

over global strategic raw materials, energy resources, and food production and distribution. It also controls, primarily via the City of London, but also through de facto City of London subsidiaries in Asia and elsewhere, a significant percentage of international financial flows.

'An extensive networking capacity'

The "neo-imperial Commonwealth" perspective has been promoted by a number of British Conservative Party spokesmen, including the outgoing chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, David Howell, and by "Euro-skeptic" Conservative parliamentarian William Cash. From the government, Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind has been increasingly on Howell's wavelength, while from the opposition Labour Party, so has party head Tony Blair and several of his advisers.

The Commonwealth-centered approach is elaborated in a new report of the RIIA, "Economic Opportunities for Britain and the Commonwealth," authored by Katharine West. Based in Australia, West wrote the report while a fellow at the University of London's Institute for Commonwealth Studies (ICS). The ICS complex also includes a Sir Robert Menzies Center for Australian Studies. Sir Robert was the pre-World War II prime minister of Australia, who stripped Australia's national defenses at the behest of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The British-Australian "special relationship," as a pillar of the Commonwealth, is a subject dear to West's heart.

West acknowledges that she received significant help in writing the report from "diplomatic, commercial, and other representatives of many Commonwealth countries, as well as a large number of people associated with the diverse commercial activities of the City of London." One such figure in the latter category, Warwick Lightfoot of the Royal Bank of Scotland, praised her thesis, in an article in the *Wall Street Journal-Europe*.

While the report is laden with jargon common to the academic think-tank world, and is replete with neologisms popularized in British and U.S. "New Age" circles of the type that generated U.S. Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, West's report is an unabashed call for Britain to assert its global imperial power, via the Commonwealth. As she sees it, the Commonwealth is a unique instrument for Britain to penetrate all corners of the world.

For one, the Commonwealth has "the real advantage of transregionalism," because it is "a link between regional and global elements in the international relations system." This makes it a "third kind of influence, strengthening the other two by supplementing but not competing with them. Instead of being seen negatively as an in-between association lacking the clout of either regional or global systems, the Commonwealth can be more positively analyzed in terms of its potential to exercise a constructive transregional influence on a wide range of policy issues affecting the economic futures of

member states. These issues involve not only the obvious areas of investment and trade, but also related areas such as environmental and climate control, human ecology, and human rights."

This, she says, gives the "modern Commonwealth" an "extensive networking capacity." She quotes a May 10, 1995 speech by Commonwealth Secretary General Chief Emeka Anyaoku of Nigeria: "In the language of modern mathematics, outside the United Nations, the Commonwealth is the next largest intersection of the many sets represented by regional organizations. It cuts across regional bodies and helps indirectly to draw them together." According to Anyaoku, the Commonwealth has a "web of relationships with a wide range of multilateral organizations."

West argues that, thanks to the array of Commonwealth member-countries, it has significant influence in the Group of Seven, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the developing sector nations' Group of 15 and Group of 77, and so on. She speculates that the Commonwealth could even provide an alternative, in the future, to an increasingly discredited United Nations.

The vast extent of the Commonwealth

Commonwealth Secretary General Chief Emeka Anyaoku of Nigeria boasted, in 1992, that the Commonwealth represents "a cross-section of the international community, with its nearly 1.5 billion people inhabiting all the continents, living in one-third of the world's nations, and constituting one-quarter of the human race."

Including the dependent territories of Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, the Commonwealth includes over 28% of world population, and over 23% of world land-area.

The members of the Commonwealth are: Antigua and Barbuda; Australia; Bahamas; Bangladesh; Barbados; Belize; Botswana; Brunei; Canada; Cyprus; Dominica; Gambia; Ghana; Grenada; Guyana; India; Jamaica; Kenya; Kiribati; Lesotho; Malawi; Malaysia; Maldives; Malta; Mauritius; Namibia; Nauru; New Zealand; Nigeria; Pakistan; Papua New Guinea; St. Christopher (St. Kitts)-Nevis; St. Lucia; St. Vincent and the Grenadines; Seychelles; Sierra Leone; Singapore; Solomon Islands; South Africa; Sri Lanka; Swaziland; Tanzania; Tonga; Trinidad and Tobago; Tuvalu; Uganda; United Kingdom; Vanuatu; Western Samoa; Zambia; and Zimbabwe.