



The Next Hundred Years: the Meaning of the Anglosphere

The German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck once stated that he believed the single most important fact of modern history was that England and the United States spoke the same language. This simple fact is often neglected by many analysts (including Polish ones) who seem to believe that the main purpose of political science is to predict when U.S. supremacy is finally going to come to an end. All signs seem to point to this eventuality: economic, statistical, and geographic, along with the newly emergent military powers.

In the current issue of the “Pulaski Policy Papers” Tomasz Pichór, Research Fellow at the Casimir Pulaski Foundation, analyses the importance of the Anglosphere. “If we consider the Anglosphere not as an established international bloc, full of various levels of authority, offices and parliaments, but as an informal structure built not only on a common language but also on common legal tradition, attachment to individual freedom and democratic elections, we will arrive at its concise and correct definition. When we remember that the countries of the Anglosphere were able to act jointly in the darkest moments of 20th century history, we can assume with a great deal of certainty that since the 19th century belonged to Great Britain, the 20th century to the United States, the 21st century will then belong to the Anglosphere.”

We encourage you to read the new issue of the “Pulaski Policy Papers”!

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The Casimir Pulaski Foundation is an independent, non-partisan think tank with a mission to promote freedom, equality and democracy, as well as to support actions of strengthening civil society. The foundation carries out such activities as conducting scientific research, preparing publications and analyses, organizing seminars and conferences, providing education and support for leaders in Poland and abroad. The Casimir Pulaski Foundation is one of only two Polish institutions that have a partnership status with the Council of Europe and is a member of the Group Abroad – an umbrella organization of top 40 Polish NGOs working outside of Poland.

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All these intellectual conjectures are supported by statistics, propaganda, the ambition of politicians, financial speculations (it was Goldman Sachs that predicted that the countries forming BRICS would become world superpowers in the middle of the century), and finally the overwhelming desire of many leftist intellectuals to see the downfall of this miserable – in their eyes – American hegemony.

America's assets

When we recall Bismarck's words we see that all such conjectures strike us with their artificiality. An impressive amount of data, indicators, economic results, and conclusions of various summits of state leaders do not answer two fundamental questions. What do countries which want to dethrone America have in common? What determines American domination: is it only its powerful economy and the world's biggest army? Or, to caricature this position, is America's supremacy only a scattered group of garrisons serving to ensure the provision of natural resources, goods and capital, thereby draining the entire globe only in order to facilitate Americans' desire to live beyond their means? Perhaps Otto von Bismarck managed to sum up in a sentence what causes American supremacy to be something entirely natural and, for that reason, difficult to replace?

Presumably the contemporary writer and traveler Robert D. Kaplan would agree with Bismarck. Kaplan wrote that “America's macrostrategic environment is chockablock with assets unavailable to any other country. If nothing else, the United States has an often-overlooked and oft-neglected bulwark of allies: the Anglosphere. This is Washington's inner circle of defense ties, and it finds no equivalent in its competitor nations' strategic arsenals. The Anglosphere is perennially – and incorrectly – declared dead or in decline by the media and politicians. [...] With a combined population of 420 million, with strategic locations off the continent of Europe (Great Britain), near the intersection of the Indian Ocean and western Pacific sea-lanes (Australia), and in the Arctic and adjacent to Greenland's oil and gas (Canada), the Anglosphere, if not abused or ignored, will be a substantial hard-power asset for the United States deep into the twenty-first century. China and Russia enjoy nothing comparable.”

The grounds of the community

It would be a mistake to limit the Anglosphere only to “the special relationship” of Great Britain with its former colony. Its grounds are based in what the Indian writer Madhav Das Nalapatem called “like minds” and not “common blood” as it is said in Europe. The Anglosphere does not only entail political or economic interests but also a common language, culture and, above all, political and legal culture and history. Andrew Roberts describes the issue in greater detail: “Just as we do not today differentiate between the Roman Republic and the imperial period of the Julio-Claudians when we think of the Roman Empire, so in the future no-one will bother to make a distinction between the British Empire-led and the American Republic-led periods of English-speaking dominance between the late-eighteenth and the twenty-first centuries.”

Looking at a map of countries which belong to the Anglosphere, it is clearly visible that it corresponds to the areas of the British Empire. As noted by Seymour Martin Lipset, the character of British authority exercised in its colonies meant that they were given greater chances to become stable democracies than the colonies of other countries. Whereas “those empires that adopted different models – the Russian and the Chinese – imposed incalculable misery on their subject peoples”, wrote Niall Ferguson.

The notion best describing the spirit of the Anglosphere is freedom. The vision of an all-embracing state, playing the role of a parent of unruly children, or citizens, is a foreign concept to Anglo-Saxon culture. It should be no surprise that a conference devoted to the attempt to understand what the Anglosphere actually is, and what it should be, carried the proud title: “The Anglosphere and the Future of Liberty.”

What is really important?

Cooperation between the biggest countries of the Anglosphere has not been flawless. In the last years of the 19th century Prime Minister Lord Salisbury complained that Great Britain did not do anything to support the South in the American civil war, which would irreversibly weaken the United States. “Such an opportunity will never appear again.” Enoch Powell, one of the most significant post-war British politicians, once said: “I just don't like America, or Americans. It is like saying you like sugar in your tea. De gustibus non est disputandum.” Moreover, he sensed an American conspiracy in all Britain's problems.

Owen Harries, a longtime chief editor of the quarterly “The National Interest”, published an article with the very meaningful title: “The Anglosphere Illusion”. His recollection of the events from the period of the British-French intervention in the Suez Canal in 1956 was a reminder that America, in the time of its closest relations with Great Britain (when both countries were governed by politicians who had also cooperated during the Second World War), was capable of turning its back on it in the name of its own interests. There are numerous examples of a lack of cooperation between English-speaking countries or those which remain in the sphere of British cultural influence. Their recollection might be evidence of one's erudition, but it would also be an omission of the most essential issues.

An example of this would be the way India has been making its presence felt in the world's economy. While the country has become an increasingly strong player on the international scene, it has not given rise to any major concerns, such as China has. The United States is inclined to share its nuclear secrets with India. It has also declared its support for India's ambition to become a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council. India's dynamic economic growth has been smoothly incorporated into the international economic system. This strength results from the fact that in a way India also belongs to the Anglosphere. This notion is so powerful that it allows India, exotic India, to appear as a partner equal to Great Britain and the United States in the heart of the 21st century Anglosphere.

If we consider the Anglosphere not as an established international bloc, full of various levels of authority, offices and parliaments, but as an informal structure built not only on a common language but also on common legal tradition, attachment to individual freedom and democratic elections, we will arrive at its concise and correct definition. When we remember that the countries of the Anglosphere were able to act jointly in the darkest moments of 20th century history, we can assume with a great deal of certainty that since the 19th century belonged to Great Britain, the 20th century to the United States, the 21st century will then belong to the Anglosphere.

The Casimir Pulaski Foundation

is an independent think tank which specializes in foreign policy, with a mission to promote freedom, equality and democracy, as well as to support actions of strengthening civil society. The foundation carries out activities both in Poland and abroad, among others in Central and Eastern Europe and in North America.

The Casimir Pulaski Foundation was founded due to political changes that took place in Poland after 1989. The principal values of Casimir Pulaski (freedom, justice and democracy) are an inspiration for every initiative undertaken by the Foundation. A few of the Foundations activities include: conducting scientific research, preparing publications and analyses, organizing seminars and conferences, providing education and support for leaders (www.instytutprzywodztwa.pl).

The Foundation was the main organizer of the Warsaw Regional NGOs Congress (www.warsawcongress.pl). Currently it is also the co-organizer of the Academy of Young Diplomats (www.diplomats.pl) and the publisher of the Communication Platform for Non-Governmental Organizations (www.non-gov.org).

The Foundation also awards the Casimir Pulaski Prize “The Knight of Freedom” to outstanding people who have made a significant contribution in promoting democracy. So far the prizewinners were: Professor **Władysław Bartoszewski**, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, historian Professor **Norman Davies**, **Alaksandar Milinkiewicz**, leader of democratic opposition in Belarus, **Lech Wałęsa** and **Aleksander Kwaśniewski**, former Presidents of Poland as well as **Javier Solana**, former High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, and **Valdas Adamkus**, former President of Lithuania.

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