

THE BRUTAL BRITISH EMPIRE:
THE COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS

by Nick Clowes

<http://naukabezgranic.pl/podcasty/great-britain/>

What is the Commonwealth?

The Commonwealth, or The Commonwealth of Nations, is a group of 53 states, all of which (except for two) were formerly part of the British Empire. As nations began the process of succeeding from the British Empire in the early part of the 1900s, it was created, largely, to ease the process of British decolonization. It was seen as a way of maintaining global unity through shared language, history, and culture despite growing independence and self-governance of former British colonies.

Overall, 2.328 billion people belong to the Commonwealth, representing one-third of the world population and one-quarter of its total landmass, at approximately 30 million sq. km. Despite massive geographic and demographic differences, these countries are said to be united through their common values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

The nations entered into the Commonwealth do so voluntarily, and the government of any member nation can withdraw at any time, without consequence or obligation, although they have no legal obligations to one another and are entirely separate entities.

What does the Commonwealth Do?

The Commonwealth aims to create strong links between rich and poor countries, bringing together a variety of religious faiths and demographics in one institution. Although the group has been criticized for being more symbolic than useful, it has helped to create strong diplomatic ties between its oldest members.

The organization has also been criticized for not acting in line with its guiding principles, letting human rights abuses and anti-democratic activities run rampant within its member-states without taking action. It is also said to be more beneficial to Commonwealth countries which are "in

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good standing," such as Canada and Australia, for instance. It is felt that there are more opportunities and advantages to the citizens of these nations as opposed to those of other Commonwealth nations, although whether these advantages are due to simply being nations that are "in good standing" or being strong Commonwealth nations is unclear.

In spite of the organization having very little political or economic clout, it does offer the opportunity for smaller nations to sit down with larger nations at the bi-annual Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, which allows them to make their projects and concerns known, something that has shown to bear fruit.

What Are The Commonwealth Games?

Every four years, the Commonwealth of Nations puts together the Commonwealth Games, hosted in a different city, and organized by the Commonwealth Games Federation. 71 nations participate, including the 53 Commonwealth Nations as well as some dependent territories.

Australia, Canada, England, New Zealand, Scotland and Wales are the only teams to have participated in every Commonwealth Games since their inauguration. Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland each play under their own banner instead of under the UK.

The next Commonwealth Games will be held in Gold Coast, Australia, in 2018.

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