

Democracy in the Commonwealth
School of Oriental and African Studies, London
June 23rd-25th, 2010

Since its inception, *The Round Table* has been at the heart of the debate over defining the Commonwealth, articulating the evolution of an imperial association into an intergovernmental organisation of diverse states based on equality. With 100 years of experience, no institution is better positioned than *The Round Table* to open a frank discussion on the current status of *Democracy in the Commonwealth*.

The conference will examine both the conceptual developments and the practical challenges of democracy as it has evolved as a central governing concept within the Commonwealth in the past half-century. The research of key Commonwealth scholars will be brought together with the findings of practitioners, policymakers, and advocates to address current challenges and future developments. The conference will be held over three days and will cover four key 'touchstone' themes:

1. **Defining Democracy** will explore a spectrum of definitions of democracy, and key aspects of the ideology, governmental structures, and policy implications of the concept, with special attention to its role in post-independence Commonwealth countries.
2. **Narrating Democracy** will evaluate the evolution of democracy through post-independence, to post-Cold War, post-9/11, even post-national forms of governance. There has been in many Commonwealth countries something of a sequencing of democracy, in which this form of governance rotates with autocracy, military rule, and various forms of oligarchy.
3. **Damaging Democracy** will engage with the ideological and technical challenges to democracy in the Commonwealth. Such challenges include poverty, insecurity, resource wars, corruption, ethnic tensions, election rigging, poor education, imbalanced or absent media coverage, and oligarchic tendencies, all of which work to undermine the culture of representation.
4. **Localising Democracy** will examine specific but crucial issues that tie the ideology of self-representation into specific policy outcomes. Commonwealth countries offer a wealth of examples of how local communities must frequently reap the unintended consequences of structural changes.

It is envisioned that this event will promote the establishment of a Commonwealth Democracy Network which will aim to further the academic research of scholars concerned with issues of democracy in the modern Commonwealth.

Both Commonwealth Secretary-General Kamallesh Sharma and former Secretary-General Chief Emeka Anyaoku have been invited to play significant roles in the conference.

For more information, please contact the conference organizers:

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