

‘The End of Anglo-America?’

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Abstract

This chapter takes a broad historical approach to the story of Anglo-America, understanding it as being both a composite actor within global international society (GIS), and a hegemonic structure within it. We start by looking at the origins of Anglo-America, and at the two main contesting interpretations of it: a communitarian one emphasising shared norms and extensive cooperation, and a realist one stressing divisions and policy differences. We then summarise first how Anglo-America became the core of the core within GIS, and second, the accelerating erosion of its moral authority to lead. Finally, we survey the likely legacy of Anglo-America, particularly in terms of institutions; the probability that it will survive as a meaningful partnership/institution; and its prospects within the emerging structure of *deep pluralism* (the widening diffusion of wealth, power and cultural authority) in GIS.

1. Introduction

There are three senses in which one can understand the question about ‘the end of Anglo-America?’ The first is that Britain and the US will disappear as great powers from the global international society (GIS). There is a real danger that Britain might, but very little that the US will do so (Buzan, 2004). The second is that the close ties between them – not just their ‘special relationship’, but the Anglosphere (including Canada, Australia and New Zealand) more generally – will weaken or break up. This is quite possible, but far from certain. Just how close, or not, the relationship has been is anyway a matter of ongoing dispute, on which more below. Third is that the Anglosphere generally, and the US in particular, will cease to operate as the core of the core in GIS. This is mainly a question about the moral authority to lead. It does also require adequate economic and military power, but that is much less in doubt. This is now mainly a question about the US, and we see a distinct possibility that the US will lose the moral authority, to lead even if it retains world class military and economic power. This will be partly because of changes with the US itself, and partly because GIS as a whole is accelerating away from two centuries of Western dominance, and towards a structure in which wealth, power and cultural authority are becoming more diffuse, the core is expanding in relation to the periphery, and hegemony of any sort is losing legitimacy. We call this emerging world order *deep pluralism*: ‘deep’ because it is rooted in civilizational differences now all empowered and connected by modernity (Buzan and Lawson, 2015: ch. 9; Acharya and Buzan, 2019, ch. 9). In this perspective, the big transition going on in GIS is the shift from a Western-dominated world order to deep pluralism. The US-China power shift is just one part of that larger picture.

We choose not to tell a narrow contemporary story with a depth of current detail, but also uncertainties about information, interpretation, and outcomes. Instead we tell a broad historical one, necessarily sparse on detail, but with a longer view bringing contemporary events into sharper focus. The chapter begins with the nature of Anglo-America, and the background to its becoming the core of the core within GIS. We then chart the erosion of the Anglo-American moral authority to lead, and the more recent burning of America’s global social capital, particularly after the advent of the Trump administration. The Conclusions look towards the legacy and future of Anglo-America, and its likely placing in the unfolding deep pluralist GIS.

2. Anglo-America as the Core of the Core

There is not much controversy about the understanding that from the 19th century to the present, Britain, and then the US, have been the dominant great powers – or even successor hegemon – within GIS. The US and Britain are

widely seen, including between themselves, as two states with a similar liberal democratic culture, and a shared (if diverging) history and language. They have been leading promoters of economic liberalism, and up to a point, democracy, human rights and decolonization. They have dominated and shaped the global economy, won all the world wars (First, Second, and Cold), imposed a degree of military and institutional order, and provided English as a *lingua franca*. These achievements both put possible rivals under a cloud, and positioned Anglo-America to dominate global geopolitics. That, plus the material power underpinning them, and the leverage of legitimacy arising from them, gave authority to the Anglosphere as the leading edge of GIS.

Underneath this widespread general view, there has been a much more durable controversy about whether or not Anglo- American dominance reflected an actual partnership based on close cultural relations. About this, there are basically two broad schools of thought.

The first school argues that the relationship has profound roots going back to the colonial origins of America (Nicholas, 1955; Dimbleby and Reynolds, 1988). Even independence did not lead to a fundamental ideological, economic or cultural break. Indeed, early America had a problem establishing its own sense of nationhood because of the difficulty of differentiating its own identity from Britain's (Hobsbawm, 1990: 18-20). The first Secretary of the US Treasury, Alexander Hamilton, also remained a great admirer of Britain's form of government as well as its prudent fiscal policies (Chernow, 2004). The Monroe Doctrine in turn was aimed at Spain not Britain, and British people continued to emigrate to the US in large numbers. The US elite was itself distinctly Anglo and Protestant and has largely remained so; in fact, the only Presidents out of the 45 who have been elected since George Washington who have not been 'British' in terms of origins have been van Buren, the two Roosevelts, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Reagan, Obama, and Biden. The official language of the country also remains English. The new republic maintained strong economic ties to Britain: cotton was its biggest export and nearly all of that went to Lancashire; Britain was also an important source of capital. And as the US rose to world power in the late 19th century many saw an alliance with Britain as key. In 1900, the British editor W.T. Stead in his 'Americanisation of the World' argued for an Anglo-American condominium (Stead, 1901). There were also calls for a 'Greater Britain' to give more political coherence to the Anglosphere (Bell, 2007). In what was then a deeply and formally unequal, and often racist, GIS, there was an increasing sense of the English-speaking peoples as the leading edge of the global standard of 'civilization' (Buzan and Lawson, 2015: 51-2, 122).

Nevertheless, even in this view, the practical realization of Anglo-America really only began in earnest from the late 19th century onwards, and was largely

brought into being by major shifts in the geopolitical landscape and a recognition of this on both sides of the Atlantic: by no less a figure than Theodore Roosevelt (Tilchin, 1997). By that time, Britain clearly recognized that the US had become the leading industrial power, and that it would be far better to collaborate with it than make a futile effort to resist its rise. The two had also become more closely aligned on the question of empire and imperialism. Thus in what has been termed the 'great rapprochement' in the twenty years before the First World War, Britain supported the US against Spain in 1898, the US supported Britain in the Boer War, and both promoted an Open Door policy in China (Perkins, 1968). In addition, Britain was growing conscious that Germany was its most immediate challenger, requiring an adjustment towards more cooperative relations with other great powers, not just the US, but also with Japan (alliance in 1902), and France and Russia (Triple Entente in 1904, 1907). Three global wars in the 20th century also confirmed the specialness of the relationship. There was, moreover, a substantial epistemic community in which elites and intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic were closely connected: e.g. Quakers and anti-slavery, the Council on Foreign Relations and Chatham House after the First World War; Rhodes scholarships; close financial links between London and New York. After the Second World War, Britain was clearly in a subordinate position, but still had an important role in the partnership: trying to play Greeks to America's Romans; being a reliable ally in NATO and the UN; and intelligence sharing. Britain was the faithful ally in wars from Korea to Iraq and Afghanistan, and was the US's eyes and ears (or in some, often French, eyes, Trojan horse) within the EU. Their leaders often seemed to have a kind of special relationship: Churchill-FDR; Macmillan-Kennedy; Reagan-Thatcher; Blair with both Clinton and GW Bush. A case might even be made for thinking of Anglo-America as being a 'society of two states' (Morgan, 2000).

The second, more realist, school, sees the relationship in much more competitive and less sentimental terms with less emphasis placed on how 'special' it has been, and more on the two country's separate and diverging national interests (See for example Watt, 1984; Burk, 2007). This stresses the significance of the break between the two countries marked by America's revolution against Britain, and its subsequent hostility to imperialism. In spite of its British roots, America also had no hesitation in exploiting French power to achieve its own independence. During the 19th century, there were moreover deep Anglo-American rivalries: about the slave trade (to which Britain led the opposition), about Latin America (where Britain had separate economic interests to those of the US), and during the US Civil War (when at least a section of the British establishment appeared to favour the Confederacy). Certain immigrant groups – Irish, and later German and Italian – were by no means pro-British, and the steady drift of US demographics away from a white majority after 1945 further weakened the 'Anglo' link. Latinos and Asians for

example had no sentimental ties to the Anglosphere. Nor did late nineteenth century populist movements whose opposition to the bankers and the East coast establishment easily spilled over into an Anglophobic hostility to the British upper classes (Tufnell, 2011). The US also drove a very hard financial deal with an increasingly dependent and financially drained British state during the First World War; and then refused to write off U.K. (or any European) debts much to the annoyance of John Maynard Keynes (Keynes, 1919; 2019). During the 1930s there was nothing very special in the relationship either, when Britain was left adrift to face the threat posed by Nazi Germany without any American guarantees. The Second World War saw a further shift in power, and evidence of greater US assertiveness towards Britain: the abrupt cancellation of Lend Lease; refusal to share co-developed nuclear 'secrets'; and a strong campaign against imperial preference. In 1956 the US used dollar power to stop Britain from attacking Egypt over control of the Suez canal. The British prime minister Harold Wilson refused to support the US war in Vietnam. With Bush senior and Clinton there were serious tensions with the UK (over German unification with Bush, and Northern Ireland initially with Clinton). Obama was no great fan of the special relationship, and nor, in practice, was Trump. In this view, the US as hegemon simply sees the UK as a useful ally but with no special claim on its time.

Both of these schools are well-supported by firm evidence. In some ways, Anglo-America was a society of two states, in other ways two separate states pursuing their own visions and interests. Anglo-America was at times a close formal partnership, at other times a rivalry, and everything in between, but from 1815 onwards it was never an enmity. The relationship always contained elements of both partnership and rivalry, and oscillated with circumstance as to which was dominant, and by how much.

During the 19th century, Britain was the leading edge of industrialism and social modernity, and the hegemon, creating a global liberal economic order around the gold standard and free trade. As Ferguson (2004) argues, the British Empire was a key maker of globalization. At that time, the US was part of the developing periphery, trying to protect its infant industries and resist British hegemony. The US only came very late into the First World War, drove hard bargains for its support for the UK, and by imposing harsh economic terms, effectively took over financial hegemony from Britain afterwards. During the interwar years there was an awkward hiatus in Anglo-American hegemony when Britain no longer had the capacity to lead, and the US had the capacity, but not the will. When the US eventually got around to abandoning protectionism and isolationism after 1945, it rebuilt a global liberal economic order centred on itself.

Yet while Britain did not harbour too many doubts about its imperial roles, the US has always been, and remains, much more torn about how its wealth and power should be expressed in a global role. Should it be an isolationist 'city on the hill', leading mainly by example, or should it be an engaged global leader actively promoting its vision? The US got dragged into global leadership by three world wars, but it never shed the tension that within the US, a constitutional commitment to democratic legitimacy generated strong sovereignty, which together underpinned a deep ambivalence about commitment to intergovernmental organizations and binding treaties/international law. Ruggie (2004: 3-4) nicely labels this 'American exemptionalism'. Thus the US, with British support, led in the creation of the League of Nations and the UN, but did not join the former, and did not like the latter once Third World states came to dominate its membership. The US only liked IGOs that it could control. Promoting economic liberalism, democracy, and human rights, and opposing fascism, communism, and mercantilism, provided the ideology for its leadership role. The Second World War, and the almost immediately succeeding Cold War, forced the US into global leadership in order to stem the ideological and material challenge from the communist bloc, which had also emerged from the Second World War with a strong claim to moral leadership and material development. Communism was so antithetical to US political (democracy versus totalitarian), social (individualism versus collectivism) and economic (market versus command) values that it constituted an existential threat. This enabled the US to recruit Western Europe, Turkey, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, and others into a global system of alliances with states and peoples who shared the same sense of military and ideological threat.

There was thus a kind of 'peaceful' power transition – possibly the only one in history – in which a *Pax Americana* succeeded a *Pax Britannica*. This in large part may have been because 'America became an empire and Britain became a democracy' (Schake, 2017: 2). It also reflected a recognition on the British side that in any stand-off with the more powerful United States, it was bound to lose. Yet the transition was only 'peaceful' in the sense that Britain and the US did not go to war with each other. Indeed, it took two world wars in which other illiberal aspirants to hegemony had to be beaten off for the transition to occur (Buzan and Cox: 2013). The Cold War – effectively the Third World War – also provided a helpful hegemonic transition in which a Britain by now very economically and militarily inferior to the US, could be a very useful and supportive ally as both faced yet another illiberal challenge from the Soviet Union and other communist states. Britain was part genuine ally, and partly, especially after 9/11, a useful front to disguise what was in reality US unilateralism.

So Anglo-America was never a close and seamless partnership. There were always tensions, sometimes big ones. But they were partners during the three world wars when it really mattered most, and this, combined with the democratic capitalist foundations of their successor hegemonies, is what underpins the widely held idea noted at the beginning of this section, that Anglo-America has been for two centuries the core of the core in GIS.

3. The Erosion of Moral Authority to Lead

If Anglo-America was at best an inconsistent and patchy reality up to 1941, after that it appeared much more stable and continuous. Not that there weren't occasional disagreements, sometimes serious, between Washington and London (Suez, Vietnam), but in general the relationship was well-institutionalised, with Britain becoming America's most capable and most reliable ally during the Cold War, and American becoming Britain's ultimate guarantor of security (Dumbrell, 2006). Except for those who leaned towards the Soviet side in the Cold War, of which there were many, both governments and individuals, the bulk of the rich and industrialized world, and much of the Third World, sided with the US, joined its institutional frameworks, and accepted the legitimacy of its leadership, even if grudgingly, as by France and many Third World states. The US, with Britain at its side, was buoyed up not only by its victories against fascism, but by its economic success, and by the attractiveness of its society to the people from many parts of the world who wanted to move there.

But like any leadership starting from such a high point, Anglo-America led by the United States appeared to have nowhere to go but down. Western Europe, the Soviet Union and Japan had by the 1960s recovered from the war; and the Soviet Union was becoming – or so it seemed at the time – a credible challenger in space, heavy industry and armed strength, both nuclear and conventional. In contrast, by the early 1970s, the US was running large trade deficits with its allies, was no longer able to sustain the dollar's peg to gold, or guarantee stable economic growth at home. Britain's economic performance was relatively poor, and it had to join the EEC from a position of weakness. At the same time it was winding down its global military deployments and becoming more dependent on US military technology. Meanwhile, abroad, the USSR was exploiting its new-found military power with Cuban support to great advantage in Central America and southern Africa, while in the Third World one radical revolution after another brought into sharp focus Anglo-America's limited ability to contain communism (Halliday, 1989). Few analysts at the time saw the crisis as being terminal. Nonetheless, some did begin to wonder whether that metaphorical eagle which had flown so high after World War II had either had its wings clipped or found itself by the end of the 1970s

entangled in a network of relations that made exercising its power increasingly difficult (Oye, Rothchild, Lieber, 1979).

Yet as cooler heads pointed out, the American empire may have been down but it was not out (Strange, 1988a). Thus the US economy remained the largest in the world and its military power vastly superior to that of any of its allies. The US was able to finance its trade deficits by keeping its markets open to exports in exchange for others buying US treasuries. Economically, US leadership was a delicate and often controversial balance between providing collective goods, and taking seigniorial privileges. The collective goods were most obviously the dollar itself as a global currency, but also deep markets and lender of last resort. Here the strength of Britain's financial sector provided useful support in what became the Anglo-American project to promote neoliberal economics and globalization. The seigniorial privileges of the US were the ability to export inflation and avoid painful domestic financial adjustments, and the power to impose economic sanctions. The US also, with some ups and downs, provided the quasi-imperial service of keeping the supply of cheap oil flowing.

The Cold War provided a supportive framework for Anglo-America because fear of the communist powers was real and widespread. All the propaganda notwithstanding, the Cold War was about a profound difference over the political, economic and social principles on which modernity was to be taken forward in both theory and practice. These were issues that many people on both sides considered worth dying for.

Yet even during the Cold War, the moral authority of US leadership began to show cracks. The war in Vietnam alienated most of Washington's European allies, including Britain, as well many young Americans. It was supported by America's Asian allies and Australia, but the savage and futile bombing campaigns, and the eventual humiliating defeat, made the US vulnerable to charges of being a 'paper tiger', whose behaviour was both immoral and counterproductive. Few of America's allies shared its obsession about Cuba, and US policy there since the revolution of 1959 comprised the same combination of immorality, counterproductivity and humiliation. US policy in the Middle East was equally open to charges of being immoral and counterproductive, and also produced humiliations such as with the Iranian revolution and the hostage crisis of 1979-81. Nor did the 'special relationship' always extend to the Middle East (Barr, 2018a). Britain had long-term relations with the Arab world and Persia and jealously guarded its position in the region. But as the UK soon discovered to its cost, from the 1940s onwards, the United States was never going to allow the Middle East with its huge oil reserves and strategic importance to remain within the British sphere of influence in perpetuity. Allies in the wider fight against communism and radical Arab

nationalism they might have been. However, 'from 1942 until Britain's exit from the Gulf in 1971, Britain and the United States were' also 'competitors in the Middle East and often outright rivals' (Barr, 2018b). Although Britain was not associated with the US's debacle in Vietnam, its willing association with the US interventions in the Middle East and Afghanistan eroded its moral authority alongside that of America.

The breakdown of the Bretton Woods economic system again showed America's relative economic decline from the glory days of the 1940s and 50s. But this event also opened the way to the revival of 'market ideology' (Watson, 2018: 96-118) in the form of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism revived Anglo-America (think Thatcher and Reagan) as the chief representative and progenitor of financial deregulation. Neoliberalism became the dominant economic ideology for the next three decades, outperforming the decaying Soviet command economy project, and being promoted partly through persuasion (redefining economic orthodoxy), partly by example (deregulation policies), and partly by coercion (access to aid and loans). Despite its other weaknesses, Britain's ongoing prestige and strength as a financial centre gave it a somewhat more equal standing with the US in this venture.

The ending of the Cold War had extremely mixed effects on Anglo-America. On the one hand, and particularly in Europe, the implosion of the Soviet Union ended the ideological struggle, and stripped away the defence dependencies, that had bound allies to the US. On the other hand, Anglo-America could claim credit for a great victory that reaffirmed their liberal-democratic view of economics, politics and society. Communist China temporarily reinforced the Anglo-American project by selling the Marxist pass economically, though clinging tightly to a Leninist vision of the command state. Its presence also kept Washington's Asian allies dependent on US defence support, but China's 'market socialism' seemed not to be nearly so big an ideological threat as the Soviet project had been. The oddity about all this was that it was the US that drifted away from its allies, and not the other way around. The dismantling of the Soviet Union was widely interpreted in the US and elsewhere as signalling a move to a unipolar global power structure, in effect, a world 'without balance' (Bell, 2003), which was viewed by some in Washington at least as an opportunity to adopt a more unilateralist approach to foreign policy. As the sole superpower, it appeared for a time as if the US had the capacity, if not always the desire, to do whatever it wanted. In economic terms, this meant pushing forward with neoliberal globalization, where Britain was a useful partner, while continuing with its strategy of 'aggressive unilateralism' in trade (Bhagwati and Patrick, 1989). In political terms it meant pursuing enlargement of the democratic sphere, a goal shared by Britain. In military terms, it meant a shift away from the idea of fixed alliances to the notion of coalitions of the willing (McKinnis, 2013). This potentially threatened Anglo-America, but Britain held

up its end by being the most willing ally of all, both in US interventions in the Middle East and Afghanistan, and in the global war on terrorism after 2001. This was first demonstrated with the liberation of Kuwait after Saddam's ill-considered occupation of the latter in 1990. Britain was once again the leading player in the coalitions of the willing constructed to invade Afghanistan and Iraq after the Al Qaeda attack on the US in 2001. Britain still had the military and diplomatic clout to make itself useful to the US by draping a cloak of legitimacy around the myth American unilateralism. The first Gulf War was widely seen as both successful and legitimate, and even defining of a new world order. At least initially, the invasion of Afghanistan was also seen as legitimate given the need to respond to the 9/11 attacks. But as that occupation dragged on, and especially with the largely unjustified invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003, and the extension of the conflict into Syria, the spectre of immoral, counterproductive, expensive, and eventually humiliating interventions once again became prevalent. Tony Blair's association with it poisoned his political career in the UK, and the US found ever-fewer of the willing to accompany it in an expensive and futile game.

In the economic sphere, the Anglo-America led neoliberal globalization produced what Rodrik (2011) has termed 'paradoxical results'. Globalization boomed during the 1990s, and China and others made major strides towards development by deploying their cheap labour in global chains of production and supply. As the new century unfolded, the US let China into the WTO, but was increasingly unwilling to let go of its advantageous position in key economic IGOs (IMF, World Bank, WTO) or to meet the status needs of rising powers (Wade, 2017). Even under Obama, the US opposed joining China's Asia Infrastructure Investment Band (AIIB), while Britain and many other European allies of the US joined it. Russia did badly under the economic shock treatment of 1990s neoliberalism, and was eventually alienated by the West's sparse assistance, and pushing of NATO and the EU deep into the former Soviet sphere. China and Russia inched ever-closer in a strategic partnership to rival Anglo-America (Cox, 2016). Globalization weakened democracy and undercut social cohesion in many of the advanced countries while at the same time destabilizing the international financial system. This culminated with the 'great crash' of 2008 which pitched not just some part of the periphery, but the entire global economy, into recession, and raised deep questions about the wisdom and sustainability of the extensive financial deregulation pushed by Anglo-America since the 1980s (Wolf, 2014).

From the early 2000s – and notwithstanding various earlier rounds of 'declinism' debate about the US since the 1980s (Cox, 2001) – a number of analysts began to argue plausibly that with its relative economic shrinkage, and its costly and counterproductive interventions, the America era might be over (Layne, 2006; Zakaria, 2008; Ikenberry, 2009). America's image abroad has

declined dramatically over the past few years (Pew Research, September 15, 2020). Since Britain's role was now dependent on the standing of the US, this pointed to the end of Anglo-America as the core of the core. Indeed, since then, the combination of economic stress, the crisis of liberalism, the rise of China, Brexit, Trump's chaotic burning of the US's global social capital, racial divisions at home and his administration's inept handling of the COVID crisis, has raised a number of well-founded questions about Anglo-America's standing and leadership.

So by 2010, Anglo-America was visibly in decline, both in itself, and in its general standing within GIS. Russia and China were increasingly alienated from Western leadership; the economic credentials of neoliberalism in general, and the Anglosphere in particular, were in tatters after the economic crisis; authoritarians continued to mount a robust resistance to democracy; and the liberal human rights pretensions of Anglo-America were substantially eroded by the conduct of the global war on terrorism, particularly the use of torture. Washington's increasing drift towards cultivation of a strategic rivalry with China did not initially attract allies, including Britain, in the same way as the Cold War rivalry had done. For many countries China's rise was a huge economic opportunity, and China was not yet seen as posing a universal ideological challenge or military threat like that of the Soviet Union. Although the US did for a time try to bring China into the Western world order as a stakeholder, this fell away as it became increasingly clear, especially from 2012 onwards under Xi Jinping, that marketization was not going to lead to democratization in China. Up to 2015, US rivalry with China looked mainly like a parochial concern to maintain US primacy rather than any attempt to represent a wider interest or to facilitate a natural adjustment to a changing global distribution of wealth, power, and cultural authority. Thereafter however, China's increasingly repressive domestic policies, along with its rising military strength, and its aggressive policies towards several of its neighbours and Hong Kong, began to strip away its benign mask. More and more of China's neighbours in South, Southeast and Northeast Asia, and eventually Europe and Britain as well, started moving towards the US view that China was indeed a threat.

From 2016 onwards, the position of Anglo-America moved into a complex and contradictory mix of supporting and undermining factors. On the supporting side was the fact that since 1945 the US had accumulated not only a lot of political and social capital throughout the world, but had also engineered for itself, and Anglo-America, a deep and strong position in the institutions of GIS: what Strange (1988b) presciently called 'structural power'. And whether the US was liked or not, there was no apparent successor waiting to play the leadership role in GIS. The alternative to Anglo-American leadership was no overall leadership of GIS at all, and this prospect was to many even more

frightening than the idiosyncratic and unilateralist drift of the US itself. China denied, plausibly, any interest in taking over the role of hegemon, and clung to its status as a developing country to justify this. Indeed, the fact that many of China's neighbours increasingly saw it as a threat, was in itself a support for ongoing US leadership. China's ruthless move into Hong Kong in 2020 to suppress the protest movement there may well come to be seen as an important turning point. While no government disputed China's ownership of Hong Kong, its very public crushing of democracy alongside simultaneous acts of domestic totalitarianism and aggression against neighbours (India, Japan, Vietnam) was a wake-up call to many states that had up until then been inclined to play along with China. This was particularly true of Britain, the EU, and Australia. The US was no longer alone in seeing China as a threat, and a new Cold War seemed to be opening up between the West and China.

At the same time, however, Anglo-America entered into a domestic crisis of liberal political-economy that amounted to a major assault on its will to lead. Even during the noughties, Bush Jnr started to burn America's global social capital by openly justifying and using torture in the war on terror, and by invading, and getting bogged-down in, Iraq. But the real burning began with the election of Trump in 2016, and his subsequent pursuit of extreme economic nationalism, and hostility to a wide range of American-built international institutions and alliances. The Trump revolution found a new domestic base for US foreign policy: the abdication of global leadership for 'America First', not even bothering to mask US actions as representing any wider interest. Trump quickly adopted a hostile rhetoric towards IGOs, alliances and international law. He made ruthless use of threats and unilateral actions based on naked exploitation of America's structural power in the global economy, and did so not only against enemies, but also against longstanding friends and allies. This was complemented by Britain's vote for Brexit in the same year, and in 2019 for Boris Johnson, largely driven by similar nationalist reactions against economic globalization and immigration. The moral leadership of Anglo-America was now under sustained and vigorous attack not only from outside, but from within, quite often by disillusioned members of the first Trump administration itself (Bolton, 2020). At the same time, while alienating themselves from much of the rest of the world, Johnson and Trump added their names to the long list of Anglo-American leader partnerships, albeit not in the league of some of their predecessors for degree of closeness.

Amplifying the hubris of US unilateralism since the nineties, Trump's 'America first' rhetoric effectively announced abandonment of the US's will either to seek legitimacy, or to play any kind of negotiated leadership role. The choice on offer to both friends and enemies was to take what the US offered, or suffer the consequences. His slogan 'Make America Great Again' seemed entirely ignorant of the fact that America's greatness was as much or more based on its

large stock of global social capital as an acceptable leader, as it was on the US's material capabilities. What followed is well known and needs only a brief summary here. The US began systematically to downgrade its engagement with intergovernmental institutions and agreements. It withdrew from the ICC and the 2015 Paris agreement on climate change. It pushed the WTO towards paralysis, while abruptly withdrawing from other longstanding trade negotiations and agreements (Trans-Pacific Partnership, Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, NAFTA). Trump withdrew the US from cooperation on the Iran nuclear deal; conducted a humiliating and fruitless diplomacy with North Korea, in which Kim took all the gifts and gave nothing in return; and likewise opted for a one-sided diplomacy with Israel, in which Netanyahu was showered with big gifts (Jerusalem, West Bank, Peace Plan) with seemingly nothing asked in return. Trump questioned not only the US commitment to NATO, but also to key bilateral alliances with South Korea and Japan. He seemed to see the EU as a rival, supported Brexit as a way of weakening it, and in other ways appeared to serve the interests of Russia (in the Middle East, and by trying to weaken the EU and NATO). Throughout all this he maintained a childish and insulting use of Twitter, undermining diplomacy in order to entertain his political base.

The outcome of the 2020 US election saw Trump defeated, but Trumpism still in control of the Republican Party. Without the intervention of Covid-19 Trump might well have won, and apart from Trump, the Republican party's embrace of his populist economic nationalism and fervent identity politics, and rejection of international institutions, provided it with a fervent political base. Thus while Biden may well dampen the rate at which the US's global social capital was being reduced to ashes, the rest of the world has to calculate that a Trumpian-style America-first agenda may well be back in four or eight years. In terms of Anglo-America, Trump's defeat does some obvious damage. It removes a friendly relationship between leaders that was supportive of Brexit, and replaces it with what will be a more distant one. Most Brexiteers favoured Trump. Brexit will make Britain less useful to the US in Europe. Biden will probably prefer the EU to Britain, and will be concerned about the impact of Brexit on Ireland. He will be wanting to rebuild America's global social capital generally, and it is not obvious that Britain will have a large or 'special' role in that.

That said, the two countries still retain close links, not just military and intelligence, but economic (London and New York), and at least under a Biden administration, support for international institutions. There remain significant broad political-economic similarities between the two in facing the crisis of liberalism in terms of inequality and globalization. The UK referendum and Trump's election of 2016 showed close affinities including a strong emphasis on sovereignty, the notion of taking back control, and opposition to immigrants.

It also seems likely that their policies on China will remain convergent on seeing it as a rising threat, and that Biden shares EU and British concerns about Russia much more than was the case with Trump. In the longer perspective, this looks like familiar ground in the ongoing dialectic of Anglo-America in which the two countries have oscillated between seeing each other as a cultural community with a lot of shared interests, and seeing each other as rivals with divergent interests. The phase in front of us looks to be in the middle of this spectrum.

4. Outlook

Where does Anglo-America stand now in terms of its position at the core? The English School's societal perspective usefully highlights that what is in transition here is as much or more in terms of the social structure of global international society (GIS), particularly in terms of the moral authority to lead, as about economic and military power. Within English School theory, the leadership question lies primarily within the institution of Great Power Management (GPM).¹ There is no doubt that with the rise of China and others, economic and military power is evening out between the West and the rest. There is also no doubt that the moral authority of Anglo-America to be the core of the core is in serious decline. The move towards deep pluralism argued above points to a GIS in which anti-hegemonism will be strong, and leadership perhaps only possible on specific functional issues such as climate change, nuclear proliferation, and pandemics. General global leadership of the type exercised by Anglo-America may no longer be possible.

Arguably, the US has never been keen on GPM unless it was in a position of unipolar control. Under isolationism, it rejected GPM up until 1945. It only conducted GPM from a dominant position within the West, between 1945 and 2001 (Clark, 2011). There have been only a few exceptions: arms control with the Soviet Union, and the opening of the global economy to China from the 1980s. Obama understood that US primacy was over, and attempted some coordinated, limited, GPM on specific issues such as Iran, the financial crisis, and climate change. But under Trump, the US turned away from GPM on all fronts, simply expecting great power rivalry and balance of power, and seemingly preferring it. Under Trump and Xi, the US and China have both preferred to cultivate a more tense international environment in order to facilitate their domestic political programmes. A militarily and economically diminished Britain is no longer able to play this game, and has thrown away its options as part of a great power EU.

¹ On English School theory generally, see Buzan (2014). On GPM see Cui and Buzan (2016).

The current situation could be just another oscillation in the long story of Anglo-America, but increasingly it looks like more than that in two ways. First, the 'special relationship' between the two, looks like getting ever less special given the decline in Britain's power, its exit from the EU, and the steady demographic shift in the US away from Anglo dominance. The sentimental, cultural and historical ties between the two are getting weaker. Second, in relation to the world as a whole, the longstanding dominance of the Anglosphere in GIS is clearly coming to an end. Even the US, which remains materially strong, is losing ground to China and other rising powers. Both Britain and the US have now lost much of their moral claim to leadership in GIS, and indeed it seems increasingly likely that the very idea that any country or group has the right or the duty to lead GIS is itself becoming illegitimate as the post-colonial world reasserts itself. While the question of material power transition is essentially zero-sum, that of social position in GIS, and moral-authority to lead, is not. China's rise to wealth and power definitely comes at the relative expense of the US, but the decline of US moral authority does not necessarily mean that China, or any other big power, benefits. None of the other big powers is at all well-placed to pick up the moral authority to lead that Anglo-America is losing. None of the other great powers in the system are claiming that role, and would not find support if they did (China, EU, Russia, India, Japan). The most likely outcome is therefore simply a net loss of moral authority to lead within GIS: a world of what Bull (1980) called 'great irresponsibles'.

The likely material and moral outcome of these movements is a weaker GIS where shared fate problems will go under-managed. The outdated, but seemingly unreformable, UNSC is a barrier to a more egalitarian GPM being conducted there. Such GPM as is possible will be functional and *ad hoc*, depending on there being shared outlooks on specific issues. Global warming and pandemics are perhaps the most likely issues to become existential enough to support significant GPM. One glimmer of hope is provided by Stuenkel's (2016: locs. 434-532) argument that the non-Western states mainly support the institutions of the existing order, both primary and secondary, but want to improve their positions within them. The problem will be whether the West in general and Anglo-America in particular can make the adjustment from thinking of themselves as the indispensable providers of global leadership and universalist liberal vision, to understanding themselves as being just one part of a deeply pluralist GIS composed of culturally and politically differentiated peers that need to negotiate a new order amongst themselves.

So while Anglo-America may find a way of soldiering along in itself, it seems much less likely that it will retain either the material weight, or the moral and social capital, to continue on as the core of the core of GIS. Between Anglo-America and the rest of the world, longstanding military, economic and ideological dominance, is fast giving way to a more polycentric distribution of

wealth, power, and cultural authority. In particular, the moral authority of Anglo-America to lead is increasingly coming under effective and well-resourced questioning and challenge, not just from outside but also from within. If Anglo-America does remain a viable bilateral relationship, it may well be in the form of a defensive partnering rather than claim to global leadership. Given that Anglo-America is now questioning its own will to lead, the option that there will be no leadership of GIS becomes increasingly plausible.

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