

What is the Commonwealth of Nations?

The Commonwealth, also called Commonwealth of Nations, formerly (1931–49) British Commonwealth of Nations, a free association of 1. _____ states comprising the United Kingdom and a number of its former dependencies who have chosen to maintain 2. _____ of friendship and practical cooperation and who acknowledge the British monarch as symbolic head of their association. The Commonwealth was an evolutionary 3. _____ of the British Empire. Contemporaneous with its shedding of mercantilist philosophy, the empire began implementing “responsible government”—i.e., a system under which the governor could act in 4. _____ matters only upon the advice of ministers enjoying the confidence of the elected chamber—in parts of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Ireland in the mid- to late-19th century. These dependent but self-governing states 5. _____ growing measures of sovereignty, and their autonomy was subjected only to a British veto. The Imperial Conference of 1926 declared that such states were to be regarded as “6. _____ communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common 7. _____ to the Crown, and 8. _____ associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.” The Statute of Westminster (1931) implemented the decisions made at both that and a subsequent conference, formally allowing each dominion to control its own domestic and 9. _____ affairs and to establish its own diplomatic corps. For a period after the promulgation of the Statute of Westminster, membership in the Commonwealth came on condition of allegiance to the British monarch. But the rapid growth of nationalism from the 1920s in parts of the empire with chiefly non-European populations required a 10. _____ of the nature of the Commonwealth. India in particular had been a special case within the British Empire; by title an empire in its own right, it had a viceroy, a separate secretary of state in London, its own army, and even, to a certain degree, its own foreign policy. When India and Pakistan were 11. _____ independence in 1947, they became members of the Commonwealth. In 1949 India announced its intention to become a republic, which would have required its 12. _____ from the Commonwealth under the existing rules, but at a meeting of Commonwealth heads of government in London in April 1949 it was agreed that India could continue its 13. _____ if it accepted the British crown as only “the symbol of the free association” of Commonwealth members. That declaration was the first to drop the adjective British, and thereafter the 14. _____ name of the organization became the Commonwealth of Nations, or simply the Commonwealth.

FREELY - ATTAINED – WITHDRAWAL – TIES – AUTONOMOUS - FOREIGN – MEMBERSHIP – OFFICIAL – DOMESTIC – RECONSIDERATION – SOVEREIGN – OUTGROWTH – ALLIGANCE – GRANTED

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