

are all internationalists now”.

It is not just that this emerging consensus is more widely shared within the Commonwealth than beyond it – it is that the Commonwealth debate is much less stuck in the past. The veto system on the UN Security Council means that familiar 20th century voices will continue to shape much of the debate. For example, the positions taken by the USA, EU nations, Russia and China over NATO’s intervention in Kosovo meant that the debate was reported in terms of universal rights or western imperialism. The debate within the Commonwealth has a different shape and tone – with Nigeria, South Africa, Bangladesh and many Caribbean states supporting a strongly democratic Commonwealth. Australian foreign ministers have spoken of “good international citizenship” furthering national and international interests, Canada led the campaign to establish the International Criminal Court and Britain has now committed to a strongly internationalist agenda.²¹

Commonwealth countries will often act in other fora in pursuit of these values, and the Commonwealth itself should focus on where it has comparative advantage. The Commonwealth does not have peace-keeping capacities, though its members often contribute strongly to international missions.²² The 6000 strong UN-peacekeeping force on its way to Sierra Leone will have a strong Commonwealth flavour – with Nigerian and Kenyan soldiers and logistical support and money from Britain, Canada and India as well as non-Commonwealth countries like the USA. But there is no reason for the Commonwealth to seek to organise it.