

# A Future Anglosphere: Realpolitik or Romance?

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## Contents

## 1. What is the Anglosphere?

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the Anglosphere as “*the group of countries where English is the main English language*”. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines it as “*the countries of the world in which the English language and cultural values predominate*”.

In reality, there is no precise definition of the Anglosphere. Its geographical coverage and form differs among advocates. It's generally held to include the US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. However, some Anglosphere advocates broaden membership to include India, and other Commonwealth countries such as Singapore. There is also a suggestion that non-Anglosphere countries, such as the Nordics, the Netherlands and Switzerland might play a part in an outer ring of countries who have a strong familiarity with the English language and share many cultural traits.

Anglosphere advocates generally (though not exclusively) don't suggest it should take on a physical form with large institutions – it's very different from the EU. The Anglosphere is what academics call an 'identity narrative'. At most, it's seen as more than an alliance and far less than a federation of states. This reveals the core nature of the Anglosphere being based on: (1) Enhanced free-trade. (2) Defence cooperation.

The idea of the Anglosphere has been advanced in recent times by a number of

historians, such as Andrew Roberts (*A History of the English Speaking Peoples Since 1900*, 2006) and Robert Conquest (*Reflections on a Ravaged Century*, 2000), but its most detailed advocate is the American writer on technology and international affairs, James C Bennett (*The Anglosphere Challenge – Why the English-Speaking Nations Will Lead the Way in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 2004).

Conquest has described an Anglosphere as providing “*a more fruitful unity*”. The Arab historian, Ibn Khaldun, has argued that throughout history, “*shared values have been critical to the rise of spheres of influence*”.

In this paper we pay particular attention to the arguments advanced by Bennett, because they are the most detailed, and integrate economics, geopolitics and future megatrends.

Bennett's essential argument is that a new world order - based on cultural affinity - is evolving in response to the information revolution, and those nations best placed to exploit it are those with a strong civil society, most notably the Anglosphere countries (in his definition: the USA, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand).

Bennett argues that the Anglosphere is a network civilization (discussed below), without a political form<sup>1</sup>, which is now becoming a distinct civilization in its own right.

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<sup>1</sup> By political form is meant the physical institutions and formal structures of power. Conquest proposed some form of secretariat based in Bermuda.

## Box 1 The Anglosphere

Bennett (2004) summarizes the Anglosphere as follows:

- The set of English speaking, common law nations, with an adherence to individualism, the rule of law and the elevation of freedom to the first rank of political and cultural values. This is similar, but not the same as, all persons who communicate or do business in English. The key consideration is whether or not their cultural values have been shaped by English speaking civilization.
- The common denominator across these societies is the strength of civil society. Civil society is a vast network of networks, which, it is claimed, is uniquely strong in the Anglosphere. The root of civil society is the individual, with the sources of authority beginning at the local or community level.
- Bennett argues that strong civil society, across the Anglosphere, is the source of its constitutional government and economic prosperity. Successful economies and democracies are portrayed as the effects of a strong civil society, not the cause. In other words, the market economy is the economic expression of a strong civil society.
- It is open and non-exclusive. Bennett uses the term 'network commonwealth' to describe the linked series of cooperative institutions evolving from existing structures such as trade agreements and defence alliances.

Bennett is essentially arguing that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Anglosphere is an idea whose time has come. He argues that the Anglosphere is best placed to exploit what he believes will be key economic drivers of success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which we have distilled into 5 themes:

- **Civil society** – According to Bennett, the Anglosphere has demonstrated continuous leadership in the scientific and technological revolutions since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Bennett argues that in the emerging economy of the next phase of the scientific and technological revolution, strong civil society values will be even more central to success. He asserts that entrepreneurship, the rapid creation of teams, venture capital and equity markets all

flourish best in a strong civil society.

- **Connectography** - The Industrial Revolution made continent spanning nation states possible. The Information Revolution makes global spanning civil societies possible – the Network Commonwealth. Lowering the transaction costs of cooperation makes it equally likely that any person anywhere can cooperate with any person anywhere else. The inference is that this connexity will be maximized where civil society is strongest.
- **Disruption** – There needs to be a strong civil society to respond and adapt to change, in order to resist the power of vested interests. The



rapid formation, deployment and financing of enterprises (e.g. Silicon valley) are an inherent characteristic of a strong civil society. 450 of the Top 500 software companies in the world are based in the Anglosphere. Technological revolution places an emphasis on voluntary action not centralized control – another Anglosphere trait.

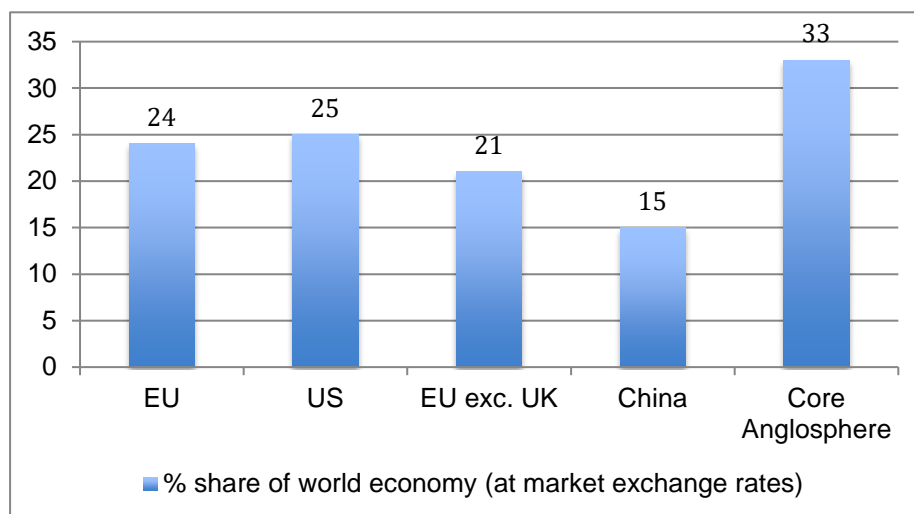
- **Entrepreneurship and innovation** - Bennett asserts that prosperity, political freedom, social trust, entrepreneurship and innovation are, with a few exceptions, primarily associated with the Anglosphere nations. This is not to argue there is a lack of entrepreneurship among non-English speaking peoples, but that when it does occur, prevailing economic and political institutions resist and retard it.
- **The future network commonwealth** – Bennett argues that in the network information economy the creation of a common business ‘space’ will

be more important than the elimination of trade barriers. Physical goods and physical proximity will be far less important, and it is argued that the Anglosphere nations are more suited to thrive in such an environment where all forms of economic barriers need to be downsized.

Bennett essentially argues that:

- (1) Strong civil society is the cause, not the effect of prosperity.
- (2) Historically, strong civil society has been most apparent in the Anglosphere countries.
- (3) Civil society will determine future success also.
- (4) Civil society will be even more important in the future than in the past.
- (5) The creation of an Anglosphere could enhance economic exceptionalism and performance.

**Chart 1 The Anglosphere in the world economy**



## 2. Why would the Anglosphere make geo-strategic sense?

**GFF** has identified 6 reasons as to why the Anglosphere would make geo-strategic sense. The ‘sense’ will of course vary depending on which Anglosphere country is being examined:

**Economic exceptionalism** – The Anglosphere countries are characterized not just by political freedom, but stronger economic freedom as well. Table 1 shows that 6 of the Anglosphere economies (wider definition) are in the Top 10 of the Heritage Index of Economic Freedom, with the one outsider, the USA, at number 12. Freedom matters for growth, through its impact on culture and institutions (the

rules of the game). A separate **GFF** report has examined this issue: *What’s the ultimate driver of economic growth?* The market economy can be seen as the economic expression of a strong civil society and so is intertwined with arguments about economic freedom. **GFF** would argue that if the ‘economic exceptionalism’ argument of Bennett is correct, and that this influence will be even more important in the future than in the past, then the argument for an Anglosphere is persuasive. Of course, this is controversial, with many arguing against the idea of any idea of exceptionalism.

Country	Ranking
<b>Hong Kong</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Singapore</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>3</b>
Switzerland	4
<b>Australia</b>	<b>5</b>
Ireland	6
<b>UK</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Canada</b>	<b>8</b>
UAE	9
Taiwan	10
Iceland	11
<b>US</b>	<b>12</b>

Source: The Heritage Foundation, 2019.  
Core countries and potential Anglosphere countries shown in bold.

**Economic power** – The core 5 Anglosphere economies (US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) accounted for 33% of global GDP in 2015 (World Bank data – nominal GDP at market exchange rates). This compared with a 21% share for the EU, excluding the UK. Extending the Anglosphere to include economies such as India and Singapore, only raises the

proportion to 35% now, but obviously that would change dramatically in the future, given expectations that India will be in the Top 3 economies in the world by 2050.

**Soft power** – The Top 10 countries in the Portland 30 index of global soft power is shown in Table 2. Soft power is the ability to influence by attraction and

persuasion. Clearly any index of this nature is an approximation, because soft

power cannot be defined and measured precisely.

Table 2 The Soft Power Index	
Country	Ranking
<b>US</b>	1
<b>UK</b>	2
Germany	3
<b>Canada</b>	4
France	5
<b>Australia</b>	6
Japan	7
Switzerland	8
Sweden	9
Netherlands	10

Source: The Soft Power 30 Index, Portland Communications 2016.

Core Anglosphere countries shown in bold.

The US and the UK rank 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in the index, but Canada and Australia are also in the Top 10. The Anglosphere countries dominate movies, TV, books and news media, helping to forge a shared identity. Anglosphere brands also dominate global commerce, particularly in the information economy.

Soft power could also be enhanced by a commitment to free-trade, a trait already associated with the core Anglosphere economies.

**Hard power** – The Anglosphere countries tend to spend more money on defence as a proportion of GDP. Recent figures for 2015 estimate defence spending was 3.3% of GDP in the US, 2% of GDP in the UK and 1.9% of GDP

in Australia. Higher defence spending, combined with the so-called 5 Eyes intelligence sharing, could be seen as providing a basis for enhanced cooperation. From an American perspective, higher defence spending by the UK, in particular, would find a receptive ear. Higher defence spending might then provide leverage in wider negotiations on trade.

**English language** – English language usage is in the ascendance. According to The British Council, English is spoken at a useful level by 1.75 billion people and this is set to rise to 2.0 billion by 2020. English is set to be the dominant international language of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and it is already the lingua franca of academia.

Table 3 % Population aged 60+ in 2050	
Country	%
Japan	42.5
Spain	41.4
Italy	40.7
Germany	39.3
China	36.5
<b>Canada</b>	32.4
<b>UK</b>	30.7
<b>New Zealand</b>	29.4
<b>Australia</b>	28.3
<b>USA</b>	27.9
<b>India</b>	19.4

Source: 2015 UN World Population Ageing Report

Core and potential Anglosphere countries shown in bold.

**Demographics** – The Anglosphere countries are projected to age less than China, Japan and the largest EU countries. The 2015 World Population Ageing Report from the UN (see Table 3) projects the proportion of the population aged 60+ in 2050. Table 3 shows that the projected 60+ population (as a proportion of the total population), is significantly lower in the Anglosphere economies. For the USA, Australia and New Zealand the projected share is below 30%. In the UK and Canada the projected share is slightly above 30%. If one includes India in the Anglosphere the ratio is just 19.4%. In contrast, in economies such as Germany, Italy and Spain the ratio is around 40% or higher.

Demographics will influence future economic policies. Countries where dependency ratios are high and welfare states a large burden, will face considerable upward pressure on taxation, unless they can enhance productivity growth and/or raise participation rates in the labour force. The economic and political outlook of these countries could become markedly different to those with less ageing.

### The Great Game - India as a counterweight to China

According to UN projections, India will have the largest population in the world by 2022. The Indian economy currently ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the world measured at purchasing power parity, and 7<sup>th</sup> in terms of nominal GDP (at market exchange rates). It is widely accepted that by 2050 India will be in the Top 3 economies by nominal GDP (at market exchange rates), but whether it will be in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> place remains to be seen.

The late Christopher Hitchens, making the case for India's inclusion in the Anglosphere described *“that historic arc of law, tradition, and individual liberty that extends from Scotland to Australia and takes in the 2 largest multicultural democracies on the planet, the US and India.”* Hitchens also made the obvious point regarding the potential importance of India, in countering radical Islam and terrorism.

In the post-colonial era India has operated a non-aligned foreign policy, and more recently, a look east philosophy, but this does not preclude



participation in a future Anglosphere. The Indian population outside India is very large in Anglosphere countries such as the US, UK, Australia, Canada (and South Africa). Indian overseas investment is also heavily concentrated in countries such as the US, Canada and the UK (The New World Order, Joel Kotkin, Legatum Institute, 2011).

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said that *“If there is one phenomenon on which the sun cannot*

*set ... it is the world of the English speaking peoples in which the people of Indian origin are the single largest component.”* English language has also been a key factor in the flourishing of India’s high-tech sector.

From a geo-strategic perspective the incorporation of India would mean that mid-century, 2 of the world’s top 3 economies would be in the Anglosphere.



### 3. Counter arguments to the Anglosphere

#### Timing

Only a few years ago, Anglophile politicians such as Prime Minister Stephen Harper in Canada (2006-2015) and Prime Minister Tony Abbott in Australia (2013-2015) increased speculation about a potential Anglosphere. The problem then, was that the UK was not really interested (notwithstanding some exploration of the idea by the then Foreign Secretary, William Hague).

Now the tables have turned, but Harper and Abbott lost power in 2015. Australia's current Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, has said that: "[Australia] would not indulge the British right's fantasies." That said, Australia's trade minister is landing in London (as this paper is written) to open talks on trade talks, and the mood music is upbeat.

It is possible that shared values might make a trade agreement easier to negotiate between Anglosphere countries. However, some form of landmark free trade agreement between all the '5 eyes countries' that goes wider and deeper than existing free-trade negotiations, would still be a tremendous ask.

Getting the ducks in line is not going to be easy, given the political climate in the US, and the protectionist rhetoric of President Trump alongside his favouring a US-UK trade agreement. Which President Trump will turn up for the negotiation? The US is obviously the key attraction to get all the Anglosphere countries engaged.

This is not to dismiss the possibility of a wide and deep trade agreement entirely.

The Anglosphere economies haven't tried before now, because the UK was in the EU Customs Union and unable to negotiate its own trade agreements. It might prove to be the case that Brexit provides a tipping point, and that a wide and deep free-trade agreement proves less difficult than we envisage.

However, there are problems for the Anglosphere in the UK as well.

#### The domestic challenges

One can envisage all manner of difficulties selling the idea of the Anglosphere domestically. It could easily be portrayed (incorrectly) that it was simply replacing one supra-national body, with another, much further away. One can also imagine its dismissal as a romantic illusion and a return to the 'Days of Empire' and a backward, not forward step. These would be substantial political hurdles.

Throw in post-Iraq disgruntlement with the US, in certain quarters, and the opposition could be considerable. The political difficulty could be compounded by the inevitability of higher defence spending, as part of any Anglosphere agreement. Though popular on the right, this would unleash howls of protest on the left, and cries of 'hospitals not warships'.

We also sense that there would be an additional problem as well, namely a perception that 'we're already there' and that a quasi Anglosphere already exists, with membership of NATO, the US Special Relationship and the Commonwealth. This, however, remains speculation. The counter argument is that a potential strength of the



Anglosphere is its ability to out emotion other options – it could generate a strong emotional pull.

A January 2015 Chatham House & You Gov survey ranked those countries UK citizens said they felt ‘especially favourable’ towards. The results showed Australia in first place, chosen by 47% of respondents, followed by Canada at 44% and the USA at 33%. The top EU country was the Netherlands, also on 33%. Using this as evidence of support for the idea of an Anglosphere is obviously tentative, and of course it would need to be repeated in the rest of the Anglosphere.

Perhaps the most interesting conundrum at the heart of the Anglosphere debate is whether or not it’s in the national interest of the UK. If the UK were to choose the unilateral free-trade option, with zero tariffs on imports, it would fundamentally

### Wider Anglosphere challenges

President Trump pivots in every direction but appears to want a US-UK trade agreement in the wake of Brexit. However, he remains deeply annoyed at the UK Government’s decision to allow Huawei to participate in part of the UK’s 5G network. We will have to see whether or not this proves a fatal obstacle to a trade agreement. Australia is equally frustrated with the UK for the same reason.

At the turn of the century this author participated in a US Government study of the economic implications of the UK joining NAFTA. Clearly this wasn’t possible to do under EU law, but it highlighted potential interest on Capitol Hill. The problem here is that it is just as easy to create an alternative scenario whereby the US is more, not less protectionist in the future, and this could rule out any deal with the UK.

change the existing dynamic in trade negotiations. The UK would have announced that this was the core of its international trade policy, and that whilst FTAs were welcome, to reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers on UK exports, that wasn’t the priority. Moreover, whilst it would have the moral edge in trade negotiations, having done ‘the right thing’, it would lack the stick of offering lower tariffs as an incentive for other countries to negotiate.

The hope would be that it could lead to reciprocation by other Anglosphere countries and a swing in the negotiations towards overcoming non-tariff barriers and impediments to the growth in trade in services.

If we now turn to the rest of the Anglosphere, the political challenges beyond the UK appear even greater.

Sceptics also highlight the domestic challenges to an Anglosphere in the US, given the country is becoming more Hispanic (18% of the population in 2015).

The ‘what’s in it for me’ could also have an uphill battle gaining traction in Australia and New Zealand. Australia and New Zealand are managing a growth orientation towards Asia. Australia exports 10 times more to China, and 5 times more to Japan, than it does to the UK.

There are also deeper problems relating to a potential ‘sense of betrayal’ extending back to when the UK joined the then Common Market and abandoned many Commonwealth markets who were left outside the Customs Union tariff wall.



Some have suggested republican sentiment in Canada and Australia could also prove to be a block to an Anglosphere. However, it is difficult to judge. Australian research suggests that support for a republic is actually at historically low levels, with younger age cohorts more, not less in favour of the monarchy. The republican argument is not clear cut.

Given the current size of the Royal Navy, and the existing ANZUS Treaty on defence between the US and Australia (membership suspended in 1986 for New Zealand), selling the Anglosphere idea in the defence realm, could also prove difficult. Higher UK defence spending and the war on terror might provide a basis for deeper cooperation, but as the 5 eyes intelligence sharing agreement shows, a lot is already happening.



## Conclusions

- The Anglosphere, a concept that can trace its lineage back to Winston Churchill's *A History of the English Speaking Peoples*, has received renewed interest in the wake of the referendum. It is claimed that the unique selling point of the Anglosphere for the UK, post-Brexit, is the possibility to create a new entity which aligns history, culture and politics more closely than with EU membership.
- The Anglosphere is generally held to include 5 core countries: the US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.
- Is the Anglosphere a whacky notion to be rubbished and ridiculed, or is it serious politics and an idea whose time has come? This paper examines whether or not the idea of the Anglosphere is based on realpolitik (practical circumstances) or romance (impractical ideological notions).
- Advocates of the Anglosphere argue that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is becoming a distinct civilization in its own right. Their essential argument is that a new world order - based on cultural affinity - is evolving in response to the information revolution, and those nations best placed to exploit it are those with a strong civil society, most notably the Anglosphere countries.
- In addition to these arguments **GFF** has identified 6 reasons why the Anglosphere could make geostrategic sense for all the core countries:
  - Economic exceptionalism.
  - Economic power.
  - Soft power.
  - Hard power.
  - English-language ascendance.
  - Demographics.
- **GFF** argues that the case for an Anglosphere is stronger than many people think, and that it has substantial realpolitik, but that it is still a long way from saying it will happen. There are very substantial challenges to it ever getting off the ground:
  - Timing.
  - UK political challenges.
  - Anglosphere-political challenges.
- There is polling evidence in the UK, that the Anglosphere might be able to 'out emotion' other options, but it is tentative, and it would need to be repeated in the rest of the Anglosphere.
- The most obvious stumbling block is the form the Anglosphere should take. There would be little support in the UK for replacing one supra-national body with another. Similarly, most (but not all) advocates of the Anglosphere don't see much of a role for an institutional structure. If the Anglosphere isn't a supra-national body, and is institution-lite, it's difficult to articulate exactly what it would do. Advocates would argue that it could provide the



opportunity for much wider and deeper trade agreements and defence cooperation, because of shared culture and values, which would make negotiations a lot easier to conclude.

- The potential Anglosphere can be imagined as a series of concentric circles extending out beyond the inner core, to include Commonwealth countries such as India and Singapore.
- Long-term, one of the most significant geo-strategic arguments for an Anglosphere

could be its potential extension to include India. This would form part of a strategic counterweight to Chinese hegemony. Indian inclusion would make economic, demographic and geo-political sense. The incorporation of India would mean that mid-century, 2 of the world's top 3 economies would be in the Anglosphere.

- Some Anglosphere proponents rebuff the potential inclusion of India, on the grounds that India fails to meet the criteria of shared fundamental customs and values.



## About the author

Graeme Leach is Director of Economics at Global Futures and Foresight. He is one of Britain's leading economists and a former Chief Economist and Director of Policy at the Institute of Directors (IoD), where he was also a member of the Board. Graeme represented the IoD in economic discussions with the Chancellor and 10 Downing Street. He is a visiting professor of economic policy and a senior fellow of the Legatum Institute in London. He is also a member of the IEA Shadow Monetary Policy Committee (SMPC).



Graeme has spent a lifetime in economics, futures and foresight, having started his career at The Henley Centre for Forecasting.

Over recent decades Graeme has made 100s of speeches on the future economy and megatrends, in more than 25 countries across the globe.

Graeme has also undertaken 100s of live television and radio interviews on BBC News, Sky News, Radio 4's Today Programme and others. Over the past 5 years he has written a weekly column for the City AM newspaper and numerous articles for the Daily Telegraph.



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## About Marcela Lopez, Artist (Front cover by Marcela).



Marcela Lopez, Colombian artist with European influences based in UK. Commissions and artwork for sale. My subject matter is landscape. Using my hands I choose plaster to capture the movement of water and trees on wooden boards. Through my artwork I intend to invite viewers to a peaceful moment of reflection. I see my artworks gently brightening up any space and being a source point of serenity and comfort.

