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Anglosphere United?

Examining and Explaining 20th Century War Time Alliances in the English Speaking World

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Introduction

To many in the scholarly, diplomatic and political communities of the major English speaking states there is something that binds them together with those who share a common language that goes beyond words. Phrases like “special relationship”, terms such as “cousins” and allegiances pledged with reference to shared histories are common across the Anglosphere and lead many to conclude that alliances between Anglospheric states are motivated by something other than raw balance of power politics. Indeed, when the recourse to war becomes the sole option for an Anglosphere state, it is often held that – as a rule – the other Anglosphere states will join in common cause, supporting the common civilisation, the common history and the common notions of international morality at stake in the fight. Yet a careful look at the record of the major Anglosphere powers over the course of the twentieth-century shows something short of this ‘one for all, all for one’ myth; instead, it depicts an Anglosphere as divided as any other collection of states in an anarchical system. While there are times that all major English speaking powers fought side-by-side, there are others that saw one or another English speaking power acting alone or in concert with only one other Anglosphere power. In short, in times of war there seems to be nothing very special about the “special relationships” the Anglosphere claims.

In the face of this reality, this paper seeks to first examine and then explain the war time alliances of the Anglosphere powers over the course of the twentieth-century. The paper will be presented in four parts. The first considers the arguments briefly outlined above, presenting and explaining the claims that scholars and practitioners have made for the Anglosphere powers allying out of common history, common morality, colonial or civilisational bonds. Having presented these arguments, a second section will explore the reality of the war-time alliances of the twentieth century across the Anglosphere. Drawing on data collected by the Correlates of War (CoW) Project, the war fighting records of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States and the United Kingdom will be presented and the wars in which they aligned, or did not align, will be detailed. Having demonstrated that consistent Anglospheric solidarity is a myth, a third section will detail an alternate explanation drawing on structural realist assumptions of international anarchy and state awareness of power relations. Finally, a fourth section will conclude the paper by pointing to the reasons why, even if untrue, the myth of Anglospheric alliance solidarity continues to remain part of English speaking political discourse.

Big Brothers, Cousins and Special Relationships

Sharing a common tongue need not necessarily lead to friendly parlance between states. Indeed, in recent times rhetorical and diplomatic relations between Venezuela and Columbia (Spanish as official language) and Russia and Ukraine (Russia as official language) have bordered on aggressive, if not completely devolved into the equivalent of international slanging over contentious points of foreign policy. The Anglosphere, in contrast, remains a rather respectful realm where states refer to each other in gracious terms and civility is the norm.

Consider, for example, the “special relationship” that is supposed between the United States and the United Kingdom. Popular accounts as early as the 19th century use this term to describe an unparalleled amity between two major powers in the international system. The following excerpt from *The Times* is typical:

There is, therefore, not the slightest occasion for other States to adopt as their model and example a form of agreement which may, perhaps, be advantage to England and America in their special relationship.¹

Similar reference was made to the special relationship in the period before World War One where *The Times* recalled “that Great Britain and the United States stand to one another in a special relationship” and, again, in the early 1920s where “the special relationship of good will and mutual understanding between ourselves [Britain] and the United States” was again explored.² Such sentiments remained common in the media as well as in political discourse throughout the 1920s and 1930s, though it took World War II to cement the phrase in the mind of the masses.

¹ The Times. 1897. ‘The Anglo-American Arbitration Treaty.’ *The Times* (14 Jan 1897): 5.

² The Times. 1913. ‘The New American Ambassador.’ *The Times* (7 Jun 1913): 9; The Times. 1923. ‘Limit of Navy Economies.’ *The Times* (13 Mar 1923): 14.

It was British Prime Minister Winston Churchill who popularised the term “special relationship” on both sides of the Atlantic, driving the notion of a unique international arrangement in speeches in both the US and at home. Shortly after the Second World War Churchill pronounced:

We should not abandon our special relationship with the United States...about the atomic bomb and we should aid the United States to guard this weapon as a sacred trust for the maintenance of peace.³

Churchill would also refer to the special relationship in his famed ‘Iron Curtain’ speech at Westminster College, Missouri, though he broadened the relationship to include the wider Commonwealth and a “fraternal association of English-speaking peoples”.⁴

The notion of the special relationship endures today. According to press reports, current US President Barack Obama used his congratulatory phone call to incoming British Prime Minister David Cameron to reaffirm that “the United States has no closer friend and ally than the United Kingdom” and he reiterated his “deep and personal commitment to the special relationship between [the] two countries, a bond that has endured for generations and across party lines”.⁵ These two English speaking powers, then, share a political rhetoric drawing on more than a century of formal and informal alliances – yet they are not the only example of such trans-Anglospheric appreciation.

Australia has long demonstrated its strong support for more powerful English speaking states. A long colonial history with Great Britain, a strong post-colonial alliance with that same state and a post-World War II alliance with the United States have been the three historical cornerstones of Australian foreign policy since the end of the 18th century. Indeed, so close were Australia’s ties to Great Britain that it was largely unremarkable for Prime Minister Cook to announce in August 1914 that “when the Empire is at war, Australia is at war”.⁶ This sentiment would continue during the first part of the twentieth century with Prime Minister Robert Menzies announcing quite matter-of-factly Australia’s declaration of war upon Germany in 1939:

Fellow Australians, it is my melancholy duty to inform you officially, that in consequence of persistence by Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her and that, as a result, Australia is also at war. No harder task can fall to the lot of a democratic leader than to make such an announcement.⁷

While doubts could be raised as to the independence of Australian foreign policy at the outbreak of World War One, its independence from the British Empire was both *de facto* and *de jure* by September 1939 yet, again, the ‘if, then’ statement of the Prime Minister was again unremarkable. The bonds of history and culture between Australia and its antipodean neighbour New Zealand with the stronger and more prominent Great Britain were so strong that there was no question of refusing to involve either state in a major conflict in a European theatre.

In summary, then, the special relationships, the ‘if, then’ political decisions and the strong cross-Atlantic links between Canada, the US and Britain all suggest, to some extent, a link between being an English speaking state and acting in concert with other English speaking states. Alliances in the Anglosphere make the consistent connection to historical elements, colonial pasts, longstanding friendships and even familial bonds between nation-states, all with at least some link to the common language and culture that the English speaking states of the world system share. Yet is this political rhetoric matched by actual ‘boots on the ground’ in times of crisis, conflict and war? To what extent do the obvious strong historical and diplomatic bonds across the major powers of the Anglosphere correlate with common cause in war fighting? In short, do Anglosphere states ally in times of war *because* they are Anglosphere states or can their choices to ally or not ally be explained completely without reference to the Anglosphere at all? In the following section this paper will present data that suggests that Anglospheric alliances are not nearly as common or automatic as the political rhetoric might suggest.

³ Interestingly, Churchill surmised that Britain’s special relationship with the United States also included a Canadian dimension.

⁴ Winston Churchill. 1946. *Iron Curtain Speech*. (7 Sep 2010) <http://tinyurl.com/ICSpeech>.

⁵ Agence France Presse. 2010. ‘Obama calls news British PM Cameron.’ (7 Sep 2010) <http://tinyurl.com/AFPObama>.

⁶ Argus. 1914. ‘Australia’s Patriotism.’ *Argus* (1 August 1914): <http://tinyurl.com/Cook1914>.

⁷ Screensound Australia. 1939. *Speech by Prime Minister Robert Gordon Menzies, 3 September 1939*. National Screen and Sound Collection, Title No. 387919.

The Data Sets

The data collected here is sourced from the Correlates of War (CoW) Project, an international research project launched by J. David Singer in order to analyse the link, if any, between quantifiable elements of international politics and the outbreak, evolution and resolution of conflict in international politics. With complete data sets stretching back to the 19th century and including all of the period under investigation in this paper (the 20th century), the CoW Project data sets exist as an incredibly detailed and greatly useful tool for political scientists with interests in conflict and socio-economic realities that may correlate with that conflict. While any attempt to quantify political and historical events is open to question – and, indeed, the CoW Project has been roundly criticised by some for its inclusive and exclusive decisions on certain data, including battle deaths – the CoW data sets remain one of the only collections of international information available to all researchers in political science and international relations without restriction. As a result, it has been used as a source or drawn into analysis in hundreds of published works over the course of its existence and continues to play an important role in quantitative efforts within the discipline.

This paper will draw on three different CoW Project data sets:

- State System Membership (v2008.1)
- Inter, Extra and Intra-State Wars (v3.0)
- Formal Alliances (v3.03)⁸

The Focus States

Though the extent of the English speaking peoples is significant, this paper considers only a sub-set of the Anglosphere. Limiting the analysis to the major English speaking powers and middle powers does obviously affect the breadth of the conclusions reached in this paper; this is accepted and clearly stated. However, it is also held that analysis of the larger elements of the Anglosphere and also the most internationally active elements of the Anglosphere can allow political scientists to draw conclusions about alliance politics within the broader sphere of English speaking peoples. For the purposes of this paper, the chosen focus states are Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Formal Alliances in the Anglosphere

There is a paucity of formal alliances between the major elements of the international Anglosphere. The following table, drawn from the CoW Project data set on formal alliances, illustrates both the small number of formal alliances and their largely non-Anglosphere exclusive nature:

Alliance Name	Start Date	Finish Date	Anglosphere Members	Exclusive
Four Power Treaty	13 Dec 1921	18 Sep 1931	US, UK	No
Canberra Pact	21 Jan 1944	1 Sep 1951	AUS, NZ	Yes
Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance	2 Sep 1947	Ongoing	US, CAN (since 13 Nov 1989)	No
NATO	4 April 1949	Ongoing	US, UK, CAN	No
ANZUS	1 Sep 1951	Ongoing	US, AUS, NZ (until 12 Aug 1986)	Yes
SEATO	8 Sep 1954	33 Jun 1977	US, UK, AUS, NZ	No
NORAD	12 May 1958	Ongoing	US, CAN	Yes
Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe	19 Nov 1990	1 July 1991	US, CAN, UK	No

Table 1: Formal Alliances in the Anglosphere

As is demonstrated by Table 1, formal alliances across the Anglosphere are uncommon and Anglosphere exclusive pacts even less common. Of the eight formal alliances involving more than one major Anglosphere power only three are exclusive to the Anglosphere and only two of those are ongoing, including one with a membership reduced from the date of first signature.

These three Anglosphere exclusive alliances have some similarities. First, two of the three can be considered alliances of only between neighbours: the 1944 Canberra Pact and the 1958 NORAD treaty see, respectively, Australia and New Zealand and the US and Canada ally bilaterally. The sole exception to this bilateralism is the 1951 ANZUS Treaty signed by Australia, New Zealand and the United States. This is the only formal Anglosphere-exclusive pact involving at least

⁸ All data sets are available for consultation and download online at www.correlatesofwar.org.

two regions (Oceania and North America), though it should also be noted it was also reduced, as a result of New Zealand's withdrawal, to a largely bilateral pact between the US and Australia by century's end.

A second similarity is that it is the US that there is a single recognised stronger partner in each of these three alliances: Australia in the Canberra Pact and the US in both ANZUS and NORAD. Even while bringing Anglosphere states together, then, there is no equality in burden sharing in these alliances. Less an alliance of equals, these seem to be clear cases of relatively weaker Anglosphere states seeking assistance, protection or support from stronger states.

It is also interesting to note that, for all the rhetoric surrounding the 'special relationship' between the US and the UK, there exists no formality to the alliance between the two states. While both were or are members of the Four Party Treaty, NATO, SEATO and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, these are also alliances that involve other members, some of whom bring or brought either equal or greater power to the alliance table. The organisational structure of NATO, for example, gives a voice to dozens of other nation-states in symphony with the UK and the US – the strength of that US voice aside, of course – and could not be considered a simple expression of the lauded 'special relationship'. Similarly, the short lived SEATO Treaty and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe both saw the US and the UK as simply two of many states allied formally. No matter the diplomatic or political agendas of the UK and the US, the formal alliance behaviour does not support the notion that there is anything particularly special about their interrelationship in international affairs.

Alliances in Times of War

Alliances and coalitions in international politics are not usually formal, long-standing institutions in the vein of NATO. More often international conflict leads to short-term coalitions between states specific to the mission and disbanding when the mission is complete, the danger is passed or the situation resolved in some manner. These non-formal alliances are far more common than formal pacts and the English speaking world is no stranger to driving or joining such coalitions when circumstances demand. Thus, if the special relationships in the Anglosphere are not confirmed by formal signed pacts, there is a real chance that the relationships will be proved by assessing the conduct of Anglosphere powers in times of war. Simply put, if we are to believe that Anglosphere states share some special bond, we should be able to recognise that bond through the consistent allying of Anglosphere states in times of war and conflict.

Returning to the CoW datasets, we can identify various types of conflict across the course of the twentieth century. The Cow project differentiates between interstate war (defined as military conflicts between states), extrastate war (conflicts between states and non-state actors) and intrastate war (conflicts within states/civil wars). In this part of the paper we will consider these types of conflicts in turn, identifying all twentieth century wars that involved at least one of the focus states and noting which, if any, other focus states fought in alliance during that war.

Table 2 (below) considers interstate wars, defined for the purposes of this paper as interstate wars that began after 1st January 1900.

Interstate War	AUS	CAN	NZ	US	UK
Boxer Rebellion				YES	YES
World War One	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
World War Two	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Korean War	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Suez Crisis					YES
Vietnam War	YES		YES	YES	
Falklands War					YES
Gulf War	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

Table 2: Anglosphere Participation in Interstate Wars

As Table 2 demonstrates, the alliance activity amongst the focus Anglosphere states is mixed. Clearly there were conflicts where all Anglosphere powers were active alliance members. World War One, World War Two, the Korean War and the Gulf War saw all focus states active and in concert with their English speaking contemporaries. Yet these four conflicts represent just half of the interstate wars that the Anglosphere participated in during the twentieth century with another four interstate wars involving only one, two or three of the focus states. The Boxer Rebellion involved only the US and the UK, the Suez Crisis only the UK, the Vietnam War only the ANZUS states and the Falklands War saw the

UK fight alone. It seems, then, that the chance of the Anglosphere uniting in common cause in times of interstate war is even: half the time they unite and the other half of the time they do not.

Table 3 (below) considers the same focus states and their involvement in extrastate wars during the twentieth century, again defined as wars between states and non-state actors that began after 1st January 1900.

Extrastate War	AUS	CAN	NZ	US	UK
British Conquest of Kano & Sokoto					YES
Caco Revolt				YES	
British-Afghan War of 1919					YES
Iraqi-British War					YES
Moplah Rebellion					YES
Saya San's Rebellion					YES
British-Palestinian War					YES
Indonesia Rebellion					YES
Malayan Rebellion					YES
British-Mau Mau					YES
Cameroon					YES

Table 3: Anglosphere Participation in Extrastate Wars

Clearly a different trend is evident when considering extrastate wars during the twentieth century. Firstly, in every case the Anglosphere state involved fought without an English speaking ally. Indeed, save for the war in Cameroon where France allied with the UK, the Anglosphere state involved in the war fought without any ally at all. Secondly, save for the Caco Revolt in the Western Hemisphere in which the US was a belligerent, every other Anglosphere extrastate war of the century was a war involving the UK alone. Australia, Canada and New Zealand – lacking the emerging power the US in their own hemisphere or the collapsing colonial empire of the British – did not find themselves fighting non-state actors between 1900 and 2000, though it might be noted that the post-9/11 War on Terror in the early twenty-first century saw each of the those states involved in fighting a non-state actor, though it falls outside the temporal scope of this paper.

Finally we can consider intrastate wars involving the focus English speaking states during the course of the twentieth century, summarised in Table 4 (below).

Intrastate War	AUS	CAN	NZ	US	UK
Russian Civil War				YES	YES
Greece v. Communists					YES
Lebanon v. Leftists of 1958				YES	
Republic of Vietnam v. NLF				YES	
Laos v. Pathet Lao of 1963				YES	
Dominican Republic v. Leftists				YES	
Cambodia v. Khmer Rouge of 1970				YES	
Somalia v. Clan Factions				YES	

Table 4: Anglosphere Participation in Intrastate Wars

Again, clearly there are some differences in comparison to the sometimes-united Anglosphere war fighting alliances of the interstate wars during the twentieth century. First, in all but one case there is a sole Anglosphere state involved in each war, the exception being the Russian Civil War that saw the US and the UK combine in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the Bolshevik takeover of Russia. Secondly, excluding the earlier wars in Russia and Greece, the sole belligerent from the Anglosphere is the United States. Indeed, every intervention in the second half of the century is a US-only affair in the Anglosphere, with the UK settling into an era of post-Empire international relative decline in comparison to its trans-Atlantic collaborator.

Considering interstate, extrastate and intrastate wars in total, then, we can find few examples of pan-Anglosphere solidarity. Table 5 (below) summarises wars of all types during the twentieth century in terms of their rate of Anglosphere participation:

Anglosphere Participation	Number of Wars	% of Wars
All Five Powers	4	14.8 %
Four Powers	0	0 %
Three Powers	1	3.7 %
Two Powers	2	7.4 %
One Power	20	74.1 %
Total	27	100%

Table 5: Summary of Anglosphere Participation in Inter, Extra and Intrastate Wars

The overall trend seems clear, then: most Anglosphere states fought most wars in the twentieth century without an Anglosphere ally. While pan-Anglosphere solidarity is the second most common reality at around 15% of the wars fought, this is around five times less common than Anglosphere states fighting their wars alone. For the English speaking powers in the twentieth century, then, it is easy to conclude that for all the rhetoric of ‘special relationships’ and civilisational bonds there wasn’t enough of a trans-Anglosphere bond to bring the five focus states together more than a handful of times.

What, then, explains the sometimes-allied, usually-not-allied behaviour of the Anglosphere states? Turning to the theory of international politics provides an answer that is simple, of great utility and explanative power, and devastating to the notion that the Anglosphere states share some bond with each other that they do not maintain with their non-English speaking competitors. A realist analysis of the alliance forming behaviour of the major Anglosphere powers seems to better explain the trends outlined above (Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5) as well as the perhaps surprising lack of formal bonds across the English speaking world.

The Realist World View

While the realist school of international politics is as broad as any other social science movement, it is possible to identify some elements of international relations that most realists consider central to their explanations of international affairs. The nature of the international system, for example, is held by almost all realists to be anarchical; that is, the system is held to be one in which there is no over-arching authority with the ability to direct the behaviour of the states in the system. Unlike, for example, the government of an individual state which has the legitimate recourse to arms and the capability to compel the subjects of the state to act in a certain manner – the international system exists without a central authoritative arbiter and all states (for it is states that the realists focus upon as the central actors of the system) are sovereign equals, in rights if not in material capabilities. As well, realists tend to agree that states have goals in international relations. While some realists focus on survival as the key goal of states (the so-called structural realists) others focus on goals such as power, territory or economic gain. Whatever the goal, though, it can be expressed as being an element of a state’s *national interest* in the international system.

For realists, national interest drives behaviour and explains why and how states become involved in conflict with other states and with non-state actors in the international system. Hans Morgenthau, often termed the father of classical realism, spoke of permanent national interests, describing the “Monroe Doctrine and the policies implementing it [as expressions of the] permanent national interest of the United States in the Western Hemisphere”.⁹ Morgenthau would go on to argue that the centrality of the national interest could be denied only at great cost:

For the individual nations to take care of their own national interests is, then, a political necessity. There can be no moral duty to neglect them; for as the international society is at present constituted, the consistent neglect of the national interest can only lead to national suicide.¹⁰

Other realists concur with Morgenthau on the centrality of national interest in international politics. Niccolò Machiavelli, for example, argues in *The Prince* that the interests of the leader must always take precedence over notions of good and

⁹ Hans Morgenthau. 1950. ‘The Mainsprings of American Foreign Policy: The National Interest vs. Moral Abstractions.’ *The American Political Science Review* 44(4): 833-854, p.834.

¹⁰ Morgenthau. 1950, p.854.

evil or right and wrong in international dealings.¹¹ Similarly, EH Carr argues that those who would deny the significance of national interest in world politics are “naïvely egotistical” about international affairs, with even non-realists such as James Caporaso arguing that states in the international system tend to act in a rational and self-interested fashion.¹²

National interest, in spite of its centrality and popularity as an explanative tool, is a difficult term to define. Griffiths, O’Callaghan and Roach admit as much by describing the concept as vague and labelling the term one “easily used and abused, particularly by politicians”.¹³ Griffiths *et al* do outline what realists imply via the term ‘national interest’, summarising the notion as policies that endeavour to further the “acquisition and rational management of power” in an anarchic international system, though this definition is problematic, as the authors admit.¹⁴ For one, the term ‘power’ itself is contentious, particularly so when considered in the wake of the expansion of the notion of power from a purely military-industrial notion to one that involves culture, language, influence and other ‘soft’ elements, too.¹⁵ This is further complicated for, as Griffiths *et al* note, realists define power as interests and interests as power, leaving a tautological nothingness at the centre of their approach.¹⁶ As well, Griffiths *et al* note the tension between “free will and determinism” that realists encourage which, again, is problematic in theoretical terms.¹⁷ Yet despite problems in definition – and it should be noted that realists like Morgenthau have much less of a problem with their power-backed, interest centred definitions than their critics do – national interest is a useful realist tool to explain the alliance joining or rejecting behaviour of Anglosphere states in the twentieth-century.¹⁸

If we consider the interstate wars in which the focus states in the Anglosphere stood completely united then we can suggest a significant national interest for all states in joining the coalition. World War One and World War Two both stand as global conflicts where the Anglosphere states were either under attack by common enemies, had security policies closely tied to the British empire (in the case of Australia and New Zealand in World War One) or where broad national interests – for example, not ceding mainland Europe to a single power – provoked intervention alongside other English speaking states. The participation of the Anglosphere states in the Korean War, being the first major intervention authorised by the Anglosphere backed United Nations Security Council, can also be explained by shared national interests in supporting the UN and rejecting communist control of East Asia. Similarly, the Gulf War stands as another example of Anglosphere interests in multilateralism and supporting the UN they helped to create, though it is also important to note the significant energy resources that the modern economies of the Anglosphere need to continue to maintain their standards of living. In each case of pan-Anglospheric wartime alliance joining, then, a case for the national interest can be made for each of the alliance joining states.

Consider, too, the incidences where either two or three Anglosphere states allied while other Anglosphere states did not. The participation of the US and the UK in the Boxer Rebellion is better explained with reference to the interests of both of those states in China than it is with any reference to a sort of special relationship. Similarly, the refusal of the UK and Canada to provide troops in Vietnam to aid the US, Australian and New Zealand forces on the ground can best be explained with reference to national political interests rather than any repudiation of the relationship demonstrated a few decades before in Europe and the Pacific. Finally, the participation of the US and the UK in the Russian Civil War is best explained with reference to interest – including stability, maintenance of the status quo, access to Russian markets and opposition to Bolshevism – than it is by a special relationship between two English speaking powers or some civilisational bond that, presumably, Canada, New Zealand and Australia had forgotten immediately after the First World War.

National interest also serves as a useful explanative tool when considering the more numerous incidences of Anglosphere states fighting wars (interstate, extrastate and intrastate) without a major Anglosphere ally. What would be the interest, for example, in the UK joining with the US in Cambodia when it refused to earlier become involved in

¹¹ Niccolò Machiavelli. 2005. *The Prince*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.61.

¹² EH Carr. 2001. *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*. New York: Palgrave, pp.72-73, p.81; James Caporaso. 1992. ‘International Relations Theory and Multilateralism: The Search for Foundations.’ *International Organization* 46(3): 599-632, p.604.

¹³ Martin Griffiths, Terry O’Callaghan and Steven Roach. 2008. *International Relations: The Key Concepts*. 2nd edition. London: Routledge, p.216.

¹⁴ Griffiths *et al*. 2008, p.217.

¹⁵ See discussion of soft power and the analysis of relative international power in Dylan Kissane. 2005. *Curves, Conflict and Critical Points: Rethinking Power Cycle Theory for the Twenty-First Century*. Teoria de las RRII Working Paper No. 9, Centro Argentino de Estudios Internacionales, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

¹⁶ Griffiths *et al*. 2008, p.217.

¹⁷ Griffiths *et al*. 2008, p.217.

¹⁸ See Morgenthau. 1950.

the war in Vietnam? The British-Palestinian War, the Iraqi-British War and the Malayan Rebellion all stand as examples of colonial struggles on the behalf of the UK; the US, Australia, New Zealand and Canada saw no civilisational or Anglospheric attack here and chose, in accordance with their own interests, to remain uninvolved. The Caco Revolt was a war in the Western hemisphere, geographically removed for the interests of the South Pacific Anglosphere powers. The Suez Crisis – despite the significance of the conflict for global trade – could not convince the US to engage in battle and the Falklands War, perhaps the last of the British colonial wars, saw the US and the other Anglosphere states remain physically distant and even rhetorically uncommitted to the UK's action against Argentina in the South Atlantic. Indeed, while the incidence of pan-Anglospheric cooperation is so low as to be indescribable with reference to special relationships, the realists and their reference to the significance of the national interest offer a better explanation of both the times of alliance and the times where alliances did not emerge. While there remain problems with the realist definition of interest (noted above) and significant criticisms of the realist approach more generally, in this case it seems that national interest offers explanative value that a resort to 'special relationships' cannot.¹⁹

Conclusion

This paper has argued that explanations for the international behaviour of the major English speaking powers during the twentieth century cannot be explained with reference to the civilisational bonds that those states share through virtue of their common history and language. While it is clear that the past of the states is somewhat similar and that, even today, the legal systems, economic systems and other significant social and cultural institutions are remarkably similar, the behaviour of those states in international politics is governed less by what they have in common and more by the individual interests of the states themselves. In terms of formal alliances it was demonstrated that they are few, mostly limited and never across all Anglosphere powers. It was further demonstrated that, outside of these formal pacts and during times of war, coalitions and alliances between Anglosphere states were rare. In only four cases in a century did all the Anglosphere powers fight on the same side in a war, while in nearly 75% of all cases an Anglosphere state fought a war without an English speaking ally. With the 'special relationship' explanation seeming little more than rhetoric, this paper offered an alternative explanation: the realist backed notion of national interest. It was argued that, if the various national interests of the Anglosphere states coincide, then coalitions are formed. However, where national interests are not threatened or where national interest precludes involvement even with a close political partner, alliances are not formed. This explanation, for all the caveats that go with the notion of national interest as a concept and realism as an approach, is found to be superior for explaining twentieth century alliances in the English speaking world, relegating the civilisationalist 'special relationship' explanation to the level of soothing political rhetoric in a world where rhetoric counts for little at all.

¹⁹ See a sustained critique in Dylan Kissane. 2010. *Moving Beyond Anarchy: A Complex Alternative to a Realist Assumption*. PhD Thesis. Adelaide: University of South Australia.