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# Brian Stewart: The growing cabal of English-speaking nations

## Canada-Britain embassy sharing deal is step towards 'Anglosphere'

By Brian Stewart, CBC News Posted: Sep 27, 2012 6:42 PM ET | Last Updated: Sep 28, 2012 5:30 AM ET 137

### ANALYSIS



**Brian Stewart**  
Canada and abroad

The week's flap over proposed new Canada-Britain embassy sharing seemed to read both far too much into the agreement, and too little.

It is most unlikely this arrangement will eclipse our own foreign policy in any way, as the opposition warns. But nor is it quite the small housekeeping matter — akin to sharing printers and a supplies cupboard — that the Conservatives seek to portray it as.

What it may well portend, though, is yet another incremental step by this particular Canadian government (and Britain) towards what academics call "the Anglosphere," a concept that has fascinated its advocates across the English-speaking world for the past 20 years or

so.

This is the rather grand theory that, in these turbulent times, a new network of like-minded nations is coalescing around certain core members — the U.S., Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand — who share, aside from language, a set of values, a common law heritage and long-existing networks of military and civilian co-operation.



### DIPLOMACY

Map: Canada's consular co-operation

It is a network that, contrary to expectations back in the early days of (post-Cold War) globalization, appears to be growing closer in the wake of the ongoing skepticism over Europe's financial stability and the uncertainty in the Middle East.

Canada, because of Quebec and the internationalist ambitions of former Liberal governments, used to be considered a rather

dodgy member of this group back in the Ronald Reagan-Margaret Thatcher years.

But with Quebec exerting less political clout these days, it has allowed Prime Minister Stephen Harper, with his love of Anglo symbolism and monarchical nostalgia — restoring portraits of the Queen to government offices and returning the honoured title "Royal" to the Canadian navy — to move quite directly into the Anglosphere orbit, where he is increasingly being lionized.

### Sun doesn't set

It is tempting to make light of this Anglo fascination as a romantic bit of geopolitical wistfulness.

But the scope of potential participants is so vast that it has persuaded many, mostly conservative, thinkers that this grouping will remain the world's pre-eminent cultural, economic, military and technological force

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### About The Author

One of this country's most experienced journalists and foreign correspondents, Brian Stewart is currently a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Munk School for Global Affairs at the University of Toronto. He also sits on the advisory board of Human Rights Watch Canada. In almost four decades of reporting, he has covered many of the world's conflicts and reported from 10 war zones, from El Salvador to Beirut and Afghanistan.

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well into the 21st century.

Believers, such as the American geographer Joel Kotkin, a strong voice for Anglo optimism, observe that just the core Anglosphere group still accounts for over a quarter of global GDP, an amount that seems to match closely what the British Empire enjoyed at the height of its glory.

Meanwhile, because today's Anglosphere is centred on a common language (English) and customs, rather than ethnic or racial factors, the Anglo nations are still magnets for immigration, which helps keep them vital.



A Mountie looks on as the prime minister walks with Queen Elizabeth as she makes her way to unveil a portrait of herself by Canadian artist Phil Richards in June 2012. (Sean Kilpatrick / Canadian Press)

One problem with some of these calculations, of course, is that so many peoples identify with the Anglosphere, and speak English as their official or de facto language, that it can be difficult to determine who all should be part of the core group. Do we add Singapore? Certain Caribbean nations? South Africa? India?

As India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said in 2005, "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."

## Military closeness

Still, when it comes to promoting much closer links across this Anglo universe, there is a strong conservative mindset that urges keeping a relatively closed shop, particularly following the economic lessons of the eurozone and the political infirmity in alliances such as NATO.

Those who write about this subject most often would have the core group kept solid, traditional and strongly self-defensive.

Over the years, advocates have included Margaret Thatcher, President George W. Bush, former publisher Conrad Black, several highly prominent historians such as Andrew Roberts and Robert Conquest, and a slew of contemporary conservative politicians (including Canadians and Australians).

"The power of the Anglosphere idea is in its informality ... its 'taken-for-grantedness'," observes Srdjan Vucetic of the University of Ottawa, who has written extensively on the concept.

"People in conservative and neo-conservative circles have been talking about 'more Anglosphere co-operation' since late 1990s, but this usually goes on behind closed doors and in select workshops, think-tank style," he adds.

At this juncture, no one seems to have come up with ways to formalise the Anglosphere alliance, particularly around things like trade.

But when it comes to military and security matters, the Anglo core is locked in a much closer embrace than many in the public are aware

## Special relationships

Some arrangements are long-standing. All five spy services from the core countries co-operate in an intelligence sharing called "the five eyes."

Canada also shares



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NORAD air defence with the U.S., while our naval, air and land units have trained together for decades and have grown even closer since 9/11.

At this juncture, all three U.S. Army Corps have Canadian deputy commanders, while dozens of Canadians regularly serve as important exchange or liaison officers with top U.S. commands, as do those from other Anglo nations.



Anglosphere best buds, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher conferring in 1984. (Associated Press)

Such close unity carries military and diplomatic consequences.

Consider that Canada would likely have joined the U.S., Brits and Australians in invading Iraq in 2003 had Stephen Harper been in office, rather than Jean Chrétien.

More subtly, during the Afghanistan mission our military always made sure the Canadian battle group operated side by side with U.S. and British units rather than far less trusted NATO-European forces.

Today, Anglosphere advocates seem hostile toward President Barack Obama, who appears to be no great fan of Britain, or the so-called special relationship that some of his predecessors liked to encourage.

Still, Obama has moved closer to Australia in the Pacific, to the point of basing U.S. Marines there for the first time since the Second World War — a powerful signal to other Pacific nations like China.

As for Canada, and our frugal sharing of closets, hat racks, printers, reception halls and portraits of the Queen with British (and Australian diplomats), this will undoubtedly seem to many countries as an irrelevant embrace signifying little.

And perhaps it is. But not among Anglosphere dreamers. For them, the headlines created in Canada and Britain brought welcome new attention back to the Anglo world's distinctive alliances. And on this message expect them to be nothing if not persistent.

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### Marksist

2012/09/28  
at 1:37 PM ET

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 362  30

Now that is what I call analysis. Bravo Brian.

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### OdyseusCA

2012/09/28  
at 2:48 PM ET

For myself I believe that a much closer relationship between the nations of the Commonwealth Realms [<http://j.mp/Sp9W2M>] offers Canada, and these other nations, strength, both economic & military.

Canada & Australia combined have the largest reserves of mineral wealth in the World by a large margin. The four main nations, the UK, Canada, Australia, & New Zealand have some of the best educated workforces in the world today. The highest standards of living, quality education & medical care are also to be found. The Westminster Parliamentary system of governance is shared as well within constitutional monarchies all under a singular Sovereign.

Each one of our nations on our own are comparatively weak & vulnerable against

the various Superpowers & emergent nations. Together though the nations of the Commonwealth Realms can be welded into a Superpower of our own. One that gently distances us from our American cousins without giving offence & allow us to seek our own destiny in this ever more unstable & dangerous world.

We are not any less Canadian by being closer to our former colonial siblings, if anything, a Canada within the Commonwealth Realms would be more secure & confident in itself through the strength & support of the others in our supranational family.

For me, it is an outcome to be devoutly wished for. So I hoist a glass & toast to a new entity to be created in the World, a unified Commonwealth Realms.

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### OneTrex

2012/09/28  
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"Britain's heyday is long past. Let it die already. It's just a dreary, rainy little island of a few million people that is of little relevance to the world any more outside of London's shrinking role as an Atlantic financial hub. I'd rather tie ourselves to a country that isn't sinking, quite literally, into the sea."

+++

Not sure where you did your research (you \*did\* do some, right?) but the UK has the sixth largest economy in the world. That's hardly irrelevant. Nor is a permanent seat on the Security Council.

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170

350 180  
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### mischief158

2012/09/28  
at 1:22 PM ET

Sounds like a fine idea to me - within limits. Streamlining things like military, economic and immigration among these nations seems necessary in view of the challenges that obviously lie ahead.

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### John Sollows

2012/09/28  
at 12:45 PM ET

Not reading too much not too little into these developments makes the most sense.

That said, cooperation and alliances need to be based on more than sentiment.

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