

GRENOBLE ECOLE DE MANAGEMENT

CONCOURS HEC SESSION 2015

EPREUVE ORALE D'ANGLAIS

Script n°11

The Anglosphere

By Michael Kenny and Nick Pearce
newstatesman.com, February 10, 2015

The concept of an Anglosphere reflects the long-held belief that Britain's best interests lie in forging closer relationships (and perhaps even some kind of institutionalised alliance) with those countries that have broadly similar political structures and systems; and that also tend to cherish the values of parliamentary government, individual liberty, the rule of law and the free market. The membership list of this club varies quite considerably depending on the author but at its core are the English-speaking "Five Eyes" countries of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. Each of these was once a British colony and can readily be situated within an imaginary horizon of a group of countries united by a shared political and economic culture, nourished from the roots of British parliamentary institutions, economic liberalism and Protestantism.

But what gives the concept of the Anglosphere striking modern-day appeal for conservatives and dispels any lingering cold-war revanchist overtones is that it frames an account of how an independent UK can prosper in a global economy dominated by the rise of Asia. Liberated from the EU and allied with the rest of the Anglosphere, the argument runs, Britain could reinvent its open trading heritage, harnessing its colonial history to integrate itself into the new global economy of the Asian century.

In his major work *Reflections on a Ravaged Century*, the historian Robert Conquest argued that the political arrangements of the west were all increasingly deficient, the EU included. The answer was "a more fruitful unity" between the Anglosphere nations. And, in a speech to the English-Speaking Union in New York in 1999, Margaret Thatcher endorsed Conquest's vision, noting how such an alliance would "redefine the political landscape". What appealed most was the prospect of the UK finding an alliance founded upon deep, shared values, the antithesis of the position it faced in Europe.

The appeal of the Anglosphere is not just a reflection of growing disillusionment with Europe. For many, the rise of China, the increasing threat of radical Islam and the uncertainties of the global economy all make the question of locating political allies and sympathetic states much more imperative for the UK. The future of the west, some argue, may be contingent upon a closer coalescence of the Anglosphere countries.

And the European project is now often condemned as fundamentally out of kilter with the dynamics and leading technologies of the world we inhabit. Eurosceptics increasingly view Europe as an old, declining continent, riddled with regulation and saddled with debt. The Anglosphere sustains a restless desire to find a new, outward-facing, globally rooted destiny for the UK. And this vision is offered in stark contrast to the more insular ethos and instincts of the right-wing populism associated above all with Ukip.

The rise of the Anglosphere is both a barometer and a source of deepening disagreement on the right about the UK's geopolitical and economic development. Yet the temptation for those on the centre left to rejoice in these kinds of disagreements ought to be set aside. For while parts of the right have assembled an ambitious and optimistic project that has the capacity to appeal to a range of social groups, the left shows few signs of forging a national project of its own that might guide it through the economic and territorial turbulence ahead.

The left has largely shed its Euroscepticism but has yet to find arguments for staying in the EU that are anything other than technocratic or tactical. With a few exceptions, it is silent on how the European project can be rescued from the historical cul-de-sac of deflation and post-democratic governance associated with Brussels and Berlin and even less certain about how membership of a reformed EU can express a bigger, compelling and value-laden vision of Britain's future in the world.

The Anglosphere is far from being just a quirky, nostalgic idea. It is at the heart of a re-emerging political world-view. Understanding its power, reach and history is imperative for a centre left that needs a more clearly defined strategic ambition and sense of political direction if it is to do more than survive buffeting by the storms.