention than we have given them in recent years, or they feel they get from other international bodies.

Examples are Trinidad and Tobago - not only an obvious gateway to Latin American markets but like other Commonwealth countries a source of swelling investment funds which we, the British will need to tap to fund our vast infrastructure and energy transition needs. The same goes for Singapore and other ASEAN members, as well as for

newcomers to the resource wealth scene such as Papua New Guinea. Add in the sovereign wealth funds of the bigger players, such as India, Australia, Malaysia and it can be seen that the Commonwealth of tomorrow could well become our bank as well as our band of friends.

George Osborne, who was the first British Chancellor for many years to attend the Commonwealth finance ministers meeting in New York the other day, is clearly alert to this possibility..

Third, it is time to become a little less diffident about operating as a Commonwealth caucus and speaking up for Commonwealth interests in the many international institutions to which we belong. France seems to have few inhibitions about advancing Francophonie interests in EU circles and elsewhere. Common Commonwealth goals in reshaping the world trading system, pushing ahead with the faltering Doha round and rebalancing the IMF, for example, not only merit reassertion but could also add to Britain's diplomatic leverage in these and other forums.

Fourth, we should start valuing more confidently what we have got, thanks to the Commonwealth legacy – a world wide **pre-eminence** in the legal and accountancy professions, an extraordinary web of Commonwealth-branded associations of experts in fields from architecture to zoology, and above all a pattern of educational linkages that not only makes British higher education one of our major exports but also sends a stream of younger Brits out into Commonwealth countries.

In short, the emerging markets, the great new centres of middle class purchasing power across the Indian sub-continent, across central, south east and Pacific Asia, across Africa both north and south, and across Latin America, are where we, the British, have to be, and

where luckily we have a great deal of experience and skills from our past history to secure our entry.

Our way in is through diplomacy but also through a mass of trading, cultural, educational, social and scientific connections, and not least through the latticework of links between Commonwealth interests and citizenry already here in Britain and their former homelands –the so-called ‘Commonwealth within’.

When the Asian engineer, trained here, specifies new machinery requirements, we want him to look to Britain. When the dentist re-designs his or her operating room we will supply the most advanced equipment. When accountancy skills or legal skills are needed we want the professionals to look to London and operate by common Commonwealth standards and accreditation patterns .

For the UK these past decades have been the years which the locusts ate

Our competitors, including our quick-footed partners in the EU, have not been nearly so slow to grab the opportunities and embed themselves in this new and lucrative landscape. .

It is the Commonwealth connection which now gives us the obvious chance to catch up and even overtake others. Obviously many of these great new markets – China, Japan, Brazil, or booming Latin America, are hardly Commonwealth. But their trading and investment partners and neighbours certainly are - giving us the gateways we need to the wider new scene.

Are we there yet? To fulfil its potential the Commonwealth system needs brisk modernisation and at this very moment a group of distinguished Commonwealth leaders – the Eminent Persons Group –

is hard at work on a plan for refurbishment. (Former Foreign Secretary Sir Malcolm Rifkind is the British member of the group.)

They have some key aims in focus. The policing of standards and the insistence on human rights and good governance throughout the Commonwealth must become much more systematic and rigorous: the championship of softpower must be much bolder: the administrative machinery of the Commonwealth must be upgraded, although the organization must never fall victim to the kind top heavy and over-centralised which has bedevilled other world institutions: the potential value of the modern Commonwealth must be presented far more effectively to the younger generation who make up half its members.

If the Commonwealth can raise its game on these lines every member will benefit, but none more so than Britain.

Nicholas Boles, a new Conservative MP, in a brilliant phrase, has described the problem for Britain over these wasted past years as being ‘not delusions of grandeur but delusions of impotence’. It is time for a more distinctive and confident foreign policy which sustains our prosperity and promotes our values. The Commonwealth is one of the key ways of lifting ourselves out of **what seemed in the past like a silo of defeatism** . It is the modern route through which we not only secure our interests but also offer our example, setting it, as the Pope observed on his recent visit, “ before the two billion members of the Commonwealth and the great family of English-speaking nations throughout the world” .

So this is why William Hague is putting back that ‘C’ in the FCO . It is the face of the future and the platform of the future for all of us.

**2013. 7<sup>th</sup> July . Article for the Commonwealth Ministers Reference Book .**

To the poorly informed observer or commentator - and alas there are many - the Commonwealth looks like a sort of club of the governments of ex-British Dominions and colonies, with one or two added, meeting from intermittently in a slightly disputatious atmosphere for old times sake.

Nothing could be more wrong. A much better way of understanding today's Commonwealth network is to start from the astonishingly perspicacious words of HM Queen Elizabeth - in a Christmas Day broadcast back in 2008. The Commonwealth, she said, is 'in many ways the platform of the future'.

What her words meant - and one wonders how many of her Ministers, or other Commonwealth leaders fully grasped them - was that in the digital age of amazing global connectivity the Commonwealth network spreading across a third of humankind, was a far better-adapted structure for the 21st century than some of the more hierarchical and top heavy international institutions of the past.

This is an era in which information and communications technology has transformed almost every aspect of human existence, empowering groups, organizations, interests, markets and indeed personal lives as never before in history. In effect it has redistributed both influence and power – and in both good ways and bad.

The good side of the story is that hundreds of millions of people across the world have been given new hope and new opportunities. Tyrants have fallen, governments everywhere have had to listen more closely to the people, women have found a stronger voice and place,

and the participation of the rising nations of Asia , Africa and Latin America in global improvement and expanding trade, investment and prosperity has been vastly expanded.

The bad side is that power has also slipped into the hands of non-state groups with evil intent, determined to overthrow all authority and challenge all legitimacy, as now tragically evidenced in many parts of the Arab world.

Amidst all this turmoil there is one great transcontinental , multi-faith, network of positive cooperation and collaboration which stands out like a beacon guiding us to a better future in a dark world. That network is the modern Commonwealth.

To understand what is really happening one needs to penetrate beneath the canopy of everyday media coverage and comment.

What hurried and instant media reports pick up are disputes between government leaders and negative official comment. The resistance of the Sri Lankan Government to open UN examination, or intolerant laws in some Commonwealth member states, or sharp departures from the democratic pathway are classic examples.

What are not picked up are the thousand and one threads of daily connection at the voluntary, informal and non-official level. Schools speak to schools every morning. (It is said that some primary school pupils have discovered they can outsource home work to Singapore!) .

More visibly and tellingly, the Association of Commonwealth Universities works with five hundred and thirty university institutions across the fifty three Commonwealth states. The Commonwealth of Learning operates by far the largest distance learning operation on the planet, from its British Columbia headquarters, Museums across the

Commonwealth are in almost daily collaboration, led from the British Museum.

Parliaments study each other and work out how to develop mechanisms like the Public Accounts Committee. Judges, magistrates and lawyers coordinate ideas and experience right across the network. Almost every profession – doctors, accountants, planners, farmers, surveyors, educationalists, broadcasters, journalists, scientists, sports promoters and developers, local government experts – have their organisational linkages across the Commonwealth system.

All are operating in an envelope of a common working language – English – and in the surrounding ambiance of common attitudes and common procedures (‘ways of doing things’) which the DNA within the language instructs.

These are linkages and initiatives considered ‘not worth reporting’ yet in reality just as influential in shaping tomorrow as high visibility gatherings like the G-8 - or even more so.

Even the statistics mislead, depicting trade and economic activity by contained regional blocs - which the Commonwealth

Clearly is not, and in the digital age no longer needs to be.

This gives an oddly inflated appearance to Atlantic and OECD economic significance – similar in some ways to the distorting lens of the Mercator projection of the world map.

Some intra-Commonwealth developments are becoming too large to ignore or remain below the radar screen of public debate. The latest IMF estimates of world economic significance five years ahead put America top of the list, with China second, the group of Commonwealth nations third and the EU a long way fourth. India is the largest foreign owner of industrial enterprise in the UK. Malaysian

capital is transforming central London. – all reminders. that the textbook stereotype picture of capital flowing from the industrialised ‘West’ to an impoverished east and south has to some degree gone into reverse, with the colossal savings of thrifty newly emergent countries being sought after to come to the aid of the old and debt-ridden West.

It should be no surprise that a number of countries with only tenuous or non-existent connection with the older alumni of the British Empire, should be knocking at the entry door into Commonwealth membership, or at least seeking association with what looks increasingly like a truly worthwhile ‘brand’ or network with which to be involved.

Some may have difficulty and the Commonwealth has hitherto been chary of contact with countries whose pathway to open and democratic governance has been, at best, ambiguous. The super-rich Gulf emirates are all cases in question .

It has been said by some that while the Commonwealth commitment to common values, the rule of law and good governance may be admirable, and are all now reflected in the new Commonwealth Charter , agreed between all member states in 2013, nonetheless , say the sceptics, one cannot eat values and they do not place food and better living standards on the table.

Not so. If one thinks in terms of values underpinning a climate of mutual trust and understanding, and such mutual trust being the *sine qua non* essential for investment, building up business and promoting risk-taking and entrepreneurial start-ups, then values do indeed become the food on the table and the trigger for societies and conditions in which wealth creation can safely take place and in which the accumulation of assets becomes possible.

In a world which , although hyper-connected as never before, is yet seething with distrust between communities, fuelled by violent religious divides and hideous persecution of minorities , the Commonwealth connection starts to make more sense than ever. It embraces both rich and poor, small and immense, advancing and somehow held back by unsympathetic global trends which pass smaller states by,

Those who ask who is in charge, or who runs the Commonwealth from the top, have to realise that in an age of mass empowerment via the web a different question has to be posed. It is how the numerous impulses which build up a peoples' pattern of power from the grass roots, are be given shape and purpose without being over-centralised and deadened by top-heavy control on the one hand, or allowed to fragment into anarchy on the other.

This is the new challenge of leadership everywhere in the internet era – how at once to guide through wisdom and illumination and yet to permit a thousand flowers to grow.

The old separation of government and official activity from voluntary and private initiative begins to blur in the new interconnected global behaviour pattern. Voluntary bodies like the Royal Commonwealth Society in London finds themselves at the centre of a living and intensely busy web of Commonwealth cooperation and endeavour, building itself up like a self-assembling mechanism to meet new needs and seize new opportunities.

By chance, by luck , but also by the wisdom and far-sightedness of a few, the Commonwealth is emerging today as uniquely suited to meet this challenge.

**2013. October 8<sup>th</sup>. Speech at Europe House - Britain, the EU and the Commonwealth**

### **Riding Two Horses**

It was James Maxton, the veteran Labour leader in the inter-war years, who said that if you can't ride two horses you had no right to be in the (bloody) circus.

Today this is exactly what an agile Britain has to do if we are to survive and prosper. We have to take a constructive lead in the reform of the grievously divided and troubled European Union, AND we have to use every available network to penetrate deep into the giant and rising markets of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

And of course the best channel we have to hand to assist with that is the ready-made Commonwealth network – re-invigorated in the age of almost total connectivity and interactivity, with a common working language, embracing now a dozen or more of the world's fastest growing economies and providing a gateway to still more of the great emerging markets of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This is the opposite of what we were told forty year ago, in 1972/73. Then the received wisdom was that Britain's global interests were finished, the Commonwealth could be ignored and our destiny lay in wholehearted participation in the great European single market.

That may have been right then, but today, four decades later, we are the other side of the internet revolution and the entirely new pattern of international power and markets it has created. The wheel of economic fortune has turned full circle. It is now outside the EU where all the growth for the next two decades or so is likely to occur and where much of the wealth is going to be generated to finance the

capital projects the world needs – including those in the debt-ridden West.

On the best estimates the EU share of global GDP is set to shrink (to 15% by 2020) while other areas expand. The Euro-zone share could be as little as 11.9% according to the IMF). The Commonwealth countries are projected to grow over the next five years by 7.2%.

Of course the modern Commonwealth (54 member states, with several more in the waiting room to join) has no specific trade track. That would have mattered twenty years ago, but today not only are tariff barriers mostly far lower or negligible, but trade flows are taking a completely different shape, with complex supply chains snaking through economies on several continents, South and North, East and West.

Determinants of trade flows are now set as much by foreign direct investment decisions (themselves driven by local conditions, culture, political risk, familiarity, trust etc) and by non-tariff barriers, regulations, procedures, customs and attitudes, as by yesterday's tariff walls. Services and knowledge products, barely featuring in trade calculations forty years ago, or earlier when the original EEC was founded, now have a central position in international exchange.

*Trade now follows not the flag but the relationships built up layer upon layer by soft power deployment and diplomacy.*

It should be no surprise that some of the biggest leaps in UK exports – of both goods and services in the last two years (2010-2012) have been to Commonwealth countries – viz 33.5% to India, 31.2% to South Africa, 30% to Australia, 18.3% to Canada.

All the EU member states have got to equip themselves with these new relationship techniques of soft power deployment if they want to

maintain their prosperity and survive in a super-competitive new world. But for Britain the dice could have truly landed the right way up. At Government level (most visible to the media) there may be intra-Commonwealth differences, even family quarrels and stand-offs. Adherence to common values may fall short; back-sliding occurs.

But that is just the visible tip of things. The genius of the Commonwealth network is that it is people-driven, civic society driven, community driven, common interest driven and, increasingly, market and business driven. That is why the age of hyper-connectivity has acted like a blood transfusion to a network covering almost a third of humankind - half of them under 25, half of them women struggling to have their full and rightful place, millions of them young entrepreneurs aspiring to break out of the development dead-ends, many of them from smaller states and islands (32 of them in the Commonwealth) to whom globalisation has given no chance.

And that is why old links of the old Commonwealth have been replaced by new ties of an intensity and density unequalled in history – ties between universities, schools, scientists, science, medicine, accountancy, the creative arts and literature, judicial systems, military forces, and a hundred other interests. And that is why, when the Queen describes the Commonwealth as ‘in many ways the face of the future’ she is a lot closer to the truth than many of her past Ministers.

The transformed international scene is now filling up with a quilt of new networks and alliances, some involving the old West, some excluding it altogether. The Commonwealth is only one of these new, or renewed, systems. But it is a mighty one and for a heavily *interdependent* Britain it is a huge potential asset in every respect, both from the trade and business point of view and from the point of view of our contribution to peace, stability and development.

We should both grasp the opportunities this brings , and share them where we can with our struggling European neighbours. The two horses can be ridden- so long as we keep our balance , and our confidence!

**2013.** *November 8<sup>th</sup>. Old Links and New Ties by David Howell, published by I. B. Tauris . Chapter 12- The face of the future How and why Britain should re-join (Yes, re-join) the Commonwealth*

‘The Commonwealth is in many ways the face of the future.’ these were the words of Queen Elizabeth, Head of the Commonwealth, in her Christmas message of 2009. Scarcely attracting the attention of commentators at the time, they are now beginning to be appreciated, a few years on, as what they truly were – namely, a prescient glimpse of the future in a totally transformed international landscape, a beam of light suddenly illuminating a global future which even now may not be fully understood or accepted.

for what today’s Commonwealth is developing into is something quite different from the past. it is becoming the necessary network of the twenty-first century – a set of relationships between nations large and small, and between their peoples, which is not provided by any other multilateral institution, but which is increasingly needed and, as the membership waiting room confirms, sought after.<sup>1</sup> As virtual linkages spread, almost to the point of creating virtual nations, and as hard physical relationships become more complicated, the outstanding characteristic of the Commonwealth is that it spans both worlds

– the actual and the virtual, the public and the private, the official or governmental, and the non-governmental linked and e-enabled world of markets, professions and peoples. As with quantum particles, it is possible within the Commonwealth to be in two places and two states at the same time.

very few planned or foresaw this. on the contrary, a wide-spread view in the later decades of the twentieth century was that the

Commonwealth had lost its relevance. it was a club of the past, a family of yesterday, held together by little more than nostalgia.

Yet contrary to expectations, what is emerging instead from the old pattern is something that fits amazingly closely with the future and with the technological revolution in which the world is now caught up.

first, the Commonwealth today, far from being a backward- looking coterie of states, is proving (to the surprise of some) to be a living network of relationships and like-minded values and principles that stretches across all continents – Asia, Africa, Europe, the Americas – and across almost all religions, at a time when global reach is essential to tackle global problems. the great themes of democracy, human rights, good governance and the rule of law, the aspirations of all humankind, have found in the modern Commonwealth a fresh and resilient means of propagation in the network age.

Second, the Commonwealth, again to the surprise of some, is one of the fastest-developing associations of nations in the world – in some parts faster even than China – and contains at least seven of the most dynamic, knowledge-driven economies in the world.<sup>2</sup> As the west's trade and investment tilts away from Europe and the Atlantic, and towards rising Asia and Africa, the Commonwealth network becomes more and more relevant for all its citizens in hard commercial terms, meaning jobs and investment in an age short of both.

Third, the Commonwealth survives and attracts new members when the world's other multilateral organisations, designed for the twentieth century, are failing us and in deep trouble. it provides scope for a real North–South dialogue on equal rather than patronising terms.

Fourth, in an age of small states, many of them feeling bypassed by global trends and tossed in the storms of world economic volatility,

the Commonwealth platform offers a life-raft of opportunity and influence, where smaller voices get a bigger hearing, and the problems of smaller states receive genuine attention and consideration, notably in meeting the severe challenges of climate change, energy scarcity, food and water needs, and other escape routes from poverty. it gives Britain yet another chance to recover its once strong reputation for helping the smaller and weaker states of the planet, to be a source of supportive partnership and not pressure, free of any suggestion of dominance, exploitation or control.

At least potentially, the Commonwealth is thus emerging as the kind of forum in which richer and faster-growing countries and the poorer and smaller nations can speak on equal terms, in which people from different faiths can sit down and discuss their problems calmly (there are 500 million Muslims in the Commonwealth), and in which almost all members are seriously committed – or under steady pressure to be committed to good governance and to contributing to global peace and stability, rather than pursuing vendettas against America and ‘the West’.

Fifth, the Commonwealth, unlike most other multinational organisations and combinations of states in today’s world, is an assembly of peoples, not just of governments. its most visible aspect may be heads of government gathering together, but beneath the official layer lies a vast substructure of alliances and groups, interests and professional bodies, civil societies and voluntary associations, all proudly carrying the Commonwealth badge.

### **The family**

Marlborough House in the Mall is the visible centre of the Commonwealth. it makes a good setting, with its superb murals commissioned by Sarah Churchill, first duchess of Marlborough, and

its echoes of a glittering past as the home of 'Bertie', Prince of Wales (later Edward VII). From here 'the Marlborough House set' radiated out and enlivened Victorian London society (some would say a little too much). Here, down the years, Secretary Generals such as Arnold Smith,

Sonny Ramphal, Chief Enayaku, Don McKinnon and currently Kamelesh Sharma, a former Indian diplomat and statesman of the highest calibre, have been able to look out across the world on the Commonwealth family.

But appearances are deceptive. What you see is not what you any longer get. The Secretariat is not a head office because the modern Commonwealth is not managed, or led, from the top down. The strength comes from below, from the dizzying range of Commonwealth-oriented organisations and initiatives across the world which the internet has now connected and enlivened. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association brings parliamentarians and legislators together from every corner of the Commonwealth. Alongside this global parliamentary convocation are the Commonwealth-wide organisations promoting parliamentary administration and techniques of accountability, as well as sharing lessons learnt, at Westminster and elsewhere, about the operation of committees of Parliament, not least the Public Accounts Committee.

Around this parliamentary network, other main 'pillar' organisations proliferate, such as the Commonwealth Foundation, the umbrella body for civil societies, the Commonwealth Business Council, thriving and expanding as never before as intra-Commonwealth trade and investment grows. Or there are the legal bodies underpinning the vital common law pattern of the Commonwealth, such as the Commonwealth Lawyers Association, or the Commonwealth

Magistrates and Judges Association, all in turn spreading common standards of judicial administration.

The other professions – the doctors, accountants, surveyors, planners, nurses, educationalists, journalists, broadcasters, social workers – all have their Commonwealth networks. there is also Commonwealth Connects, a strategic digital initiative, showcasing the Commonwealth and its values, increasing public visibility and personalising the Commonwealth connection for millions of individuals. its website connects audiences and enables professional and expert collaboration on a titanic, trans-world scale.

Then there is the Commonwealth Local Government Association (active at a highly practical level in many countries), the Commonwealth of Learning spreading teaching through open and distance learning (ODL) on a world scale, the Association of Commonwealth Universities (530 of them!), and of course the whole world of sport and the Commonwealth Games administration. the list goes on and on, and grows with all the new professional skills, interests, specialisms and technologies the age produces.

The Commonwealth of Learning, based in Vancouver, is a particularly fascinating example of networking at the most practical level. Supported by 50 Commonwealth governments, it is literally the world's only intergovernmental organisation solely concerned with the promotion and development of distance education and open learning.

All this is usually called 'the Commonwealth family'. what exactly is this vast family? in Annex d there are 82 bodies listed as accredited organisations with the Commonwealth 'family'. Many more lie outside the official accreditation list. ranging across almost every conceivable branch of human co-operation, they are the programme

material and data for the ultimate global network. Alan Turing, said to be inventor of the computer, would have built a 'thinking machine' to handle them in no time. But his work would not have been necessary. the Commonwealth network machine is busy building itself.

For nations like the United Kingdom, which seemed in past decades to lose interest in its Commonwealth connections, the entire network assumes a new and crucial significance, as the gateway to new markets and new sources of finance – the reversal of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century pattern. Not only have Commonwealth countries become new and demanding consumer marketplaces, ready for the highest- quality goods the UK can turn out. Australia and the Pacific Commonwealth nations lead the way to Chinese markets, via the once-British and still welcoming Hong Kong. oil-rich Trinidad and Tobago leads the way into Latin America, again mostly with welcoming and Britain-friendly consumer classes.

A flood of figures is beginning to provide more eloquence than words could about the Commonwealth impact on world and British affairs. in the Fraser institute's index of freedom, six Commonwealth nations are in the top ten. in the world Bank's 'ease of doing Business' rankings, seven Commonwealth countries are in the top 25. in the international Corruption Perception index, six Commonwealth nations are in the top 25 for being least corrupt.

Commonwealth nations are among the fastest growing, and the momentum is spreading out from the traditionally rich states to the historically poorer ones, particularly in Africa. trade between the UK and the rest of the Commonwealth (goods and services) has expanded over the last decade by some 150 per cent. intra-Commonwealth trade and investment flows are also growing fast, although it is hard to extract precise figures. At the Heads of Government meeting in Perth, Australia, in October 2011, a cascade of new investment projects was

announced, together with tie-ups between mining interests – for example, between Australia and Nigeria – and a new business forum between the Commonwealth and China.

What has changed after recent decades to bring this amazing vitality to the surface? If there is a single basic explanation for what has occurred to galvanise the modern Commonwealth, it probably lies in the microchip, meaning the information revolution and the globalisation process to which it is linked. Quite simply the Commonwealth network of countries, societies, interests and peoples has been brought to a new and intensely interactive life by the phenomenon of instant global communication and connection. Language connects; electronically and digitally linked language connects totally.

This has occurred and is occurring at all levels, from the individual to the governmental, from the remotest school to schools everywhere, from student to student, farmer to farmer, doctor to doctor, from the humblest group or organisation to the largest state. the lacework of live associations and linkages described above (and in Annex d), stretching across the whole 54-nation Commonwealth network on a staggering scale, has become wired up as never before, enabling almost continuous dialogue and creative exchange – a kind of unending concerto of co-operation and common identification and purpose.

It is true that much of this extraordinary network was there before the turn of the century. A mid-1990s report from the

House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee<sup>3</sup> pointed out how the changing Commonwealth was supported by a battalion of non-governmental organisations, covering a vast range of interests and activities.<sup>4</sup> But in the new age of transparency and accountability

worldwide, in which the web and the mobile phone camera open almost every window of activity and social trend, this meshwork of contacts has been given a kind of blood transfusion. In effect, the Commonwealth 'badge' has become a sought-after asset – an entrée to the community of trust, reliability and transparency for which the world's investors and traders constantly search. This is certainly one explanation of the fact that, as we have seen in Chapter 4, countries with only a remote link with the old British sphere, or none at all, have either already joined the Commonwealth, or aspire to do so, or at least seek to link up with its various supporting groups.

Of course, the global communications miracle is not the only transforming force in the Commonwealth network. It interacts closely with the other key binding language factor, and embedded within it the DNA of common attitudes, assumptions, instincts, manners, ideas of what constitutes humour and ways of looking at the world which a language contains and purveys. Because the language is English, the origins of many of these things go back to British traditions and values, but by no means all. The Britishness factor has long since become enriched by and interwoven with many other cultures, such as Asian, African and Caribbean, in some cases much older and more powerful than the traces of the British legacy.

### **Quarrels and awkward family members**

There must be realism about the Commonwealth as it is developing today – at least at the official and governmental level. Within any family there are differences, even quarrels at times. That is inevitable. So it is in the Commonwealth family, where not all see eye to eye over either governance issues or world issues. Some are well off, some are not at all well off, and the gap may be widening. With new patterns and doctrines of international behaviour being aired and proclaimed all the time – such as humanitarian intervention, the

responsibility to protect, the right to intervene – a constant debate is hardly surprising. Sixteen realms, under the Queen, and 37 (at the time of writing) republics and independent states are hardly likely to agree on everything. But the point is that if there are disputes they are not with ‘foreigners’, not lost in translation, but between members of the family, all viewing each other as closer than, and subtly different in feel and attitude from, foreign states. Heads of government may clash – the aspect most of interest to the media, of course. But below the surface lies a real Commonwealth network, outside the range of governments and their media camp followers, which continues to knit together across the world as never before.

A second reality is that as the Commonwealth network evolves, not all agree as to how standards should be enforced. that there should be high standards in terms of fundamental values and principles of behaviour and governance, to which all members should aspire to adhere, is not in question. that is the distinctive nature of the club, that it requires certain standards to be matched. Not anyone can march through the entry door.

But how those standards should be upheld, policed and even enforced is much more controversial. responding to the times, the Commonwealth leaders have sought, and continue to seek, new methods for ensuring principles are upheld in member states. this is work in progress, work to ‘advance the Commonwealth’s values’, as the most recent report and recommendations on strengthening the Commonwealth ‘brand’ put it.<sup>5</sup> it is work that is yielding growing results.

A new Charter of Commonwealth values has now been agreed and validated. Cynics may say that this is not for the first time. there have, after all, been a string of declarations and manifestoes down the years, from the Harare declaration of 1992 (irony of ironies, when one thinks

what the Mugabe regime did for human rights there) to the Milbank declaration of 1994, to the Auckland Charter of 1996.

What is the difference this time? the difference is connectivity and information. this is a Charter – a Maxima Carta– that sets standards for an age of almost if not completely total transparency. To say there is no hiding place now for brutal and illiberal rulers and their ways is going too far. Many things can still be hidden, and not just in totalitarian regimes. But the hiding places are now much more limited, and for nations that wish to wear the Commonwealth badge on their lapel far more limited still.

There are miscreants and there are bad sheep (black is the wrong word here for obvious reasons). Many families have them. Some Commonwealth countries have wanted far more in the way of policing within the club to ensure good behaviour and examine deviations. other countries have seen this as unwarranted intrusiveness, either because they fear that examination would show too many deficiencies or because they reckon that internal controls, exercised by accountable internal authorities, are best, or because they see an outside inspecting body to be another unnecessary layer, or for a jumble of all these reasons. whatever the motive, the proposal for an independent Commonwealth-wide Commissioner for Human rights has been rejected as going too far.

So what emerges from this compound and fusion of changes, motives and aspirations and enormous new opportunities as the technological revolution races ever faster ahead? why is that royal insight so pertinent? what is the real impact on the lives and hopes of the Commonwealth's 2 billion citizens, now and tomorrow? where should British policy now be reinforcing these enormous trends?

To understand clearly what is occurring, and how the evolving Commonwealth fits in, it helps to think in terms of a new kind of global equation. this can be presented as values = trust = Business and development.

In essence, the message in this era of super-connectivity and transparency is that those countries and societies that adhere most openly to Commonwealth values, or are clearly looking and moving in the right and same direction, are those that will be most attractive to investors and developers. the places where justice is likely to prevail, where commercial laws are familiar, where there is a serious aspiration to check corruption, if not stamp it out completely, are the places to set up new enterprises, invest new money and grow jobs and prosperity. Jobs and justice ride together.

There are obvious backsliders – sometimes nations have simply failed to update legislation inherited from their colonial pasts many decades ago. Attitudes to gay rights and to capital punishment, long since altered in Britain, are examples of this time lag. But the Commonwealth genius is that it acts as the constant pressure source and channel for change. to be pressed collectively from within the system is surely more likely to find a response than being lectured from afar by other nations claiming a moral superiority that they may not actually possess.

At the same time the twenty-first-century world is seeing a remarkable reversal of roles. the capital that used to roll from west to east in the last two centuries, from the great industrialised nations to the developing ones, to build their infrastructures, is now flowing the other way. it is the high- saving, fast-exporting nations of Asia in particular that have the wealth accumulations the west needs to meet its own requirements, square its budgets and update its often dilapidated facilities.

On top of that there is the question of natural resources and the wealth, if carefully managed, that the Commonwealth can bring to previously struggling economies. As we saw in Chapter 10, revolutionary changes in raw materials potential and access have altered the picture heavily in the Commonwealth's favour. The old resources were oil, coal and iron ore. The new resources are shale gas – accessible now in vast and potentially commercially recoverable quantities in Asian and African countries that previously had to import all energy – plus new ways of harnessing the sun, wind and tide, plus precious metals and rare earths hitherto undeveloped or even discovered. Commonwealth countries that were resource poor are beginning to see themselves as resource rich.

There is the matter of new or would-be members of the Commonwealth family. The rigid requirement that membership demanded some previous association with the British empire has long since been relaxed. Mozambique, Rwanda and Cameroon are now enthusiastic Commonwealth members. As Chapter 1 revealed, others are knocking at the door or seeking to associate themselves with some of the pillar organisations at non-state level. South Sudan, as already mentioned, has applied to be a member. Burma (Myanmar) and Yemen (once Aden) are still in the throes of political upheaval but could yet turn their attentions to the Commonwealth. The Gulf states, again with historic links, have also shown an interest in being kept in close touch with Commonwealth activity. Kuwait has voiced strong interest and believes it qualifies with the standards and conditions that membership requires.

### **The Irish dimension**

There are other states where serious voices can be heard talking about membership but nothing is said by ministers or at government level. The most interesting country in this category is the Republic of Ireland.

the historical baggage here is almost crushing. Ireland declined to join the 1949 Commonwealth, which first admitted republics, although history has it that Eammon de Valera, who could hardly be described as pro- British, oddly wanted to stay in. in any case there would have been an instinctive dislike of any British-tainted institutions, and the 1949 Commonwealth must have looked to many very much like the old British Commonwealth in new packaging.

Today the picture is different. first, as has already been explained earlier, the Commonwealth of today and tomorrow is no longer such an Anglo-centric entity, whatever its origins and history. Second, Ireland has been wounded by its euro association. Commonwealth membership would not be some sort of ricochet impulse, but it might be a steadying reinforcement for a nation temporarily knocked off balance by financial misfortune – a situation in which Britain was ready with prompt and substantial help. third, the Queen’s visit of May 2011 proved outstandingly successful in healing old wounds and promoting reconciliation. fourth, there is a question of mindset. Bringing Ireland and the UK, as fellow members of the Commonwealth, alongside each other in that orbit ought to be an opportunity not just for reinforcing the institutional links. the Council of the isles has long existed, although hardly in a state of public prominence. the new thought, yet to mature fully in either Dublin or London, is that Britain and Ireland need each other as never before. the combined voice of the whole British Isles would carry new weight both in a European and a wider international context. the Northern Ireland issue would at last fade away into inconsequence. the mutual economic benefits would multiply. New areas of co-operation in every- thing from cultural creativity to offshore energy possibilities would open out. inter-island transportation might lend itself to revolutionary technical possibilities. these are the areas to which the

first step, membership within the Commonwealth network, might lead.

It will all take time, but there is a growing campaign for this to happen and there are now no obvious obstacles. No allegiance to the Crown is involved and the Commonwealth of today is a very different institution from the one which Ireland walked away from in 1949.

Lingering fenian suspicions of course remain of anything that appears to involve British intrusion. But this would be partnership without dominance in a changed world, and fellow-membership in the worldwide Commonwealth network, opening up links and access opportunities to many other regions. And what a partnership it could be! value would be added for both countries. in a way that has never occurred within the EU context, joint Commonwealth membership would enable the so-called Irish dimension, seen from the London side, to begin to fuse with the English dimension, as seen from the Dublin side. there would be the question of the impact on the North, but the idea's supporters in Dublin see such a move as a strong gesture of reconciliation.

In reality the overlap of interests between Ireland and the Commonwealth already exists and is growing. Some 40 million Irish people live in Commonwealth countries. A changing world landscape may have turned the idea of Ireland's return from a possibility into a probability.

The existence of a queue of interested applicants is itself a kind of message. it does not, of course, guarantee that they will be admitted. A careful balance has to be struck between the danger of dilution and the invigoration of new members entering the Commonwealth family. either way, the fact that

States and societies round the world are privately urging their governments to consider applying, or are actually sending representatives to Commonwealth events, says something. it says that the Commonwealth is today's club of preference, the group that countries ambitious for improvement feel they should join.

The precise status or category of new member states matters not at all. Queen Elizabeth is the ruler, the monarch, quite separately and independently of 16 Commonwealth countries, the so-called realms. the rest are republics or separate kingdoms. New applicants for returning to realm status seem unlikely, although in this modern turn-turtle world of contradictions and reversals, stranger things have happened. fourteen other British overseas dependent territories nestle in under British membership, but increasingly aspire to have a bigger role at the Commonwealth table.

In the end the Commonwealth will succeed or wither away as a multilateral forum, depending on its practical usefulness and the clear benefits it brings to its members, very much including Britain. today the UN struggles to reform but remains at loggerheads over its own reform, over fundamental issues and facing severe internal problems to boot. Nothing could replace it, but something else seems to be needed in the twenty-first century. the various regional alliances and organisations are growing in power, but by definition lack the global spread the Commonwealth offers. the European Union is the biggest and potentially the most powerful regional bloc, but is beset by fearful current problems which hold it back and becalm its economic activity. the world trade organization (WTO) still struggles to avoid deadlock at Doha on farm subsidies, while those outside the existing trade blocs feel increasingly frustrated at their still substantially barred access to the richer markets.

By contrast, the Commonwealth scene looks somewhat more positive. Intra-Commonwealth trade appears to be expanding steadily, as are investment flows between its countries. A recent research paper by the Royal Commonwealth Society showed that the importance of Commonwealth members to each other in trade matters had grown substantially over the last two decades, with intra-Commonwealth exports up by a third. Ranging over issues from competitiveness to gender questions, to human development to environmental performance, the paper found the evidence 'seemed to suggest' that Commonwealth membership brought measurable trade advantage'.<sup>6</sup>

Much more work remains to be done in establishing the full picture of contemporary Commonwealth exchanges. None of this may amount to the case for anything like a Commonwealth free trade Area (an old idea attempted twice in the twentieth century, although in very different conditions). That era is past. But it does suggest a pause for thought as to how in today's very changed trading conditions, this extraordinary network, with a reach stretching right across regions and continents and embracing a third of the world's population, might (if it can be strengthened imaginatively) do a better job than the existing battered international institutions.

In particular it is surely time to think how a more ambitious Commonwealth of Nations could become a distinct force in both opening up the world economy and uniting the more well-intentioned and responsible countries in facing up to the ugly dangers of the age – such as terrorism, pariah nations, entrenched and paralysing poverty, protectionism, inter-ethnic wars, corruption and rotten governance.

What the Commonwealth requires now is perhaps less intergovernmental grandeur and more practicality. What governments need to do, the British government included, is to study more closely, and then reinforce, the strong developments now taking place within

the Commonwealth network. For example, as intra-Commonwealth business expands, and intra-Commonwealth cultural and professional ties multiply, the need for easier intra-Commonwealth travel increases. It ought to be possible to replicate something like the business travel card system operating between six members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation group (APEC).

Better information about the Commonwealth potential

– not just its history but its beckoning future – needs to be embedded in the educational curriculum of member countries, Britain most definitely included. Scholarship and study opportunities in all directions need to be fostered and increased

– not just one way towards the UK and not just at governmental level. All universities, British and Commonwealth, have a part to play in enlarging the volume of scholarship schemes. A Commonwealth trade and investment Bank has been proposed by Indian advocates to boost Commonwealth trade and investment potential. Numerous new Commonwealth initiatives are springing up of their own accord, unheralded and unnoticed by officialdom, such as the Commonwealth environmental investment Platform, bringing entrepreneurs throughout the Commonwealth together. There is Commonwealth exchange, the brainchild of two inspired young activists, Tim Hewish and Jim Styles, determined to get at the new facts. web searches reveal many more.

For Britain specifically, in addition to external opportunities and benefits, there are internal gains to be harvested. No one has a precise estimate of the numbers of British citizens of Commonwealth origin or with close Commonwealth connections. But the guess is that this ‘Commonwealth within’ is very large. A Britain with a more clearly articulated Commonwealth role could be a friendlier and more

unifying place for millions who are uncertain where their loyalties lie or with what causes they should identify. when disunity is tugging at every edge of British nationhood, the Commonwealth story could pull powerfully the other way, whether against Scottish separatism, alienated cultural and ethnic groups, or rootless younger generations.

Although, as we have seen, countries continue to queue up to join the Commonwealth as it is – which must say something for it – the question is whether it could ever carry enough clout in its present form to perform this wider role. is it firm enough and strong enough to meet and police its own high standards in terms of human rights, the rule of law and democracy in its various forms? that is the key issue on which the leading member states of the Commonwealth are focusing. in addition, one other way forward might be to offer a much closer association, if not actual membership, to some other important countries that are outside the existing blocs or uncomfortable within them, but plainly belong in the democratic camp.

An intimately allied grouping that embraced (if loosely) Japan, India, Canada, Malaysia, South Africa, Australasia and the UK, for a start, and had the good wishes of the Gulf states on board as well, would indeed be a network of common wealth, interests and power, able to speak on friendly but firm and equal terms with the American and Chinese giants. it would be able also to stand up for common values of justice and democracy in a way that no other international institution currently seems capable of doing.

The Commonwealth template stretches over this new scene, bringing a clear and calming prospect of betterment and common purpose. its roots are old, stretching back into the histories of its original members, but its character today is youthful – in the most literal sense. Half the 2 billion or more citizens of the Commonwealth

are under 25. for women, its declared aim is a far better future and a much better gender balance generally.

Over it all presides Queen Elizabeth ii, as she has done for 60 years past – an undeniably unifying influence, held in high affection and leading the way to the future with vast experience and skill. the paradoxes are powerful – a monarch guiding the way to a new world order! Succession to the role of head of the Commonwealth is not automatic. when the time comes, the Commonwealth membership will want the right to choose. But there is every reason to suppose that the choice will continue to fall on the occupant of the British throne.

As a bloc, the Commonwealth is historically one of the most successful collections of nations in world history. But of course it is not a bloc in the conventional sense. its links are electronic, not geographical; they are digitally networked, not hierarchical; they are between peoples and societies and the modules within each social structure. the challenge from the back of the hall, or from the journalists in the front row – who is in charge? – cannot really be answered in the usual terms. the nearest answer would be that the people are in charge, or perhaps it is nearer the mark to say the network is in charge. the Commonwealth is a creation of self-assembly. it is not the United Nations, nor even a pale replica of it. And it is not a regional bloc like the battered European Union. it is an escape from these structures and it leads to territory that these organisations do not reach, and often cannot see. this is its power and its weakness. it is a truly vibrant global family of cultures, economies, societies and political groups, far from perfect but looking in the same direction.

**2014.** *Article for Daily Telegraph - It's The Commonwealth After All*

Has the penny dropped? Has the British Establishment, which for a generation has turned its back on the Commonwealth – with the noble exception of the Queen and members of the Royal Family – at last begun to see that it made a terrible mistake?

Have the policy-making grandees of Whitehall and Westminster at last realised that far from being a nostalgia-ridden club of the past the modern Commonwealth network, with its colossal reach across almost a third of the human race, is for Britain a golden asset of the future?

A few facts (although these are still hard to come by from official sources) may help shift outdated perceptions. Today's Commonwealth of fifty three nations may contain some of the world's poorest nations but it also embraces a growing number of the fastest-growing and the richest on earth. Trade between them fell spectacularly in the second half of the last century but is now rising fast, as are capital and investment flows, not least because these are countries generating enormous savings looking for a profitable outlet. Indeed some of it is coming our way - and very useful it is as 'inward investment' boosting our home economy and financing our capital projects.

This of course is the opposite of what we read in our nineteenth and twentieth century textbooks about the West pouring capital into the developing nations. Now it is starting to be the other way round. Exports from Britain to the rest of the Commonwealth are now about 15 percent – far below the figure in the post-war heyday when the Commonwealth took almost half Britain's exports, but notably above

the even lower figure of recent years and, more to the point, rising fast.

Countries like Canada, India, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Malaysia now offer not only some of the wealthiest consumer markets, but also growing sources of international capital, with others like Nigeria, and Sri Lanka, for all their internal troubles, or Mozambique or Ghana coming up fast.

And these countries are in turn potential gateways to the biggest rising powers of all, China and Japan, now respectively the second and third largest economies in the world.

It may be said that the Commonwealth does not amount to a trade bloc and anyway our trade policy is all handled nowadays by the European Union. It is true that EU officials set tariffs on imports from outside the Union and negotiate on behalf of all EU members, or try to negotiate, deals to cut tariffs with outside trading partners.

But this portrays a remarkably dated view of trade. Tariffs today are one of the less important elements in the flow of international business. The average tariff on internationally traded goods is only 3 percent, though of course there are some higher ones on things like footwear and some pharmaceuticals.

Besides, it is increasingly information and services which are going to make up the bulk of international transactions and exchange –and indeed are already doing so. It makes less and less sense nowadays to distinguish between ‘manufactures’ and ‘services’, as the statisticians persist in doing. . A telling adage these days (which I think comes from HSBC) is that ‘in the future goods will be transmitted rather than exported’.

Almost all physical products now have a significant information and service content, whether via actual electronic parts, or via the machines which make them, the design input which shape them, the research behind them, the marketing and sales which transports and distributes them or endless other connections at every point in the production process.

So we can forget the steady moaning about ‘declining’ British manufacturing, as though metal-bashing was the only virtuous kind of industry. Aero-engines, intricate and incredibly advanced machinery, ultra high tech health equipment, training systems, defence equipment, car components, even simple households goods— it is all one big and compacted bundle of goods and services combined.

In short, modern manufactured products nowadays have become vehicles for exporting knowledge-intensive services, creative items and technology expertise in which the UK has developed an enormous advantages. Typical examples are the whole fields of education and health care. These are so now so large that with all the industrial and research ecosystems they have spawned and carry with them they are beginning to stand alongside the biggest ‘service sector’ of all, namely financial services in every shape and form.

And there’s more still. By far the most promising markets for our huge services exports are countries with English as the working language and the same or similar systems of commercial law, accountancy and general business practice, in a word - the Commonwealth. By contrast the EU Single market for services barely exists. Always on the verge of being ‘completed’, so we are told, it remains a forest of obstacles and deterrents.

Since the days in the last century when the original European single market was conceived completely new patterns of international

commerce have grown up. These have been described as a spaghetti bowl of regional and neighbourhood trade arrangements . Modern cars (computers on wheels, some call them) may be ‘created’ in six differ places before being finally marketed, making it almost impossible to apply rules of origin (i.e to say where they were actually made).

Meanwhile, East Asia, which for centuries past has been seen as a remote area of deserts and scattered primitive communities has suddenly begun to sprout new (or rather revived old) trade routes and activities. China’s ambitions for new rail, road and air routes, indeed whole new cities, are moving off the drawing board in the form of a ‘New Silk Road’ linking Asia and Europe as never before.

Some argue that these great new markets are the alternative to being involved in Europe so closely. But the truth is that we have to be in both. Europe is still our neighbourhood, our locality with whom we need to be on the best of terms , even if the big play is now moving elsewhere. In the same way we must stay on the best of terms with the United States, but always as partners, not as slavish subordinates, as we so nearly became during the Blair years.

Of course trade is not the only consideration. The mounting horrors of terrorism remind us that a globally connected response is required. NATO membership is vital but not nearly enough. Commonwealth military chiefs and security experts already work quietly but closely together. The South East Asian Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA) , which includes Britain and four other Commonwealth powers, , is just one example. Another is that Britain and Commonwealth countries increasingly train together, exercise together, plan together.

Besides, victories are secured nowadays not just by force deployment but by winning the narrative, by using so-called ‘soft’ as well as hard

power methods to safeguard and gain grass roots support for our values, and reject and defeat nihilism and anarchy. For deploying Britain's undeniably immense, but still underused, soft power assets the Commonwealth is the ideal network and platform, even though it has some backsliders.

To see things through this new lens demands a changed mindset amongst policy makers and the flag-carrying developers of Britain's global business, brand and reputation. We are talking about nothing less than a grand repositioning of the UK in a world utterly transformed by the digital age.

**2015.***The Daily Telegraph. China, Commonwealth, and Trade - A New Phase Opens*

By David Howell and Tim Hewish

Last week in China we saw George Osborne calling for China to become our second largest trading partner. Back in May we heard David Cameron say: “I want us to be nothing less than the modern world’s most open, trade-minded nation. To do that, we must tap into markets outside Europe; to look to the Commonwealth and beyond.” But do these two ambitions fit together?

Yes - they certainly do. Both are part *of a* much wider vision that seems at last to have been grasped by those in Whitehall - namely that despite their understandable preoccupation with EU renegotiation the big economic prizes for Britain in the future lie elsewhere away from just one continent.

It is in the vast new markets of Asia, Africa and even Latin America that our export underperformance has to be reversed and in which Britain will either survive or succumb. And while China is obviously the colossus amongst these much less notice is given to the 53-nation Commonwealth which, while it has many *small* and developing states, also embraces some of the fastest growing economies and most lucrative new consumer markets on earth.

India, Australia, Malaysia, Canada, Singapore, South Africa, Nigeria are emerging economic players in an increasingly networked world. And in turn they form the gateways to the other rising markets and new trade routes taking shape. Some people believe that India could yet prove the winning tortoise to the Chinese hare. Either way the UK would be foolish to miss out.

It is true that the Commonwealth is not a traditional trade ‘bloc’ and nor should it be seen as such. And it is true that the bulk of our official trade policy is in the hands of the EU. But as Brussels officials slog away trying *to* put together elaborate trade deals with other regions a different world is unfolding round them which they hardly seem to recognise.

Thanks to the digital age and the stunning advances in almost total global connectivity modern trade is vastly more knowledge-laden and information-intensive than even a few years ago. The picture of *eKport* and import being solely a matter of giant container ships, manufactures and raw materials now has to be revised. Services of every kind and digitalised information now form a larger part of international business than ever before. UK services are world leaders. International trade links and

supply chains have grown *infinitely* and rapidly more complex, outdated and invalidating the 20<sup>th</sup> century pattern of trade blocs and protected regions.

To all of these new challenges the modern Commonwealth network is ideally suited, not by any imposed design but by evolution and adaptation. And it is of course the common language, understanding and sheer affinity of outlook between Commonwealth countries which links Commonwealth markets, allows the communication of complex ideas and significantly lowers barriers to the conduct of this new kind of business.

Intra-commonwealth trade which shrank steadily from the 1950s to the 1990s, is now rising, and there are strong grounds for expecting it to continue rapidly in these completely transformed world business conditions.

For Britain the importance of these new patterns cannot be over-emphasised. The great British strength nowadays, in the information age, lies in the immense ingenuity, novelty and sheer creative power of our service sector. Success in manufacturing and services are all woven together. In almost every professional field an extraordinary and dense weave of live, instant and continuous intra-Commonwealth relationships has now emerged, thanks to the universal use of English and the way we are all connected at the click of a button.

Importantly too, as vital and rich new trade routes and supply chains open up, their protection, stability, and the friendliness of the regions they cross suddenly leap up the scale of importance for the security and defence dispositions of many Commonwealth states. This should become a growing priority.

Britain is correct to woo China early, but we should not put Britain's future prosperity all on red. As in personal investment it is prudent to have a diverse portfolio, spread across numerous zones. The same is true for a country's trade and investment strategy. The modern Commonwealth is emerging as a key part of the new pattern. With all of the Commonwealth's advantages and underpinnings, it is becoming not just a matter of opportunities. It is becoming a matter of survival.

**2015. March 9<sup>th</sup>. COMMONWEALTH DAY OBSERVANCE**  
*MESSAGE . This is my forward to the folder for the great Commonwealth service of celebration held annually at Westminster Abbey.*

In an age of renewed global dangers and uncertainties , while Governments may differ and nations struggle to maintain coherence, the Commonwealth family continues to knit together as never before. The team between peoples, the partnership, the unifying association of common values and purpose which is the modern Commonwealth, stands out increasingly as a network of hope across the planet.

Today's Commonwealth is one of the world's best pressure groups for gender equality, for youth opportunity, for mutual help and respect between peoples from large nations and small. Sometimes it falters but always the pressure is there

Our Commonwealth Day Observance at Westminster Abbey, in the presence of the Head of the Commonwealth, H.M. the Queen and HRH the Duke of Edinburgh, , allows us to give thanks for what has been achieved and for the chance to achieve much more. It proclaims the vitality, and ever increasing connectedness, of peoples across a third of the planet (with others knocking at the door) who are determined to work together in every field from the defeat of poverty and the stability of governance, to sport and games , to art, music and literature – and all in the best causes of humanity.

This year the Observance event, and the day of the Commonwealth, will reach out as never before in recent times and be matched by ceremonies, services and flag displays across the towns and cities of United Kingdom ,and of other Commonwealth countries, as a reminder of our common family purpose and of what together we can do.

**2015. June . *English, the hub language , the protocol of the planet and the Power of Language across the Commonwealth***

*A Note for circulation on taken from Cesar Hidalgo's book (Why Information Grows. Penguin 2015)*

Language allows people to weave networks by empowering them with the ability of communicate complex ideas, to coordinate their actions and establish commercial links . Language is the quintessential standard. It is the difference between the network of people who built the Tower of Babel and the fragmented network that was left after 'God' punished them with linguistic fragmentation.

Today our world is still linguistically fragmented but that fragmentation is both declining and structured.

Ten thousand years ago humans spoke an estimated twelve thousand languages. An estimated six thousand are spoken world-wide today but most of the world's population communicates in a few global languages, and in many important on-line and off-line forums, including Twitter, Wikipedia and book translations , English has emerged as THE 'hub' language, bridging communication between languages.

**2015. 13<sup>TH</sup> MAY.** *Perhaps the most important Commonwealth – and global – issue of all.*

*SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE COMMONWEALTH YOUTH, GENDER AND EQUALITY NETWORK, HELD WITH SUPPORT FROM THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE CHOGM TASK FORCE*

*9.50. a.m. Corinthia Hotel. MALTA.*

Your Excellency, President of Malta, representatives of the Maltese Government and CHOGM Task Force, and a special thank you to the Australian Government, which has so generously supported this conference, and the network going forward.

The Key to Economic Progress:

The link is obvious - or ought to be. Gender equality is the key to economic growth. A society in which women and girls have full equality of opportunity, equal access to education , to work , to all forms of training and personal development, to all positions in government, business and the professions is a healthy and balanced society. And a healthy and balanced society is one which develops and grows. No other does.

This may not always have been the case in history. But in today's world it certainly is so. An economy and a state in which half the population is set below the other half , in which half the potential workforce is set below the other half , and denied equal status, is bound to stagnate and retreat. It is a sick society. It cannot go forwards. It cannot prosper.

In short, equality is not just a matter of fairness, and not just an ethical and social concern. It is the high road to sustainable economic progress and development.

You may say that we knew this all along. Yet millions of women and girls are still oppressed, abused, forced into marriages, degraded, barred from living a full life. Outright discrimination against women and girls continues – and quite an amount of it in Commonwealth countries.

What are the factors behind this, the walls we have to break down? We know that the opponents of gender equality are ignorant and worse, in places apostles of pure evil – guarantors of continuing poverty and suffering.

But even where discrimination against women is less blatant and less violent we still hear the arguments that custom and culture must be respected. This is outdated nonsense. Finally I attribute some of the blame to the economists and to statistics about women and work – which fail again to depict how real economies now work, or to quantify the real burden women carry, the most important, and yet unpaid, roles they perform.

As I say, this is common knowledge and the subject of copious discussion and proclamation. We have the G20 committing to new efforts, the UN with all its committees, the OECD campaign of recommendations, national and international institutions and movements in profusion, think-tanks galore – all declaring their

dedication to women's equality. Yet the abuse continues, tolerated, condoned, ignored.

### **The Commonwealth Reinforcement.**

What can the Commonwealth really add? What can the world-wide Commonwealth network bring to the campaign in real and practical terms?

First we must be clear, as many are not, about what the Commonwealth itself is today. It is not, for example, 'just another international institution' as I heard it described, regrettably by a senior British official. The Commonwealth has evolved, like no other global entity, as a giant network, a family, embracing one third of the human race – and of course half of its 2.3 billion are women and girls.

I have described the Commonwealth today as being not merely relevant but 'necessary' – something like it would have to exist in this deeply troubled and unstable world if it had not already grown from the roots of the past.

I have also described it as above governments, above most official global institutions, even above history and past grievances and bitternesses. It is family- the strongest and most lasting, and yet the most self-critical and flexible bonding of all.

The age of the internet, of almost total connectivity – between almost every age group, every interest and profession, between schools, universities, professions and causes – has made it so.

Armchair critics and columnists like to point out that when it comes to shared values, and the place of women in particular, the 53 member

states of the Commonwealth include many backsliders and many examples of female abuse and deep discrimination.

Well that is true but negative. What the commentators do not say is that the Commonwealth offers a forum and an opportunity to remedy like no other. What the columnists, who like to scratch their heads and focus on negative aspects, and who do not, with noble exceptions, grasp the nature of the modern Commonwealth - what they fail to see is that this is the ideal assemblage for addressing the challenge.

### **The Practical Contribution**

The Commonwealth can deliver the focus, the pressure for grass roots action, which no amount of media sermonizing can do.

We, the Commonwealth family, can drill right down to the details – of both abuse and required remedy – like no other body.

We can send the message into schools. We can shape the business opportunities through new forms of funding and enterprise support, we can promote the local democratic systems, we can challenge the laws, we can expose and reject the twisted justifications of custom and culture and tribe. We can push for female labour force participation in ways that exactly match local conditions. We can campaign for dozens of local changes, country by country, which better recognize the place of women in the workplace. We can be the bespoke reformers in dozens of societies, as against the generalist vocalizers who fill the airwaves and the printed columns.

### **A Time for United Strength.**

It is time we used our muscle. I see this gathering today here in Malta as not just a message-sender, not just a nucleus of a wider network of

discussion, but as a launching point for a thousand actions and a thousand pressures.

The Royal Commonwealth Society will play a vigorous part in the struggle for gender equality, but within the Commonwealth there are many driving forces. We have within our network, ready to work side by side, all the dynamic organizations large and small, ready to carry forward the agenda on all fronts.

They include the Commonwealth Investment and Enterprise Council, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, the Commonwealth Education Trust, the Commonwealth of Learning, the Commonwealth Secretariat itself, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the lawyers , the magistrates, the doctors, the teachers, the scientists, -and many more , rank upon rank ready to march.

Let them all prosper, all cooperate, all fight as one army. These are the many spearheads of the new international order, the battlegroups that can win against the giant global evils of today.

The degrading and subordination of women is one of the greatest of those evils. And the utter defeat of discrimination against women opens the gateway in countless states to a more prosperous, peaceful and stable future for all.

Thank you.

David

Howell

13.05.2015

**2016 July.** *Now there is the sound of gears changing in Whitehall. Suddenly, the Government and media start sounding interested. This article for The Roundtable, is a first shot at the Opportunities for the UK in Commonwealth markets post-Brexit*

In the swirl of post-Brexit debate the role of, and the implications for, the Commonwealth have been raised with increasing frequency.

**One question** is whether the Commonwealth network of 53 nations, with its growing markets and trans-continental spread, could in any way be for the UK a substitute for EU single market membership.

**A second question** is how EU withdrawal by the UK impacts upon various Commonwealth countries, bearing in mind the strong pre-referendum message from many Commonwealth leaders that the UK should remain and not leave.

This stance is of course in striking contrast with Commonwealth views back in 1972 which were understandably hostile to British EU (then EEC) membership – evidence of how radically world trade conditions have changed in the intervening decades.

In one sense posing the first question is to confuse apples and oranges on a grand scale. The two bodies, Commonwealth and European Union, are of course totally different - in character, origin, structure and relevance to the UK economy.

While the EU is a political construct the Commonwealth is much more organic. While the EU is a mixture of supranational tendencies and intergovernmental cooperation, today's Commonwealth draws its strength from the extraordinary connectivity at countless non-governmental levels, including flourishing business and professional links, which a common working language, common legal procedures,

common accounting and commercial practices, and common cultural links both allows and reinforces.

What has emerged in the modern Commonwealth network is not an old-style trading bloc but something much more novel and suited to the network age - a grass-roots-driven type of organisation. Perhaps surprisingly to some, this is proving more suitable to the expansion of trade and commerce in the digital age, with its growing emphasis on information and data exchange, than the more dated EU hierarchy, with its heavy and top-down bias towards centralisation, scale and integration. Thus the assumptions of 1972 – that the UK’s ‘destiny’ and best trade prospects lay in Europe and not in the Commonwealth, are being turned on their head.

For example, according to a recent report, published by the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth trade and investment flows of all kinds are now growing noticeably faster than overall world trends, and now account for some 15 percent of total world exports. The report also found a ‘Commonwealth Advantage’ of up to 20% which is described as the practical economic value, in both trading and investment interchanges, of a shared language and systems between members when compared to non-Commonwealth nations.

UK exports to Commonwealth states, once, half a century ago, 50 percent of the total, have over the years fallen to a low point of about 10 to 12 percent. But from here the upward direction of travel is clear. Whatever relationship the UK ends up agreeing with the EU Single Market the time for a sharply increased focus on both Commonwealth and adjacent markets is now ripe, and crucial for the UK’s continuing prosperity, and because of connectivity, for other European economies as well.

The EU referendum result means the UK will regain control over its trade and investment agreements once the EU deal is signed. A number of Commonwealth nations have expressed interest in trade talks such as India, Australia and New Zealand. Australia and NZ have offered trade negotiators to help the UK.

However, the UK must see any trade deals from Commonwealth perspective as well. It must avoid sounding narrowly Anglo-centric. Successful trade and investment relations should be a partnership of equals. Further deals must also cover non-economic relations, including in many cases security. Having shown other Commonwealth members the door back in 1972, we now need to knock politely and ask to be let back in.

When we do so we will find ourselves entering a very different world from the one we turned our backs on all those years ago. Then it seemed that all the best growth opportunities lay in Europe. Now it is to Asia, Africa and Latin America we need to look for the big prizes, and the Commonwealth network is the gateway to many of these fast-growing new economies.

There has been significant structural Departmental change with the Ministry of International Trade under Dr Liam Fox being set up. This new creation is welcome but two further changes are required.. First there needs to be a much stronger and freer standing Commonwealth unit inside the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Second, the Commonwealth needs to be given a place and a voice at the Brexit negotiating table – or tables.

For the UK to respond to the new situation requires a vastly expanded degree of attention to Commonwealth member states, large and small. The legacy of common working language and past friendships can certainly help. But much more will be needed. Relying on unreconstructed old ties with Commonwealth member states will no longer suffice.

Successful business has to cover not just actual deals and contracts but a whole framework of supporting soft power deployment – including everything from cultural and professional links to easier and friendlier travel and visa policies.

As the new Commonwealth Secretary-General, Patricia Scotland, told a parliamentary committee: ‘Much, much more energy will now go into enriching the Commonwealth relationship’, adding that she saw the need now ‘to turbocharge the Commonwealth trade advantage’.

This doesn’t mean just piling on more trade missions. It means involving the UK more deeply than ever in the new connected world system, and especially in the immense expansion of Chinese infrastructure connections across Central Asia and right into the heart of Europe. Here the Hong Kong connection, with its substantial UK-friendly bias and past history, can be an invaluable aide.

We live in a world seemingly falling apart yet paradoxically coming together as never before through the staggering power of constant and instant communications. Fragmentation versus super-connectivity – the two contradictory forces prevail simultaneously, bringing bewilderment and confusion to governments and governed alike.

For the UK in a post-Brexit world it is high time for more Commonwealth togetherness .The case for a decisive strategy of redirection of trade and investment, both ways, and for the supporting policies, towards Commonwealth and developing country markets was strong long before Brexit and will grow still stronger long after the Brexit dust has settled.

**2016 OH NO! NOT EMPIRE. 2.0!** *Riposte to an absurd 'leak' , allegedly from a senior FCO official, that the reviving interest in the Commonwealth was somehow a return to the British Empire – a real piece of wrong-headed and woeful ignorance and misunderstanding.*

A number of reasons explain the undoubted heightening of Westminster interest in the potential and prospects of the Commonwealth in recent months.

The first and most obvious is that with Brexit in prospect attention has turned, sometimes a bit shamefacedly, to the trade possibilities in Commonwealth markets - possibilities which were not only cast aside back in 1972 but studiously ignored by London policy-makers ever since.

Suddenly , all the talk is of making new links and refreshing old ties. Free Trade Agreements are to be eagerly sought on all sides. Commonwealth countries who received the cold shoulder back in 1972 can be forgiven for a certain scepticism. But the hope is that the snubbed ones – especially those that have developed vastly richer consumer markets in recent decades - will forgive, forget and cooperate. As with those BA Business Class seats, the dividing screen has been briskly lowered and its smiles for the family all round.

The second reason is a mixture of serendipity and prescience. Back in November 2015, at the Malta Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, Britain agreed – at the time with a good deal of pushing from some of us and without much enthusiasm – to host the next Commonwealth summit in the Spring of 2018.

Scroll forward to late 2016 and in London it all looks different. The Commonwealth Summit becomes a major staging event in the great British re-positioning, away from the EU as Britain's destiny and towards Britain as a global power in a network world. The Commonwealth ceases to be just one more international body in the foreign policy portfolio and becomes a central part of the future strategic picture. A handful of Civil servants in the Foreign Office is briskly replaced by an army of officials in a new Cabinet Office unit charged with taking the whole affair forward and coordinating activity right across Whitehall and the private sector.

Some protesting voices and scepticism there is bound to be, especially from within the bureaucracy. One civil servant is reported to have likened the shift to

'Empire 2.0'. But overall these administrative changes are good and very encouraging. Yet I believe there are deeper reasons still to explain the new and growing sense of relevance of the Commonwealth network. These lie not in Brexit, or just in renewed British commitment and interest but in something much deeper and with far more global significance.

Put bluntly, the world system of communication and cooperation has been changed totally and beyond recognition. Connectivity has transformed traditional notions of diplomacy, patterns of behaviour between nations and forms of international cooperation.

Within this revolutionary new context it so happens, without any master plan or ideological impulse, that the Commonwealth network emerges as the ideal platform – the self-associating and non-hierarchical type structure which is utterly suited to the digital age. And this becomes so not just in terms of business and trade but in terms of common culture, common legal procedures, common

attitudes ,underpinned by common working language ,common security interest, common values an aspirations and a hundred other linkages of likemindedness and soft power intimacy.

We are entering here into a world which even the most assiduously compiled statistics cannot cope with or reflect. No figures of past Commonwealth trade – in the British case modest in recent years – can pick up the trends which will build the future. The bedrock for future commerce ,increasingly in the form of service, data and information flows, rests upon secure political conditions and relations, minimised instability an maximised friendliness , open and unhindered connections and shared values.

This in turn demands cooperation on security, national defence, collaboration against international crime and drug operations and safeguarding of trade routes by land and sea. Those who argue that shared values may be fine but don't put food on the table or promote economic growth are wrong in every respect. It is precisely these commonalities and the trust which they engender which make business easier and project cooperation freer from misunderstandings and lost-in-translation screw-ups.

Before our eyes the modern Commonwealth is evolving to meet these conditions and to create a zone of highly professional cooperation and trust which stands in sharp contrast to the volatile and dangerously unstable world outside the family network.

Not the only network but without doubt the one which gives Britain a flying start over competitors, as the London policy-planners, after years of neglect and disinterest, are belatedly realising. *About as far from Empire as you can get!*

**2016** *Text of comments on the Commonwealth, Europe and 2016 Prospects to the Oxford University Foreign Service Programme .*

## **The Commonwealth in the 21st Century**

What does 2016 bring for the family of Commonwealth nations, and Britain within this worldwide network?

The answer is a considerably better prospect than for the European region and the EU within it.

Not that the two are alternatives for Britain, as some suggest. On the contrary the two are quite different systems both of which we need to prosper.

But both the modern Commonwealth network and the EU are undergoing immense reform and structural transformation, as profound changes in the whole global trade and investment landscape unfold.

Of course, you don't hear much about these developments in the British press.

Not only is the soaring intra-Commonwealth trade potential ignored, but the media coverage of the EU issue has reached new depths of pathetic inadequacy and ignorance.

What they are portraying on the European front is a Punch and Judy show between ins and outs, leavers and remainers.

What they SHOULD be telling us about, if they remotely understood it, is the huge transformation of the whole EU structure now going on,

making the so-called ‘British question’ only a part of a far larger and deeper upheaval.

While there is the usual rump to feed off of know-nothing, entrenched diehards – at both extremes- whose comprehension of real European developments , or wider world trends, appears to be zero, for the rest of us, and for the public as whole , the coverage is mostly plain insulting.

Let me share briefly with you some of the new facts about our world, Britain’s interests in this changed place, and about both the Commonwealth and Europe, which seem to have escaped British public comment almost entirely.

First, it needs to be recognised that fundamental transformations have *already* taken place in global trade, with many more on the way.

These changes are influencing the sources and direction of trade and business linkages and their pattern and characteristics. And this in turn alters profoundly the competitive and comparative advantages of individual countries.

This means that the new pattern and shape of trade is driven:

- by powerful digital factors;
- by the greatly increased overlap between, what the sleepy statisticians still distinguish as, merchandise goods and export of services and information;
- by the phenomenal growth of the of developing countries;
- by entirely new and different global value chains;
- by numerous new regional trade arrangements; and

- by climate concerns and upheavals in world energy and commitments to sustainable development.

These shifts mean that the old picture of trade consisting only of container goods being transported between ports and markets has already given way to a new template.

Today's international trade is composed increasingly of knowledge-laden, or knowledge-attached, services and information products. Manufacturing and services of every kind are now largely inseparable.

Furthermore we are seeing globalisation of not just finished goods, but of *processing, value-adding, and cross-border production networks*. *Conventional 20<sup>th</sup> century ambitions for protected single markets scarcely fit into these 21<sup>st</sup> century realities.*

This invalidates many of the assertions and figures to which we are constantly treated about sources, origins and destinations of international trade. In these new conditions of intense complexity and connectedness old-style multilateral trade negotiations, as well as regional bloc arrangements have stalled or become unravelled.

Rather than conventional tariff-based preferences and protected single markets the modern trading environment involves behind-the-border forms of integration and soft power relationships that have far more driving power in trade promotion. The Commonwealth with its common standards, legal structures, commercial methods, numerous soft power linkages and - above all common working languages - is ideally suited to this new milieu.

Let me nonetheless give you some facts about Commonwealth trade and business, and their trends within the new trade-connected global architecture now emerging. *(These figures come mostly from a highly*

*illuminating new publication from the Commonwealth Secretariat, 'The Commonwealth in the Unfolding Trade Landscape' which I strongly recommend to anyone who wants their minds opened about new British or world trade realities)*

- Between 2000 and 2013 the combined total exports of Commonwealth countries increased from \$1.3 trillion to \$3.4 trillion - about 15 percent of global exports. There was obviously a check in 2009-10, as for everyone else, but today the figure is almost certainly substantially higher and still on a strongly growing trend.
- Intra-Commonwealth trade (which is between Commonwealth members) has also been growing rapidly – at 10 percent per annum since 1995, now above \$600 billion and heading for \$1 trillion by 2020, and projected to reach \$2.75bn by 2030.
- The ‘Commonwealth Advantage’ (which describes the practical economic value of shared language and systems between these nations) has been calculated to be an average 19% higher than with non-Commonwealth nations – which is broken down as an average 17% for goods, 28% for services, and 10% for FDI.
- While since 2000 total Commonwealth exports to China have grown fourteen times – from \$19 billion to \$268 billion plus. It is worth mentioning that Hong Kong, as part of the PRC, still sends delegations to Commonwealth business gatherings. They know where the future prizes lie!

Moreover, modern Commonwealth countries are not only generating capital and output on a vast scale, but also skills. India alone produces 500,000 engineers a year. The advanced technological and engineering skills we in Britain need to prosper are going to be drawn heavily from Commonwealth countries. It is interesting (and regrettable) that our current immigration policy is heading in *exactly* the opposite direction, making it much harder for skilled workers and technicians to enter Britain from the Commonwealth.

There is also another important contrast between the Commonwealth and Europe today. In Europe, the already large disparities are between poor and rich countries, mostly, but not all, between Western and Eastern Europe. Latest figures show they are growing larger still. In the Commonwealth system the distinctions are between developed and developing countries and they are much more blurred. All are either mature trees or growing saplings in the same great forest.

New trade patterns also mean new security challenges. NATO may look after Europe, but there is an increasing need to safeguard new global routes and patterns, both physical trade routes and cyber routes as well. Closer security and armed forces co-operation through the Commonwealth network, stretching from the Pacific, across the Atlantic and round the globe again, can provide the ideal support frame for the new security and lifeline protection arrangements required.

Europe and the EU, in its 20<sup>th</sup> century structure, have been shaken to the core by waves of crises. Immigration on an unimaginable scale, severe currency disruption with more to come shortly, extremist politics, over-centralisation and regulation, low growth, high

unemployment, the need, only half understood, to adapt radically to new world markets and the new digital age – all beg for a new approach.

Let us hope 2016 allows us to see through pasts mists and clouds of misinformation and misunderstanding and perceive more clearly, and in a more balanced way, the real prospects for UK, for Europe and for all the Commonwealth peoples, young and old, women and men, smaller and bigger member nations – in short the whole gigantic 2.3 billion strong family of which we in Britain are so fortunate to be part in a troubled, dislocated, and dangerous world.

**2016. 12<sup>th</sup> November – Notes for a Speech in the House of Lords**

I want to begin by quoting a newspaper comment from this Tuesday which said that the best vision of what our 21<sup>st</sup> century could become was a Britain which rediscovers the Asian and wider global links that propelled the country's economic growth in the past AND COULD DO SO AGAIN.

Entirely right. Not a dream but a PRACTICAL vision .Here, in what we now call the emerging powers is where our future clearly lies.

Having been saying so for twenty years, and of course the Commonwealth network is a vital part of this new scene, or the Necessary Network as I have described it, in the sense that if it did not exist we would certainly want to invent something very like it in the internet age.

My RHF the Foreign and Commonwealth Sec. was therefore showing commendable prescience when he called the Commonwealth ‘ a cornerstone of our foreign policy’ a year or so ago - a central feature of our future and the gateway to the great new emerging markets where all the trade expansion is going to occur for decades ahead.

The peoples of the Commonwealth are family – well, extended family - not foreigners. Commonwealth Governments may be unfriendly at times, awkward, even hostile, but these are family matters, not foreign matters.

Today's Commonwealth is an all-powerful network concept. Government and the policy making establishment may not have entirely understood this, but outside Government the peoples, businesses and civil societies of the Commonwealth nations certainly have. It is people driven - a network of peoples and societies as much

as of Governments and states ,possibly even more so. And it is a generator of soft power linkages and contacts on an unparalleled scale.

And that, ML, is crucial to our interests. It used to be said that trade follows the flag. Today the situation is that trade, capital flows and investment - inward and outward - follow the softening up of markets through intertwining of cultures, language, social contacts, professions and common interests , all nowadays instantly and continuously connected. This can be more important in winning orders than any one-off trade mission.

So now soft power paves the way for trade and economic expansion. Trade follows not the flag but this soft power connectivity. As the Australian PM said recently the Commonwealth today has become ‘a softpower network which represents the realities of a changing world’.

The Commonwealth family today has evolved as a design of great intricacy, subtlety and complexity – a true reflection of a very complex world. Perhaps it is appropriate that the old Commonwealth Institute site in Holland Park is having a new life as a centre of Modern design.

What happened in 1972 was that Britain itself tried to walk out of the family. It believed that there was another family nearer home called the European Community and the European demos. It feared economic collapse if it did not discard Commonwealth and global ties and join in the European trade and growth scene.

Large numbers of people followed the ruling establishment , slightly confused and uneasy at the break with the family, but it seemed the right thing to do at the time.

But the European demos was not there and the economics began to turn out differently. The rise of the network world and the global

information revolution have changed everything. The wheel has tuned full circle.

So completely were Commonwealth markets washed out of British concerns in the last century that even today it is hard to come by the statistics of what is now happening with incredible speed . Most are gloriously out of date, so we have to go largely on trends.

But we do know that fast growing Commonwealth GDP is poised to overtake EU GDP, that intra-Commonwealth trade has been rising fast, that vast new consumer markets are opening up in India, South Asia, parts of Africa and Latin America. We know that, thanks in part to the new shale oil and gas energy resource revolution – which is totally transforming the world’s energy balance - many African countries now face a far brighter prospect, with much better governance .Thirteen African countries have a bigger per capita GDP than China. Fifteen of the twenty top states in which it is said are best to do business in Africa are in the Commonwealth.

We know that countries like Australia, Canada and Malaysia are turning out to be both our best allies and powerful sources of finance for our own investment needs. As I pointed out to the FAC (page 40 in their impressive report – which was incidentally very kind to me ) we should “concentrate ... very much more” on seeking finance for infrastructure projects in the UK from sovereign wealth funds, including those in fast-growing Commonwealth countries.

And we do know that almost half our invisible earnings come from Commonwealth sources - and rising.

One estimate claims that by 2050 the UK’s Commonwealth market will be nine times bigger for us than the rest of the EU market . Perhaps that is way too much but it shows the trend. Dare one hope

that for once the UK gets ahead of the game instead of too often being the Johnny-come-lately into many new markets?

It should be no surprise that other countries want to join what is clearly seen as one of the world's best clubs, with clear advantages for its members. Of course they do. Anyone can see that the Commonwealth badge of trust and commitment to the rule of law, once earned, is good for business. A string of countries have expressed interest. Could even the Republic of Ireland now be amongst them? I have had clear signs of interest from Dublin.

Of course any family has its problems. Commonwealth Government heads are due to meet again in Sri Lanka this Autumn. It would be a major defeat for diplomacy and common interests if that did not proceed smoothly. Of course even if heads don't meet Commonwealth toes and fingers will! The Commonwealth network will continue networking. And of course the anti- Commonwealth or uncomprehending media would make the most of it. We'll just have to see how that works out.

But most important of all are the links of learning, education and the personal contact that brings to every point of the network. We know that this is where the real spread of sympathies vales and good business begins. From Tavistock Square the Association of Commonwealth Universities runs the world's biggest network, and the oldest , connecting over 500 universities , supplying service and support and administering several large scholarship schemes. For us this is part of a gigantic export earnings flow from the education-related sector, - at £28 billion larger than any single industrial sector.

The story is similar in area after area - in judicial administration , in medicine, in accountancy, in the creative arts, in science. The

Commonwealth today may no longer be Anglo-centric, but these are where our ready –made opportunities lie.

This is our great re-positioning. This our strategy ; this is our narrative. Not everyone yet sees or understands what has happened .But this where our energies need to be directed as never before if we want to survive and prosper in a thoroughly dangerous and uncertain world.

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**2016** - *Address to the Jersey Branch of the Royal Commonwealth Society - The EU and The Commonwealth.*

### **A Safer Anchorage for Island States**

The European Union and the Commonwealth are not alternatives for Britain, whether economically or in security terms. They complement each other. But it can be said with certainty that, stay or leave the EU, the world-wide Commonwealth network is going to assume an ever-growing importance in Britain's affairs and prospects.

Why is this? The basic answer is because the modern hyper-connected world and the architecture of the modern Commonwealth are ideally suited. Unlike the EU, with its heavy and centralised top layer of intrusive administration and its governmental hierarchy of authority and control, the Commonwealth is a quite different kind of entity and structure.

It binds together not through officialdom and treaties but to a far greater extent through non- governmental and voluntary linkages and cohesion in short through its peoples. Connectivity brings together, on a daily and continuous basis, every kind of profession, activity and interest in a way that no imposed order from above can ever do.

Connectivity links up the doctors, the lawyers and court administrators, the accountants, the scientists, the educationalists, the sportspeople, the creative artists, the health administrators, the authors, the artistic designers, the journalists, the vets and agricultural experts, the communications experts, the museum specialists, the parliamentarians, the women's rights movements, the young entrepreneurs, the architects, the ecologists and environmentalists, the archaeologists, the engineers, the city planners, even the expert trainers in security, in military matters and policing procedures.

And of course the cementing agency which brings all these people and interests together as never before in the Commonwealth context is the common working language (along with all the common attitudes and identities hidden within it).

Language allows the communication of complex ideas and cultural stances. It is the quintessential standard. In an age of information transfer and big data it creates a platform for trade and exchange like no other in the world. English has emerged as THE ‘hub’ language , bridging communications between other languages. When Asian ‘tiger’ economies meet to plan progress they talk in English. Even Chinese corporations are instructing their workers to use English , as a more powerful medium for innovating ideas than their own Chinese.

Are not we lucky, and are not we in the UK absurdly short-sighted and inept in failing to utilize the colossal potential of the Commonwealth connection today and the even greater potential tomorrow.? And is not HM The Queen more percipient than all her Ministers put together in seeing – as she forecast several years ago – that the Commonwealth was becoming ‘in many ways the face of the future’.

Of course it is. In the age of the internet mesh, in the age of platform business models and blockchains, in the age of totally new trade flows and supply trains, it is becoming daily more obvious where our national assets lie and how they should be used and developed. The Commonwealth is not only offering the fastest growing new markets; it is not only generating investment capital and new skills on a phenomenal scale. It is also the gateway to all the other rising powers of Asia and Africa and Latin America.

In addition it is the harbour and safe anchorage for dozens of small island states and communities who would otherwise be left out of the

globalisation process. They, too, are loaded with potential, whether they be Crown Dependencies, British Overseas Territories, Commonwealth Realms or Republics. They are all part of the one family system, stretching across continents and faiths , which offers trust and cohesion in today's fragmenting world of violence and conflict which seems almost to be falling apart.

Under the last Secretary General, Kamelesh Sharma, the Commonwealth gave especial attention to the plight of many smaller island states. It is high time the British Government did the same, and time that the endless stream of negative measures and policies for smaller states emanating from Whitehall was replaced by much more supportive approaches, whether the subject is tourism, financial services, energy support, agricultural exports , local crafts and skills, or any other potential growth areas.

And let me end with one particular asset right here in front of me. The Crown Dependency and Island of Jersey is in fact a major and massive asset for the United Kingdom. It supports 140,000 British jobs and earns at least £2.5 billions a year for the UK Treasury.

Its record on openness about beneficial ownership is exemplary and long-standing. Instead of criticising and bemoaning such assets as 'tax havens' the opinion-formers and commentators in London should be reminding people how lucky we are to have such skills, resources and potential within our kingdom and nation or within our Commonwealth family. We should look after our assets, instead of denigrating or neglecting them.

**2016** . November. *Speech to the RCS International Forum- New Zealand House*

### **A 'CAN-DO MOMENT AND THE COMMONWEALTH**

The former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott has said that this is 'a can-do moment' both for Britain and for Australia — and indeed for the whole family of Commonwealth nations. With Brexit in clear prospect it is indeed a time for making both new links and refreshing old ties.

This is why today's and tomorrow's Commonwealth Network of 53 Nations has to be viewed in the CONTEXT of current and developing world events.

Last year, in 2015, a little noticed but profound London School of Economics report was published called 'Investing in Influence' backed by the high expertise and authority, reminded us of some new home truths about the world, namely:

- That the processes of globalisation have eroded both the dominant role of the Western core and of states writ large
- That we are in the process of a shift from an industrial world to an information world
- That this will be a world of network relationships and not of superpowers
- That relationships are not born, they are made, but that the Commonwealth network offers enormous opportunities for mutual trade, influence and business that have yet to be fully capitalised
- That for too long British foreign policy has been the preserve of 'grandees' with an understanding that reflects their own reading of history

- That the UK now operates in a world that is networked, interdependent and with power diffused across a wide-range of state and non-state actors
- That large scale military force does not have the same importance that it did 60 or 70 years ago, and that the tools of international diplomacy need to be renewed.

They could usefully have added that trade and exchange are becoming dominated by information flows, data transmission and process—sharing. As a matter of record almost half the export earnings of a country like the UK come not from actual goods shipped but from services of every kind, and this proportion is rising fast.

Also, it must be added that huge new supply chains now wind across the world and that business relationships between states now only flourish in a powerful framework of ‘soft power’ connections at all levels, governmental and non-governmental, including common language, common values, cultural and sporting links, educational links, common standards (especially in relation to gender and racial equality), and trust and friendship to an unprecedented degree of trust, intimacy and connectivity. The English language in particular has now become the protocol of the cyber-entwined planet—a binding force par excellence with its own internal DNA.

*It is in this completely revolutionary world context that we should be analysing and reviewing the Commonwealth system today.*

It cannot be emphasised too strongly that the Commonwealth today is tailor-made for this new kind of milieu. It may have become so by accident, not by design. But it is nonetheless now the perfect platform for business and relationships the digital age.

H M the Queen presciently observed just this almost seven years ago, although I fear that few of her Ministers cottoned on to it, and still haven't.

The focus now has to be on strengthening the values which bind us and the potential, both social and economic , for advancement for each and every Commonwealth member, large and small. And remember that in a world *of* networks, unlike a world of exclusive trade blocs, the interests and welfare of the smallest community or island state, become just as important, and just as influential to the whole system, as the largest .

And it is in this context that the call of the Secretary General for the Commonwealth trade advantage to be 'turbo-charged' can be realized .

There is one caveat. Values on paper, fine speeches and calls for more trust, become weak and impotent unless underpinned by security, physical and political, by good and honest governance and by the rule of law. Thanks to the information revolution it is an age of people power, but also an age when good governance is demanded more strongly than ever.

That is why in this 'very unsettling and rather dangerous world' (the Secretary-General's words again recently to the Lords International relations Cttee) the security dimension of the Commonwealth network, long rather ignored, should now be brought to the fore in foreign policy.

In South-East Asia, I believe that close Commonwealth co-operation, both maritime and military, is going to become of increasing relevance.

We may all admire and seek to do business with the massive Chinese economy, but we do not want to see an Asia entirely Chinese dominated. Nor do we necessarily want to see the region grow into a confrontational battle-ground between American super-power ambitions and rising Chinese power — what has been called the Thucydides trap.

That kind of stand-off, full of conflict escalation potential, is inherently unstable and a danger to world order. A better pattern in Asia has to be between the Commonwealth powers of India, Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, maybe with Japan in alliance, not to challenge but to BALANCE the Chinese titan. Britain can play a supportive role. There is plenty of past experience on which to build.

Of course there are flaws in this new tapestry. Tension is high again between two Commonwealth members, India and Pakistan. Other countries are lagging badly in good governance, human rights and treatment of women. But at least within the Commonwealth family the pressure is on them night and day.

But despite these problems I see the Commonwealth network of today and tomorrow, and I ask you to see it, not as a fading association bound by memories and history, but as a uniquely relevant and immense network in today's transformed international order—and one to which every member, large and small, should vigorously subscribe and which every member benefits increasingly. It is also a *network with which several other countries seek to be associated, and my own view is that they should be welcomed into suitable forms of association, if not full membership, without delay.*

That should provide a safer berth for states and communities who do not seek full Commonwealth membership but do want honoured and close friendship with the club and its non-governmental agencies . I have in mind the Republic of Ireland, a number of Middle East and African nations and even the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong.

In a chaotic and uncertain world, with even the United Nations struggling to bring order, the Commonwealth milieu is the sort of association that more and more countries find valuable and supportive.

So these are some of the objectives for which the Royal Commonwealth Society is working , and in doing so can set a pathway for governments, statesmen, international institutions and societies to follow.

**2017 Ministers' Reference Book, Commonwealth 2017 Looking ahead to CHOGM 2018, Commonwealth Development and the New World Trading Agenda**

*The Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting scheduled for London in April , 2018, offers the opportunity not just for the development of the Commonwealth and its causes but for a major step forward in the redefining and enhancement of the whole global trade environment.*

If skilfully planned, approached and managed during the course of 2017 it could be a pivotal occasion for the interests of the entire Commonwealth network, as well as a milestone in the re-positioning of Britain in the post-Brexit era.

**Trade, Investment, Markets and Gateways**

During the stormy debates during 2016 in the UK about Brexit it came as a surprise to some that the services sector of the British economy had grown to no less 78 percent of total GDP. Yet this growth pattern of services domination is of course the chief feature of most advanced economies in the digital age. and behind it lies a highly significant development.

This is that we are in the midst of an all-embracing technology-drive revolution that is transforming business activity and transforming world trade in the developed and the developing world alike. Analytics, automation, the Internet of Things, use of amazing new lightweight materials — all these developments are rippling through economic life.

Against this shifting background the current 'snapshot' of intra-Commonwealth trade and business activity, and of British trade links with the rest of the Commonwealth, is both blurred and misleading. It

illuminates yesterday's patterns rather than the trajectory of current trends, which is where trans-Commonwealth cooperation should be focussing.

A first understanding is that the modern Commonwealth is no longer a uniform group of 'developing' countries (an increasingly outdated categorisation anyway) but a fascinating amalgam of some of the fastest-growing and high technology economies on the planet and some of the smallest and most vulnerable ones. British policy needs to be attuned to both groupings—and to their very different concerns (for example in energy and climate matters and in development and trade policies).

People everywhere are on the move as never before. The Commonwealth collectively needs to take a creative lead in addressing the consequent fast-growing pressures. This is not just a one-way matter of British entry conditions and visa requirements. And no-one is seeking entirely free movement of labour (of the kind to which the EU is said to be fundamentally committed but which in practice has been abandoned under current pressures), nor for the British open-door approach of the 1950s which did so much damage to immigration policy and prepared the way for today's antagonisms.

But Britain should be proposing a raft of improved conditions for trans- and intra- Commonwealth movement and travel. These should include a new regime of Business Visas throughout Commonwealth countries, easing of restriction on post-graduate employment, fewer bars to incoming *bonafide* students, incentives for British students to attend *Commonwealth* universities. Post-EU the whole pattern of British port and airport reception and classification will also need re-design more in favour of Commonwealth citizens.

## **Commonwealth Networking and Communication.**

The Commonwealth network offers the ideal platform on which, and from which, to advance all kinds of interests, public and private, official and voluntary, and at every level of society and between all age groups..

Half the world's population is now on the web and the same , or higher, proportions may apply throughout the Commonwealth . More mobiles are in use than human beings, and within what used to be designated as developing countries the mobile penetration is 90 percent.

The impact of networking density on all levels of education and on all professional linkages is now growing at an exponential rate, as total and continuous connectivity takes over. Building on the work of both numerous professional Commonwealth bodies and organisations such as the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO) major new initiatives should now be worked up to enhance cyber-security, increase cyber-defence and further expand the already massive distance-learning systems operated by Commonwealth of Learning, the world's largest such operation. The latter could also be empowered with leading the whole Commonwealth digital transformation, accelerating the connectivity linkages between professional and civil bodies throughout the Commonwealth network.

**Commonwealth Values, Promotion of human rights, gender equality, rule of law, good governance standards and more democratic systems.**

The search must be for new grassroots initiatives, especially from the Indian sub- continent and from African societies and culture. At the same time continuous Ministerial and official dialogue and discourse needs to be intensified as communications technology now allows .

The Commonwealth Charter stands but it must not be insistently over-promoted as the instrument of Western values in a post-Western age. Instead there needs to be greater emphasis on the ‘golden thread’ theme that highlights the linkage between values

adherence and trust generation on the one hand and entrepreneurial and innovative investment decisions which are the real drivers of economic advance on the other.

The Commonwealth agenda needs to define more clearly where its efforts can *add* unique and original value to existing world-wide causes, including economic development. Practical steps to promote gender equality and defeat corruption are two examples.

And the Commonwealth needs to be far more sensitive (especially in trade meetings and at the forthcoming CHOGM) to the need for reconciliation between the fundamental energy needs of ,say, India or South Africa, or Malaysia, and the low carbon objective. Expensive and complex methods for greening power are of poor advantage to struggling communities who at present have neither water nor electricity. The constant and seemingly insensitive harping by some Commonwealth voices on climate measures *regardless of cost* is a huge negative for millions of Commonwealth citizens.

## **Developing Commonwealth Structures and Organisation: The Agenda Tasks**

Strong leading voices need to be combined with a powerful non-governmental chorus of support and reinforcement. Steps to open up the Commonwealth opportunities are

as the host country for 2018, should make the maximum use of outside expertise from now on and over the next fifteen months up to the

CHOGM (from business, academic, parliamentary and technical sources) in substantiating and publicising the benefits of Commonwealth membership.

The Commonwealth is not of course the only path to future global trading and security prospects or its future 'global influence'. But by its evolving and organic nature the modern Commonwealth structure and character happens to fit remarkably well with the new template that rapid technological advance and consequent popular empowerment are imposing on our times. No apology is needed for constant return to the piercing golden words from the Head of the Commonwealth, HM the Queen - 'The Commonwealth is in many ways the face of the future'

*To head out through 2017 to the 2018 CHOGM with imaginative vigour and enthusiasm promises great benefits for the wider Commonwealth Within the global framework. To fail to take this path can only lead to missed opportunities on a historic scale at a time when every ounce of effort should be going into refreshing old links and building new ties in a world in which almost all preconceptions must now be reset.*

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<sup>2</sup> Christmas Broadcast 2009

2017. 2<sup>nd</sup> November . *Speech to the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Commonwealth Societ.-*

### **The modern Commonwealth as ‘the Mother of all Networks’ and Britain after Brexit.**

- *The Commonwealth today is the newest and most dramatic example of a network in the modern sense which is living and growing as all networks do. The successful expansion of free trade depends not just on WTO rules but on trust and affinities between trading entities. **That is the Commonwealth ‘premium’.***

The Commonwealth summit and gathering of over 50 heads of government has been planned in London next April. This presents a massive opportunity for Britain to set its new direction in the utterly transformed international conditions which are unfolding before us in the 21st century. Britain’s withdrawal from the European Union Treaties is a part, but only a part, of this new unfolding scene.

And I want to stress at the outset that the Commonwealth network and a vibrant flourishing Europe are not alternatives.

But as we proceed we need to bear mind one crucial factor about the Commonwealth. Unlike the EU it is more than an assembly of governments and officials within a strong central hierarchy. It is a network of peoples - far the largest and most extensive in the planet . And like all large networks in the modern digital age it behaves and develops in ways of which conventional thinking and conventional diplomacy find hard to explain or keep track .

Some call it the fourth industrial revolution. Some call it the second globalisation wave. But I call it the hour of the Commonwealth

network, linking up no less than 2.4 billion peoples, a third of the world population, larger than any nation – even larger than Facebook!

It is this network phenomenon which I want to enlarge upon this evening .

Why am I choosing this opening theme? Because the Commonwealth today is the newest and most dramatic example of a network in the modern sense which is living and growing as all networks do.

Trendy historians and journalists are churning out books and columns nowadays about global networks and clusters, and their predominance in the pattern of international events , as though they were new discoveries. But these are developments which some of us have been pointing out ever since the digital age began some 30 to 40 years ago . This the reason why we now see the world, and the UK's position within it, in terms of 'old links and new ties' (if I may indulge in a literary 'selfie' – the title of a book I wrote in 2013), or to use the UK Prime Minister, Theresa May's language ,in 'old alliances and new partners'.

The hub and spoke model of the past typically put Britain at the centre of a sort of wheel with lines going out to all our Commonwealth partners, now 52 in number (with more lining up to join). The network and cluster concept is quite different. Instead of links from a central point to the various points on the rim there emerges a fantastic network of linkages without any particular centre. In the case of the Commonwealth this currently means not 52 connections but 1326 individual connections - a very different story!

Is this possible or practical? Yes ,in the digital age it now is. Of course some of the linkages will be stronger between bigger trading partners and associates and some will be thinner, but the modern network is a pattern without a dominant or dictating centre. Furthermore because

networks talk to other networks all the time it is a continuously growing system, so that unless one is deliberately exclusive fantastic series of linkages opens up ready and in effect lead to networking the entire planet.

And furthermore again, while borders will of course remain, time-consuming impediments to trade flows will be largely eradicated by split-second digital clearance. Decisions from official authorities will become instant. Customs officers and much of the paraphernalia of frontiers will become redundant.

All networks of course require a framework or what used to be called in the language of the past a hierarchy of control and governance. Today the old links about which we are talking provide the framework, (in some cases, such as Hong Kong, quite regardless of national boundaries). Meanwhile, the new ties provide the explosion of connections and gravitational effects which now govern international trade, made vastly more powerful day by day by the emergence of new technologies such as block chains which allow the ever multiplying part of the microchip to handle and validate the commands, wishes and opinions of tens of millions of people instantaneously. There has been nothing like it ever before in human history. Even the largest super-powers have to accept nowadays that they are part of this ever-evolving global network of networks.

However in making sense of this new world two cardinal points need to be born in mind.

The **first** is that the successful expansion of free trade depends not just on WTO rules but on trust and affinities between trading entities. In more practical terms successful trade depends upon intimate and

closely linked patterns of finance, of trade insurance ,of common approaches on tax and interpreting a range of regulations.

This is a pattern which has to be replicated in relation to every market. An American shipper exporting into the European Union has to conform with a vast variety of EU regulations and legal requirements as well, and dare I say it with the rulings of the European Court of Justice. The same goes for a Chinese exporter into the EU or a Japanese exporter into the EU. And the same will go for the UK, too, whatever the final outcome of our negotiations with the EU. Every market has its rules.

When exporting into the EU, just as much as into the USA, or China, or India, or Commonwealth countries, trust is the key, and trust comes in many forms. . I have to say in passing that the present badmouthing of the European Union by some of my countrymen, and the constant reference to UK negotiations with it as seeking a deal with a hostile body, when it should really be described as an agreement with friends and neighbours, , hardly helps build up this trust we are going to need in that direction .

There is talk in the media of ‘No Deal’ between the UK and the rest of the EU.

In practice, any attempt at NO Deal will end up with dozens of practical agreements - for instance to keep planes flying, massive supply chains flowing, countless agreements on policing, customs, health checks, environmental controls, educational exchanges – the list goes on and on.

In short there is no such thing in today’s world trading conditions as No Deal. A whole new set of arrangements ,covering not just trade but

a web of deep and special arrangements in Europe, not least in defence and security areas, is inevitable. Be assured of that.

What those who call for 'No Deal' fail to appreciate is that successful free trade under WTO rules (the 'No Deal' prospect), far from automatically ensuring a nirvana of flowing trade volumes, requires a massive amount of conformity with the systems, habits and jurisdictions of other markets. Trade requires trade *relations* – a whole hinterland of connections, understandings and friendships.

Nowadays trade expansion also requires lots of common understandings and trust in the fields of security and defence.

The **second** point to bear in mind is that services are the new growth area in international trade. They now make up 1/4 of all trade receipts and indeed McKinsey suggests that more than half the wealth generated by international trade comes from services and various forms of data transmission. All the trends point to much more expansion of trade in this form, especially with the growth of digital fabrication.

I am very glad to say that the British government is aiming for a new global services trade framework - because of course the services aspect of the European single market has yielded very slim pickings over the years. I repeat that trust is even more the key ingredient when it comes to trade in services, data and knowledge products. And remember that the UK is overwhelming a services economy.

This is the aspect that seems to be forgotten even as we seek to expand our trade links within the growing Commonwealth.

Trust also means a high degree of mutual respect. It means treating the citizens of the particular country with whom one is dealing in a respectful and sympathetic way. It means making one's nation attractive in all respects and exemplary.. It is quite deplorable that in

our attitude to students from India we have deliberately discriminated in a hostile way, halving the number of Indian students in Britain , seeing them diverted to America and to Germany and making life as difficult as possible for many newcomers and visitors from India . That is not the right basis of trust and of course no satisfactory expansion of trade will be built without that trust. Our actions harm ourselves, harm our brilliant universities and harm the Commonwealth.

So let us remember that while world free trade is a powerful force for good ,(and indeed the key means nowadays of upholding a rules-based order in a troubled world), the key ingredient is trust and it's supporting pillars of common language, common values, standards and above all, respect for the rule of law, all underpinned by close affinities and feelings of fair dealings , friendship and cultural and educational exchange .

Nowadays it is called soft power. It is no surprise that China, like many other nations, is investing in soft power of all kinds

When I speak in those terms what am I really describing? The answer is I am describing exactly the nature of the modern Commonwealth network. The Commonwealth has emerged in the digital age in a way which is organic rather than governmental. It is increasingly woven together not so much by governmental linkages and directives but by professions, civil society and interest networks of incredible density and power, all *outside* the governmental range.

I refer to the networks of scientists, of schools and universities, of creative industries, of parliamentarians, of doctors, of financiers, of farming reformers, veterinary experts, engineers, architects, environmentalists, of women's groups of all kinds and all ages, energy and climate specialists, of judges, of lawyers ,small business

promoters– the list goes on and on. These are the skills and binding forces which generate trust and attract capital investment, from which trade follows.

Networks grow all the time and connect with other networks all the time . Networks never rest. Networks allow and impel the opening out of links for the United Kingdom through the Commonwealth to the great trading groups in South-East Asia such as Mark Two ASEAN, to the emerging trading groups around the Indian Ocean, to the entirely new networks and clusters forming in Central Asia, in Africa and in Latin America, to the Pacific Alliance, to the Trans-Pacific Partnership, now abandoned by America, and to NAFTA .

Above all I expect to see massive connections grow between Commonwealth networks and the great China networks, clusters and global supply chains now snaking across the world. These are bound to expand with the (BRI) Belt Road initiative and the tying up of Chinese, Central Asian and European markets as never before in history. And of course all this has to move forward with the necessary infrastructure of finance, trade facilitation , insurance and so on.

These connections are already producing new levels and depths of relationships between China the UK and between China and the network of Commonwealth countries.

Hong Kong fits superbly into the new pattern. It becomes what has been described as a super-connector between all the inter-active network connections which are shaping the digital age and transforming international trade and commerce.

This is the new world which leaves the old 20<sup>th</sup> century centralised European model of integration and protection far behind. Indeed, in this new age I have heard the Commonwealth described as the "the mother of all networks" . It may not yet be quite that. But through the

energy of its peoples, the understanding of its leaders and the unstoppable powers of communications technology that is what it is now destined to become.

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**2018.** *Here the trail halts, an odyssey unfinished but with one enduring and central fact standing out just as clearly as it did at the start to some of us 23 years ago . In the age of digital revolution - disrupting, connecting, empowering , challenging - the Commonwealth network has acquired, and is continuing to acquire, momentum, potential and significance on a scale hitherto unimaginable. The transformation continues in a radically changed international landscape now taking shape, driven by immense new forces*

*Networks are living systems. They connect communities, groups, cells, interests, professions, projects, enterprises, inquiring and creative minds, with a frequency and intensity which has never before existed.*

*In the Commonwealth case there is the added immense binding power of a common working language, and the DNA within that language, which multiplies network power many times over*

*This means that we can watch linkages and common endeavour connecting all the time between every Commonwealth country and every conceivable sector - between scientists, doctors, vets, teachers, lawyers, universities, schools, enterprise in all shapes and sizes, designers, authors, military organisations, engineers, administrators, legislators, cities and villages, youth movements, museum experts – the list is endless.*

*Above all it means that the Commonwealth assumes, or re-assumes, a central place in our nation's overseas priorities and policies; it becomes a vast transmission system in the exercise of soft power.*

*This may not be what national governments or political leaders planned or intended. Indeed in the British case such an outcome has been actively resisted for decades until very recent times.*

*But while at government level Commonwealth countries may differ and clash, all the while, beneath the media radar, the network process is continuing and expanding regardless - each new connection sparking not only to fresh initiatives and activity but leading through to further contacts with yet further networks beyond. Thus, on a 'friend of a friend' basis, entrée to the whole global connected system, to the new networks and new institutions of the 21st century, opens up before us.*

*Positive official and governmental policies obviously assist, but with or without them the networks carry on expanding unceasingly .*

*Some call this the fourth Industrial Revolution. Some call it the second wave of globalisation. For us here in Britain I call it the hour of the Commonwealth, and it feels good to survey the infinite opportunities for our nation which now spread out before us.*

**David Howell. December 2017.**

## APPENDIX

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House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. First Report 20<sup>th</sup> November 1995

### CHAPTER X EXTRACT

#### CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

204. Our inquiries and evidence have surprised us. At the outset of our enquiry we were fully aware of the historic and sentimental attachment which constituted Commonwealth relations; space but our study has identified opportunities and potential which would make Commonwealth relationships meaningful in a rather different way, while at the same time, building upon the natural affinities of shared language and accord political and cultural beliefs.

205. Our report therefore has a central and explicit conclusion. Space it is at the Commonwealth is acquiring a new significant in rapidly transforming world and that United Kingdom policy-makers should bring this major change to the forefront of their thinking. Space Are enquiries show that the Commonwealth of yesterday, still stirring perception here has given way to something quite new and not yet fully appreciated. Space from being a 'club' of countries all too ready both criticise and make demands on the former imperial power, space the Commonwealth is rapidly metamorphosing into a network quite different interests and ambitions.

206. Our report shows the wide-ranging nature of these changing interests and aspirations. These include extensive changes in political and economic relations. However, no less important is the changed

emphasis on promotion of democracy, good governance and human rights, where the Commonwealth is increasingly willing to stand up for the values and objectives it espoused at Harare in 1991.

207. From the United Kingdom's point of view this transformation of vast potential which is quite essential that we exploit with vigour and imagination. If energy is created by shared language in the Concord cultural attitudes and political beliefs make these opportunities all the more attractive, although it's up to us, and no one else, whether we made the best of them or let them pass by.

208. The new positioning of the Commonwealth network, and of Britain within that network, is to be seen in the context of growing Asian importance, both economic and now in political terms, in the world scene. The recent Asia-Europe summit in Bangkok, which Asian and European leaders were meeting not and more demands for a to the developing world, still less to go back to recriminations over the past wrongs, and instead to discuss on equal terms the ways in which the powerful economies of the two regions could co-operate and reinforce each other, was a reminder of this new context.

209. This is precisely the sort of occasion-and there will be more of them - when this country's unique links with many of the other nations involved through the Commonwealth connection, can be deployed to considerable advantage. We would have liked to have heard more from the policymakers about the emerging possibilities in this respect.

210. However in our enquiry we were not enormously encouraged that such new ideas not yet taken hold. We were struck by the cautious downbeat FCO memorandum on the whole subject, although in their evidence Ministers undoubtedly sounded a more positive note.

211. We note that Lady Chalker refuted any suggestion that the ‘C’ in FCO represented a Cinderella within the department.<sup>339</sup> that is welcome; but our own conclusions in Report now lead us to recommend something much stronger still, namely a whole new strategy to reinforce bilateral Commonwealth ties, to sustain the overall Commonwealth organisation and to deploy the advantages which Commonwealth membership gives us far more systematically, both in diplomatic endeavours and in the furtherance of this country’s world-wide commercial interests.

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212. We do not wish to impose more administrative structures or overheads on the Commonwealth system. But we believe that within our own national administration, and certainly the FCO, more minds should be focussed on our Commonwealth role.

- The Importance of the Commonwealth dimension does not appear always to be reflected fully in government policy. Decisions seem to be taken on what appear to be perfectly sound grounds, but account necessarily being taken of the Commonwealth dimension, or regard to the way they will be perceived in the Commonwealth. Examples include:
- reporting, the outcome of CHOGM to Parliament by the way of written answer rather than an oral statement;

- the absence of any reference to the Commonwealth institution in the new mission statement of the FCO diplomatic Wing when any of its 17 long-term aims and objectives<sup>340</sup> and
- the removal (under the guise of a removing anomalies remaining after bringing United Kingdom law into line with European Community requirements) from 1 June 1996 Of the right of Commonwealth citizens to apply for posts in the United Kingdom Civil Service which constitute "employment in the public service" within the meaning of the European Community treaties.<sup>341</sup>
- **A Larger more pro-active role for the FCO's Commonwealth Co-ordination Division- presently a seven-person operation is essential.**

213. We also wish to see a stronger emphasis on the Commonwealth dimension across the Government as a whole. In hard practical terms this means:

- greater readiness to speak up for the interests of our Commonwealth friends in the various forums of the world to which the United Kingdom belongs, as well as a greater readiness to remind our Commonwealth fellow members speak up for ours-for instance in the Asia-Pacific Economic Forum structure and in ASEAN;

- giving a new governmental attention to the educational and cultural interchanges which used to characterise the Commonwealth and which must not be allowed to languish. On the contrary, they should be fostered more energetically than ever; and
- recognising in shaping our industrial and trade policies, that growing interests and opportunities for British business now lie in the emerging markets of the world, of which several happen to be Commonwealth members.

214. We have heard often our enquiry, and we do not tire of repeating in our report, that Britain's Commonwealth connections and the integration the global network of communications and friendships which go with the, are the envy of our trading competitors. Surprise is expressed that this country has not utilised them to greater advantage.

<sup>340</sup> Foreign and Commonwealth Office including Overseas Development Administration, 1996 Department report, CM3203, HMSO, London p.1.

<sup>341</sup> See Ev p. 7 for the present basis of employment of non-United Kingdom Commonwealth citizens in the civil service and HC deb, 1 March 1996, Vol involved 272, Col.771w for details of the changes. Approximately 25 per cent (some 132000) Home Civil Service posts currently constitute such “employment in the public service”). (Source office of public service.

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215. Perhaps it was understandable for a few decades after the end of the Empire that the Commonwealth was seen in the United Kingdom

as a relic of an imperial past—a political albatross around the country's neck. Trauma and uncomfortable adjustment were inevitable, although they should never be forgotten that the unwinding of that was achieved, the most part, in a relatively peaceful and constructive way.

216. But that era is over, and so is its successor phase of 'decolonisation'. A new global pattern opens out in which the competition to maintain, let alone advance, living standards will be more intense than ever. In this new situation for the United Kingdom has both friends and opportunities. They should be recognised and seized.

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