

# “The Anglosphere Century”

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Although there is much contention amongst academic circles as to who rightly coined the term ‘Anglosphere’, there is no doubt that James C. Bennett has popularized the term reviving interest and fervor on the subject that Churchill so aptly surmised, credited and promoted throughout his life through his clarion calls for Anglo-American brotherhood and literary work such as, ‘A History of the English-Speaking Peoples’. Bennett’s latest literary work, “The Third Anglosphere Century: The English-Speaking world in an Era of Transition” follows on from his largely successful book, “The Anglosphere Challenge: Why the English-speaking Nations will lead the Way in the 21st Century” but is stylistically different providing an ideal introduction to the lay reader in a mere 100 pages of the Anglosphere conception and its’ core tenets that lie at the heart of Western Civilisation. Bennet re-invigorates these centuries’ old traditions and calls on his readers to consider his views as to the best future direction to further the Anglosphere nations’ potentials to be taken by the member nations so as to further nurture and develop these ideals in amidst both internal and external threats that seek to undermine these traditions.

## *The ‘Anglosphere’ conception*

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“Common conceptions of what is right and decent, a marked regard for fair play especially to the weak and poor, a stern sentiment of impartial justice above all, a love of personal freedom... these are the common conceptions on both sides of the ocean among the English-speaking peoples.”

—Winston Churchill

The concept of an Anglosphere has come to represent something much more than merely those common law civil societies that employ English as their official language but rather the network of countries that adhere to some of the tenets at the core of English-speaking culture; the rule of law, individualism, the honoring of contracts, parliamentary democracy, respect for freedom, openness to innovation and strong civil society. In this way, Bennett departs from the straightforward classical conception set down by Churchill (as merely those peoples that were merely the inhabitants of the British Isles and their descendants in the colonies they settled) and broadens the concept into a somewhat concentric one with Churchill’s definition constituting the core of the Anglosphere (America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) with an outer ring of countries strongly influenced by English language and law (such as India and Hong Kong), and finally, a periphery of countries exposed to the language and law indirectly.

A clear and consistent message invoked by Bennett is an innately positive one concerning the Anglosphere; that the, “the english-speaking world ... has helped

to rescue humanity from a life of mere subsistence, toil and predation” allowing humanity to , “dream of and achieve prosperity, longevity, productivity, freedom and independence from the cruelties of random fate”. How Bennet argues this ‘achievement of developed society’ to have come about is not as an ‘automatic’ product of the anglosphere nations’ western traditions within a ‘whig’ interpretation of history but rather as a result of particular historical circumstances and turns of events which echoes Churchill’s own reflections in his literary work that the societies of the English-speaking peoples have developed and evolved over almost 2 millennia as a result of the culmination of opposing forces often at work. In this way, Bennett is not placing citizens within the anglosphere on a pedestal but rather foregrounding the developmental supremacy of the Anglosphere as a branch of western civilization. “The unique strengths of Anglosphere society lie in the template rather than in the materials that it organizes.”

### *Exceptionalism of the anglosphere nations*

How did a smallish island on the periphery of Europe, not overly endowed in learning or virtue, prosper and flourish in pre-industrial times? What would lead Britain to serve as the veritable forge of modernity? Why do its offspring nations outpace and out-innovate, rather than simply mimic, their counterparts? These are all questions that address the heart of what Bennett terms, ‘The riddle of the English-speaking world’. The book spends some time to set the scene and further the Anglospheric cause by proving that membership in the Anglosphere is clearly a better predictor of a nation’s prospects than any other indicators which reinforces Bennett’s belief that there is truly something special about the cultural and legal western traditions of English-speaking nations by reference to the irrefutable fact that it’s core member nations tend to enjoy some of the world’s highest standard of living and levels of economic freedom . I believe that to a large extent, Bennett does succeed in objectively demonstrating a, “statistically verifiable” correlation between economic prosperity and core Anglosphere traditions. Ranked on various economic, military, political and social criteria such as prosperity, political freedom, social trust, new company formation and innovation; members of the anglosphere stand at the top and perhaps, more significant Bennett emphasizes that in the areas of productivity and employment, the gap between the Anglosphere and the rest of the world’s nations is only increasing.

And, what better time than now to be reminding people about the roots of western civilization that have lied at the core of our economic, political and social achievement over the decades. At a time when school curriculum’s across the board in a number of these jurisdictions (particularly Australia) are failing to improve the state of education particularly with respect to history. Here, in particular there is a growing trend that is emerging whereby an all-round rudimentary historical knowledge that gives students basic understandings of the foundations of the Western Civilization upon which the Anglosphere nations have developed is being wholly rejected in favor of piece-meal,

departmentalized bites of knowledge focusing on method rather than substance that don't give students the all around knowledge they should have. As Bennet argues, the better we understand western history, "the more we understand that the voyage to those countries was more continuity than re-creation. This perspective has substantial consequences on our understanding of political, social, economic, military, and technological history". As Bennet states, "The Anglosphere is a relatively old social construct among human societies, with a tangible continuity reaching back at least twelve centuries... Americans or Australians who long for depth of historical perspective ought properly to find it in the Anglosphere identity". In these respects, Bennett's book provides a great source for reformers who are seeking input and direction as to what should be put in and left out in the new Australian national curriculum.

### *The Way Forward*

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*"Nothing can obscure the fact that, in their harmonious companionship, lies the main hope of a world instrument or maintaining peace on earth and goodwill to all men...If we are together nothing is impossible. If we are divided all will fail."*

—Winston Churchill

Bennett predicts that the Anglosphere will continue to be the cutting edge civilization in terms of economic and political developments into the future if the right steps are taken by the member states now in order to secure their potential. Bennett argues that decisive action must be taken in the fostering of cooperative arrangements by the leading Anglosphere nations in order to be better positioned in coping with the challenges of the 21st century rather than what seems to have become a trend recently for nations to be building distinct Haushoferian geographical blocs. In essence, stronger cooperative collaborations and institutions between nations bound together by common language, culture and value is imperative in the areas of trade, defense and immigration inter alia; not for the purposes of replicating some form of an EU through the creation of an 'English-speaking superstate' but rather to protect the English-speaking nations' common values from 'external threats and internal fantasies'. Thus, while seeking to celebrate on all the successes that has come to the anglosphere in the past; Bennet is critical in his evaluation of events such as the UK joining in with the EU for instance as an indicator and warning of what is happening and how damaging it can be for countries within the sphere to move away from their collective traditions and legacy. Although, rather than ending on a negative note and merely stating the need for anglosphere nations to come together, Bennett offers concrete remedies to the present situation advocating for a rather novel and original, "network commonwealth" as an institutional framework with the goal of strengthening ties between the Anglosphere nations which he sees as best equipped for future pre-eminence based on its' history of cultural dynamism and flexibility which will be a premium in the 21st Century. Bennet posits that the US be at the lead of the anglosphere to initiate this formal coalition and commitment with other members towards cooperation to a level matching, at least the US's level of commitment to the "Pan-American"

movement and its damaging prior support for European Integration as. He ultimately puts forward the case that Anglosphere nation should essentially forward those things that strengthen civil society and also (what may be viewed as rather extreme by readers) for member nations to abandon both multiculturalism and bilingualism and instead make assimilation and the learning of English national priority while calling on America to downgrade its hemispherist ambitions, on Britain to rethink its Europeanist illusions, and on Australia to reject its "Asian identity" fallacy. It is perhaps a little short-sighted that Bennet gives little or no consideration of a growing and powerful China and how the global framework of a 'network civilization' would interact and get along with the 'Sinosphere' which is not a new concept and has developed largely independent of the Anglosphere whose underlying traditions are so very different and often, oppositional to what the Anglosphere nations have in common.

### *Conclusion*

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Ultimately, "The Third Anglosphere Century" tries and succeeds in re-affirming the outlook of the Founding Fathers – particularly Jefferson, Franklin, and Adams - at a time when it is, no doubt needed most, where we see unprecedented government growth is impinging upon civil society and many sacred western traditions showing no sign of stopping and when the citizenry have sadly largely forgotten what has brought them continued prosperity, happiness and all that they have arguably taken for granted. The legal, social, political and economic traditions that lie at the heart of western civilization and the Anglosphere conception are being embattled on our campuses and in our schools while it is so rare to see constructive and genuine debate being focused on these traditions' contributions to our history and advancement. Bennett's short piece provides an invaluable and pithy introduction to the lay reader on what stands behind the Anglosphere and Western Civilisation and its' current state affairs at the beginning of the 21st century . It's hopeful subtext foregrounds that the only way we are to move forward into a brighter, more prosperous future is through honoring our anglospheric past. Whatever actions the leading anglosphere nations take; it will clearly set the direction liberty is to take in the future. Yes, the 21st century is well under way but have yet to see this becoming a truly 'Third Anglo sphere Century'.