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AUKUS and the Anglobal Colour Line:
Race, Anglosphere aphasia, and (White) Military Supremacy

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Abstract

Existing studies of AUKUS have explored the security partnership's geopolitics, diplomatic fallout, and technological potentials. However, they have not considered the foundational importance of historical, racialised warfare. Indeed, mainstream International Relations theories tend to exclude race as a formative influence on world order building and AUKUS' political elites display 'silent whiteness'. For both, the ties that bind remain unspoken. To remedy this, the article theorises the affective politics of racialised military superiority, and the productive role played by Anglosphere aphasia, as both combine to make possible AUKUS' contemporary security possibilities. The article draws on a large comparative computer-aided content analysis, coupled to thirty-five elite interviews, which together enable a narratological analysis of racialised violence and constructivist analysis of contemporary security silences. It concludes by calling for a new, critical research agenda, and urgent, open debate on the problematic underpinnings of AUKUS – an unspoken formative ontology of recurrent, imbalanced, and racialised conflict.

Keywords: AUKUS, Anglosphere, race, aphasia, silent whiteness

Introduction

In 2021, Australia, the United Kingdom and United States announced the 'AUKUS' trilateral security pact, committing to cooperation in advanced military technology. AUKUS is a 'new' and vitally important security actor, which has been set up to play a leading role in the geopolitical contestations of an increasingly multipolar era. This is important: AUKUS represents an alliance that is likely to be highly consequential for twenty-first century geopolitics, just as its unnamed predecessor has been in previous centuries. At significant expense, AUKUS binds the US, UK, and Australia ever closer, despite contemporary turbulence. The immediate impacts of AUKUS' announcement were spectacular, inspiring condemnation abroad, particularly from allied states such as France, which lost out on a lucrative submarine contract with Australia. Scepticism has also been voiced inside AUKUS, most notably in Australia and by members of the Trump administration, given the substantial costs and implications of the partnership, for example around questions of sovereignty and interoperability. Despite all of this, analysis to date has tended to overlook AUKUS' foundations – its intrinsic properties – the deep, binding, and problematic historical ties that make the partnership possible. This oversight is reinforced by a specific type of historical forgetfulness and propensity for more politically correct platitudes.

This article therefore explores the ongoing affective politics of AUKUS' unspoken historical foundations in the context of challenging twenty-first century geopolitics. Specifically, the article analyses the unpalatable foundations of AUKUS – historical narratives of recurrent, imbalanced, and consequential racialised violence – and their continued (unspoken) contemporary relevance. In doing so, the article unveils the imperial conditions of possibility

that enable a remarkable 'new' security partnership, setting out a call for further critical inquiry and open public/policy debate.

The article develops three arguments and allied contributions. First, theorising the affective politics of racialised military supremacy, the article furthers to burgeoning debates in Global IR and critical postcolonial approaches, arguing that repeated, racialised warfare against indigenous populations co-constituted the idea of the 'Anglosphere'. Second, the article challenges mainstream, rationalist analysis of the politics of military alliances, arguing that the racialised extermination of indigenous populations was extended overseas in the form of highly affective coalition warfare, helping to form and cement the 'old Anglosphere coalition' as the precursor to AUKUS. Third, the article develops a more specific variant of 'silent whiteness' that extends recent constructivist work on absence, amnesia, and silence; it argues that the effects of AUKUS' troubling foundations are perpetuated today through the productive politics of 'Anglosphere aphasia'. Together, the affective intoxication of racialised military supremacy and contemporary silence comprise the building blocks of an 'Anglobal security ontology' – the imperial conditions of possibility that enable, shape, and constrain the AUKUS security partnership. Read thus, AUKUS continues to reproduce the 'Anglobal colour line' – a racialised division of the world – as did the Anglosphere and 'old Anglosphere coalition' before it.

To develop these arguments and contributions, the article employs multi-method analysis of two data types. The first of these comprises political elite and media texts from the US, UK, and Australia in four broad eras: 'Greater Britain' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; the 'great democracies' of the latter twentieth century; the 'War on Terror' of the early twenty-first century; and the global reordering efforts of AUKUS (see appendix, part 1).[1] Political elite and media texts from each era were collated and analysed comparatively (by state and era), making use of manual computer coding, prior to sequential content, discourse, and narrative analysis (see appendix, parts 1 and 3). Texts were located for inclusion based on author/orator (prominent political figures such as president, foreign secretary etc) or keyword (e.g. key conflicts) (see appendix, part 1). The second data type comprised transcripts from thirty-five interviews, conducted with political elites working in the US, UK, and Australia with a professional remit that includes AUKUS and associated expertise (see appendix, part 2).

The article proceeds in three parts. First, it introduces AUKUS in the contexts of global reordering and the long history of Anglosphere interventionism. Second, the article conceptualises the 'Anglobal security ontology' of AUKUS. To do so, it theorises the roles of (i) race, (ii) military supremacy, and (iii) silence for the Anglosphere as an affective alliance, chronologically layering their political resonance. Third, the article concludes with a call for a critical research agenda, as well as reflection and learning through open dialogue.

Race, AUKUS, and the Anglosphere

[1] The appendix for this article is available at: https://doi.org/10.5518/1713

Mainstream approaches in IR have obscured or actively legitimised the exclusion of race from understandings of the Anglosphere world-order building project (e.g. Acharya 2022; see also Anievas et al 2014; Rutazibwa 2020; contra Snyder 2024; and Persaud and Sajed 2018 who trace IR's progress on race). Moreover, where good critical literature and postcolonial critique exists, 'most nonetheless remain locked in metropole-colony dyads that neglect inter-imperial dynamics and connections', including 'of the most significant intercolonial connections: the complex invocations of the British Empire and of racial "Anglo-Saxonism"' (Kramer 2002). Yet, it 'is only with a deeper long-term understanding of the origins of the modern world order, and the role played in it by race and racism, that more informed contributions can be made to the debate about the present and future world order' (Acharya 2022: 23, 43). AUKUS, with a history interwoven by narratives of racialised violence, not only sets out to shape world order; it is possible to conceptualise this new security partnership as the latest example of how the Anglosphere 'operates to preserve racial hegemony in the face of non-white threat — real or perceived' (adapting Clayton and Newman 2023: 503). Of course, official articulations of the security pact put things very differently.

AUKUS is designed to shape twenty-first century geopolitics, re-balancing the Indo-Pacific away from a rising China (Holland and Staunton 2024). The formation of this partnership is an effort to defend maritime capitalism and a free and open Pacific. In other words, AUKUS is designed to maintain and promote liberal international order. To do this, AUKUS promises greater cooperation in a range of advanced military technologies, including nuclear-powered submarines, cyber, quantum, and AI. While negotiations took place in secret, AUKUS' announcement had recent policy roots in all three states, which in turn were embedded in long and intertwined cultural and colonial histories (Guardian 2021 – see appendix 5b). For the US, the announcement followed Obama's important but incomplete 'pivot to Asia', continued through President Biden's efforts to out-compete China (see Wallis et al 2024; and Biden cited in Boot 2021 – appendix 5p). For the UK, the agreement marked a logical step towards 'Global Britain' after Brexit and following the Integrated Review, helping to realise the policy of an 'Indo-Pacific Tilt' (Wellings 2020; Gamble 2021; Haugevik and Svendsen 2023). For Australia, the pact marked the culmination of a recent turn away from China and back towards historical allies, as part of a 'Pacific pivot' (from 2018), following several security concerns (Cox et al 2023; see also Jennings 2021 – appendix 5l).

Given how new AUKUS is relatively little research exists on the security partnership. Here, I map out three areas where extant research requires furthering. Together, these set out the case for analysing the affective politics of AUKUS, through an historical approach, which explores the security partnership's intercolonial foundations. First, then, prevailing accounts have explored the impact of the agreement for diplomatic relations with excluded allies and the potential implications for Five Eye's operation as a two-speed intelligence sharing organisation (e.g. Barnes and Makinda 2022; Holland and Staunton 2024; Staunton and Day 2022). This is important but begins from the politics of exclusion rather than inclusion (contra e.g. Mitzen 2006); it is vital to explore the ties that bind the AUKUS states (e.g. Vucetic 2010). Likewise, extant analyses – mainly policy reports and journalistic coverage – have focused on the technology potentials of the partnership, almost entirely ignoring the foundations of alliance politics. International critique of the pact's colonial roots finds only a limited parallel inside AUKUS (e.g. Hurst 2021 – see appendix 5h; Medcalf 2022 – appendix

5i; Galloway 2021 – appendix 5j; The Age 2021b – appendix 5k). This is surprising, given AUKUS' composition, ambition, and history, as well as the controversy the pact's announcement ignited. In short, a focus on geopolitical exclusion, as well as weaponry and technical detail, distracts from the material and affective affinities enabling AUKUS' political possibility in the first place.

Second, and relatedly, it is exceptionally rare, beyond noting nostalgia (Daily Mail 2022 – see appendix 5a), that questions are asked of AUKUS itself, as a new unit of analysis. The perceived naturalness of AUKUS is frequently taken for granted. Moreover, its sui generis qualities render standard quantitative approaches to analysing coalition formation difficult and often partial (due to the difficulties of identifying, isolating, and modelling complex and intertwined cultural variables) (e.g. Massie et al 2023). AUKUS necessitates de-reification through a qualitative historical approach because it is a longstanding, culturally underpinned, and socially constructed coalition; it is incomplete and misleading to account for AUKUS' existence through rational calculations of (future) power balancing alone (Wijaya and Hayes 2024). Indeed, it is vital to explore how it is that a contemporary era, often perceived to be constituted as a rational and broadly realist environment – of great power competition, increasingly unconstrained by liberal (institutional) limits – is nonetheless informed by historical legacy, and particularly historical narratives of racialised coalition warfare.

Third, within Anglosphere studies, AUKUS suggests a need to reject the view of an 'Anglosphere lite', as the Anglo-American Special Relationship (Haglund 2022). The announcement of AUKUS confirms the need for a tripartite conceptualisation of the 'old Anglosphere coalition' (Holland 2020), which should have already been evident through extensive military interoperability and mobility, as well as unprecedented degrees of trust and intelligence cooperation, allied to a proclivity for recurrent coalition warfare that distinguishes the US, UK, and Australia from other allies, even those in Five Eyes (ibid; and see appendix 5e and 5f). Today, there are innumerable material and institutional examples evidencing unparalleled levels of Anglosphere cooperation (e.g. Legrand 2015, 2016), with US-UK-Australia cooperation at its core (Holland 2020). AUKUS' announcement has shifted the focus back to 'heavier' conceptualisations of a larger, militaristic Anglosphere, united by culture and affect, as much or more than interest alone.

AUKUS' Anglobal security ontology: Race, military supremacy, and silent whiteness

The 'Anglo-Saxon race'

Fortunately, race is an important feature of several select studies of the Anglosphere (e.g. Bell 2007, 2020; Bell and Vucetic 2019; Ledwidge and Parmar 2017; Parmar and Yin 2021; Vucetic 2011a, b) and contemporary security at the level of geopolitical reordering (e.g. Acharya 2022; Shilliam 2023; Vitalis 2016). This section synthesises the insights of this rich historical literature with analysis of formative Anglosphere texts (see appendix 9h for aggregate themes) in order to situate AUKUS in its problematic foundational context: a racialised world-order building project and the associated construction of a civilisational apex in an imagined Anglo-Saxon whiteness (e.g. Shilliam 2024). Far from merely a union of

the English-speaking peoples, the Anglosphere inscribes a racialised identity onto a community of 'Anglo' states, with mutually intertwined colonial histories (e.g. appendix 5s).

Vucetic (2011 and 2017, for example) has traced how the idea (and impossible neologism) of the Anglosphere emerged through popular works such as Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* and Stephenson's *The Diamond Age*, translated for policy and wider audiences through the efforts of figures such as James Bennett and Robert Conquest. Stephenson's emphasis on the Oceanic character of the Anglosphere, for example, can be traced as the term enters the public and conservative lexicon. Orwell's and Stephenson's respective contexts of the 1940s and 1990s are important moments for the growth of the Anglosphere idea. However, the seed of that idea germinated at the end of the previous century, going on to flourish in the next. It was the colonial relations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that tilled a fertile soil for the blossoming of the Anglospherist imagination in the 1890s, and Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilisations* that helped the idea to bloom once again in the post-9/11 fervour of the twenty-first. While the Anglosphere idea had previously found important resonances in the worldviews of figures such as Thatcher, Menzies, and Churchill, its rise was notable in the discourse of numerous politicians during the War on Terror – George W. Bush, Tony Blair, and John Howard foremost amongst them. Following the quagmire of Iraq, the 2016 Brexit referendum gave the idea renewed focus and emphasis, as Leave campaigners painted a picture of a glorious past, to which the UK could return if freed, reuniting with old, enduring, and more natural friends (Gamble 2021; Kenny and Pearce 2019; Vucetic 2021; Wellings 2020).

The Anglosphere's flourishing in the twenty-first century – including the development of AUKUS – is directly enabled, shaped, and constrained by the contexts in which the idea took root and grew. Its growth is also tied, intimately, to the ideas it, in turn, drew upon, incorporated, and reworked. Duncan Bell and Srdjan Vucetic have made this point extensively and persuasively. As Vucetic (2017: 77) explains, 'the deep origins of the Anglosphere in security lie in late nineteenth-century inter-racial politics'; 'we cannot grasp any aspect of the Anglosphere phenomenon today without due attention to the imperial drive towards the conquest, exploitation and domination of 'inferior' peoples'. Likewise, as Duncan Bell (2020: 8) and others (e.g. Vucetic 2011b) have shown, 'the debate over Anglo-America bloomed in the final two decades of the nineteenth century and continued until the First World War'. Bell traces how this debate 'was overdetermined, with multiple tributaries feeding the stream', which coalesced in unionist advocates who sought US-UK integration on the 'basis of their shared racial identity' (ibid). This racial identity was slippery, but frequently found articulation in the combination of language and creed, as an 'English-speaking race' (see appendix 5t, u, v).

Other tributaries were also important. Robbie Shilliam (2009), for example, has noted that the roots of an 'Atlantic community' were intimately intertwined with the development of the slave trade, while Parmar (2012) has traced the epistemic thinking of elite networks that were evident at the birth of American hegemony in the late nineteenth century, which left an indelible mark on the shape and nature of the Anglo idea. Worth noting, too, is that the role of technology, even in this formative moment, was crucial. New communications advances facilitated the rapid circulation of literature – and, with it, ideas and discourses – through the colonies. These enhanced longstanding, elite network ties: 'the success of

Anglo-Saxonism as a racial-exceptionalist bridge between the United States and the British Empire was due in part to the social, familial, intellectual, and literary networks that tied elite Americans and Britons together' (Kramer 2002).

In this context, the science and politics of the time combined to inform the construction of the Anglosphere idea. Parmar (2012) and Vucetic (2017) have shown how the Anglosphere took shape, in the run up to the twentieth century, in an era of Social Darwinism and explicitly racialised thinking about world affairs. Such racialised thinking was the explicit context that enabled the relatively peaceful transfer of power from the UK to the US; a transition largely in lieu of conflict, which is remarkable in the history of international relations and yet its drivers remain contentious in the discipline of IR. Vucetic (2017) highlights the importance of Anglo-Saxonism in this period, defining it as 'a shared discourse of identity that positioned the two ruling establishments as not only 'kinsmen' but also the 'vanguard of civilisation''. 'Absent this deep racialised affinity' (ibid) things would certainly have unfolded in far bloodier a fashion – the violent hegemonic transition of realist fears. But as 'leaders of the two branches of the Anglo-Saxon race, one that was in a state of competition with other races', hegemonic transition was occurring *within* the Anglosphere, between familial kin (ibid.; see also, Kramer 2002).

Tracing one particularly important intellectual tributary of the Anglosphere, Duncan Bell (2007) has shown how the concept of 'Greater Britain' served as a vital precursor, with the term, for many activist political elites in the 1880s and 1890s, 'synonymous with the power of 'the Anglo-Saxon race'' (Vucetic 2017; see also appendix 5cc and 5w). In his travels and writings on 'Greater Britain', for example, MP Charles Dilke [1869] 2013) emphasised that across 'English-speaking, or in English-governed lands … [if] mixture with other peoples had modified the blood, I saw, too, that in essentials the race was always one'. Through 'the grandeur of our race', Greater Britain had *both* 'imposed her institutions' and committed the 'inevitable destruction' of natives; as such, for Dilke, the English 'race' possessed a 'colonising instinct' with 'the Anglo-Saxon [unique as] the only extirpating race on earth' (ibid.). This – 'extinction of … inferior race[s]', he noted, was a 'blessing to mankind' – and, the bloody violence of such acts was made clear in his recollection that, in 1866, the Coloradan capital offered 'twenty dollars a piece for Indian scalps with the ears on' (ibid). These micro-sociologies of violent, racialised Anglospheric settler colonialism were globally significant: 'through America, England is speaking to the world' (ibid).

The concept of an 'Anglo-Saxon race' operated transnationally at the birth of the Anglosphere idea. Belich, for example, has argued that the US 'settler community' remained 'neo-Britains', with remarkable links maintained to the homeland (see also Vucetic 2017). Such a 'settler revolution' was also experienced in Australia (appendix 5x, y). English novelist Anthony Trollope, for example, argued in 1871 that settlerism in fact produced 'a race superior to themselves' (in Veracini 2021). Veracini (2021) charts the difference and connection of settlerism and displacement for the metropole versus the colony, with both nonetheless united in pursuit of white dominance. Likewise, Moreton-Robinson (2015) reflects on the slippages between the racial marker of 'Anglo Saxon' and the nationalist identity of 'British', emphasising that both metropole and colony relied upon 'possessive whiteness' – 'heavy investment in the tradition and memories of war and the defending and taking of possession'.

Clayton and Newman (2023) have identified the direct historical continuities between the formative impact of settler colonialism – and its associated racial discourses – and Australia's strategic culture today.

> 'Australia's history as a settler colony *within* the British Empire fundamentally shapes its sense of security within the Indo-Pacific region. Australia has consistently looked outside of its region for security and sought partners on the explicit basis of political, cultural, and ethnic similarity. Likewise, for 'the British settler colonies in North America, and in Oceania, Anglo-Saxon heritage predetermined governmental and civilisational success' (Clayton and Newman 2023: 503, emphasis added).

For both Australia and the United States, real and imagined umbilical ties to Britain paired with violent civilising projects in difficult, new geographies. These worked *together* – the emotional comforts derived from a notion of connection to the motherland worked in active juxtaposition to the affective alterity of pacifying, existential violence against perceived barbarous races. Transnational whiteness in combination with bloody, racialised settler colonialism helped to forge the idea of an Anglo-Saxon race and an Anglosphere. In short, the '"Anglosphere" as a concept cannot be removed, nor can race more broadly, from its colonial structure' and the racialised violence that defined and shaped it (ibid., drawing on Browning and Tonra 2009):

> 'The preservation of the racial purity of (or racial dominance in) the Australian state, as with the American state, was linked to the preservation of civilisation itself and manifested politically through restrictive immigration policies and domestic policies which attributed rights according to racial designation. The privileging of race over citizenship/subjecthood disrupted the political sway of identity attached to the multi-racial British Empire, and provided a common identity among the Anglo-American world' (Clayton and Newman 2023).

Clayton and Newman (2023) trace Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds' work, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, to detail 'a history of intraracial solidarity among the Anglo-Saxon states which proactively sought to do two things: to distinguish the settler colonial, self-governing states of the former British Empire — now Commonwealth — and to defend the (imagined) racial homogeneity of the [Anglosphere] states' (see also Sen 2024 on NATO). Lake and Reynolds (2008: 3, 2, 12) chart the 'spread of whiteness as a transnational form of racial identification' – a 'tidal wave' of 'colour consciousness' – that leads all the way to Iraq, as 'old fears' take 'new forms'. By the time Churchill delivered his noted 'Iron Curtain' speech, critics such as W.E.B. Du Bois were arguing that Anglosphere cooperation was about maintaining 'the 'colour line' – that is, for quashing the freedom of black and brown people on a global scale' - 'a more highly developed kind of benevolent Anglo-American imperialism', as Paul Robeson put it (see Vucetic 2017). Or, alternatively – an Anglobal colour line. Vucetic notes that such critics were correct about Churchill's 'racial supremacism', which was in keeping with evidence in his personal and political biographies, if left largely unspoken publicly. His 'privileging white people, particularly fellow Anglo-Saxons' reflect Churchill's 'early socialisation into the now forgotten world of 'Greater Britain' (Vucetic 2017). Indeed, as Du Bois notes, by this stage an 'obsessive belief in the superiority of "whiteness" had taken hold on both sides of the Atlantic', with a particular popularity reserved for the 'white Germanic races' and especially the '"Anglo-Saxon" variant of whiteness', complemented by appeals to the 'English race' or 'the Teutons' (in Bell 2020:

32; see also appendix 5v). Critics were largely ignored, with Anglospherists 'viewing Anglo-Saxon supremacy as self-evident' (ibid.).

For Bell (and others), therefore, the Anglosphere can and should be understood as an attempt to institutionalise white supremacy globally. Indeed, 'advocacy of transnational whiteness, and Anglo-Saxonism in particular, was popular across the Angloworld' (Bell 2020: 30). Australia's 1901 White Australia policy was a particularly visible example of 'the transnational ideology of white supremacism [that] infused political culture in the United States and the British Empire'; 'people excluded from the embrace of whiteness were largely absent from the unionist discourse' (Bell 2020: 30). However, it is also clear that whiteness was a slippery and evolving concept. For Clayton and Newman (2023, drawing on Saunders), the 'Anglosphere is fundamentally a racially exclusionary project, designed to further white interests in a non-white region while explicitly excluding non-white neighbours' (see also The Age 2021a – appendix 5c; as well as Tate 1961 on an Australasian Monroe Doctrine). It relied, however, on the transferability of whiteness, transnationally, enabled by its Anglo-Saxon and Greater Britain ideational precursors (e.g. Lake and Reynolds 2008). It was also enabling of difference to Others, as impoverished whites could become white settlers (e.g. Clayton and Newman 2023). As much as common tongue (appendix 5t, u, v), the birth of the Anglosphere idea, therefore, relied upon the incorporation of frontier settlers at the edge of Greater Britain's empire under the banner of Anglo-Saxon whiteness (see Jones 2021 on AUKUS' reproduction of this role – in appendix 5g).

Violence and victory: White military supremacy

In this section, I argue that the Anglo race was defined by its whiteness and the possibility of mutual alterity to, first, racialised indigenous communities and, second, a range of external enemy Others. In both cases, the starkness of binary juxtaposition to Otherness – and the relational alterity that it engendered – was exacerbated by the bloody violence of encounters and the military imbalance of these engagements. Analysing both, together if sequentially, requires some disciplinary un-learning; a need to 're-think the discipline's constitutive distinction between 'war' and 'violence' (Sabaratnam 2020), particularly where the coding of historical events into one or another category have been as a result of racialised categorisations and thinking about whose deaths count, thus enabling an epistemology of 'innocence'. The Anglosphere's frontier wars are a good example here, since they are often downgraded from the markers of 'war' and 'foreign policy', despite being just that (e.g. Caso 2020, 2024). These frontier wars were vital to the Anglosphere's foundations, in both geography and mentality. As Roy Harvey Pearce put it, Englishmen 'found in America not only an uncivilized environment, but uncivilised men – natural men, as it was said, living in a natural world' (Selby et al. 2022: 104). The same was true in Australia. Alongside disease and displacement, the extermination of indigenous Americans and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians took place through a series of violent, racialised frontier conflicts that shaped early Anglosphere thinking. The often one-sidedness of battles was read to confirm and reify the inexorable march of Darwinist evolution towards a white Anglo-Saxon apex. These frontier wars of annihilation were reaching their conclusion in the 1890s, as the idea of an Anglo-Saxon race was fermenting in the minds of political elites.

Racial difference, white supremacy, and military supremacy were mutually reinforcing in the Anglosphere's formative period. As Watson (2001: 457) notes, 'Theodore Roosevelt asserted an ontological connection between white superiority and what he imagined as a European martial pre-disposition. He divided the world between civilized and savage races and insisted that war between "American and Indian, Boer and Zulu, Cossack and Tartar, New Zealander and Maori" brought out the greatness of Europeans'. For Roosevelt, 'The most ultimately righteous of all wars is a war with savages, though it is apt to be also the most terrible and inhuman. The rude, fierce settler who drives the savage from the land lays all civilized mankind under debt to him' (cited in Acharya 2022: 32). The transferability of a transnational Anglo-Saxon whiteness was linked indelibly to violent and exterminating conflict, which was nonetheless entirely naturalised through pseudo-scientific rationales – Social Darwinism and Malthusian population checks on 'savage nations' foremost amongst them (Selby 2022: 108). As Churchill (1937, in Attar 2010) put it:

> 'I do not admit [...] that a great wrong has been done to the Red Indians of America or the black people of Australia. I do not admit that a wrong has been done to these people by the fact that a stronger race, a higher-grade race, a more worldly-wise race to put it that way, has come in and taken their place' (see also, on Churchill's links to AUKUS, Morrison 2021 – appendix 5q).

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Anglosphere's 'Aborigines' were largely seen to be 'problems of the past, solved according to nature's rule of the survival of the fittest' (Sinclair Kennedy, *The Pan-Angles*, p. 27 in Bell 2020: 30). However, with US and Australian frontier wars largely concluded around the turn of the twentieth century, racialised conflict nonetheless remained a dominant mode of Anglospheric identity production, albeit now through recurrent coalition warfare overseas. Indeed, twentieth century conflicts can, in significant part, be understood as enabled by and the logical extension of the frontier wars upon which the Anglosphere was founded. Three factors are important to emphasise. First, these wars tended to matter for global politics; often they are tied to international order, with their outcomes impacting the polarity and structure of geopolitics. Drawing on Paul Reinsch, Bell (2020: 31) has spoken of 'the allure of world-ordering joint action'. That allure is far stronger when you know you outgun potential opponents; when fighting First Man, rather than the Last (Selby 2022: 111). Second, then, they are regular and one sided; military supremacy is taken for granted in the vast majority of the Anglosphere's conflicts. The challenges of World Wars I and II were the exception, not the rule, as the old Anglosphere coalition repeatedly confronts militarily inferior enemies, in theatres such as Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. Third, the politics of repeated, racialised, and consequential coalition warfare is exceptionally powerful through its deep affective resonances. The intoxicating affirmation of military imbalance inspires racialisation in much the same way as Shilliam and others have noted that the slave trade *inevitability* inspired racist and white supremacist attitudes (whilst also coming to rely upon them). The effect is the opposite of trauma – a heady, affective affirmation of pre-eminence, repeated intermittently, at the apex of an international order created by, and to serve, proclaimed Anglo values.

As Bartholomees (2010: 80-1) notes, victory is a complicated, political, subjective, and constructed term. It helps to consider war fighting at tiered levels – tactical, operational,

strategic – but, even then, perception and post hoc narration are key (ibid). In Vietnam, for example, few would consider the US and Australia to have achieved a strategic victory, despite winning every major battle of the war. Overwhelming military superiority and the tactical victories it enables was, as one North Vietnamese officer put it, 'irrelevant' to an enemy that could simply outlast the occupying force (ibid: 82). The same could equally be said of Afghanistan and Iraq, and yet few would argue that the Taleban or Revolutionary Guard mounted equal resistance to the coalition's overwhelming application of force on the ground. In Iraq, shock and awe – in conjunction with the sight of Saddam's army fleeing up the banks of the Euphrates in their underwear – demonstrated overwhelming Anglosphere military might, even while weapons of mass destruction would prove elusive. In Afghanistan, the Taleban were toppled quickly, even if finding bin Laden would take almost a decade. Victory, therefore, is a misleading term for our purposes, here. What I am talking about, instead, is the formative role of military dominance on the battlefield, through overwhelming technological superiority. The experience of recurrent, devastating, racialised supremacy in combat serves to co-constitute the Anglosphere idea and alliance, just as the frontier wars of the nineteenth century did previously. Through the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, military supremacy has sustained and furthered white supremacy, generating deep, tacit affective bonds in the Anglosphere community. The psychological effect of recurrent racialised violence and repeatedly dominating on the battlefield are the twin arms of a heady affective resonance that helps to hold the Anglosphere community together in a troubling embrace.

In the US, UK, and Australia, victory in world-ordering warfare is a common, central, and unifying theme of national identity narratives. Caso (2024: 14), for example, describes how 'the Australian civic spirit is intrinsically martial'. These are, after all, three 'warrior states', with a taste and talent for imperial warfare, whereby unity arises, in significant part, through repeated bloodshed as brothers in arms, against racialised Others. That these wars were recurrent, one sided, and consequential imbued them with deep affective qualities. Akin to the visceral embodying of crises and their associated cultural resonances, the recurrent vanquishing of racialised Others on the battlefield is at the heart of the Anglosphere's ontology. The psychology of fighting and winning – violence and victory – as a 'band of brothers' against racialised Others – unites the AUKUS states as an Anglo-Saxon community, forged through familial kinship and a culture of military honour that extends the frontier ever outwards (e.g. adapting Nisbett 2019; also, Mead 2002; Fischer 1989; see also appendix 5bb). It is a form of 'regeneration through violence' (Slotkin 2000) based on 'affective familiarisation':

> 'War as both a physical and perceptual stimuli can trigger visceral emotions, somatically and cognitively connected as anger, fear, and hatred while at the same time drawing from socio-historical understandings of a particular social identity' (Campbell 2015: 14).

Campbell's (2015) thesis usefully highlights the automaticity of a combined affect and habit that finds symbolic reproduction in narratives which enable collective memory of the visceral, emotional experience of vanquishing opponents. The 'somatic residue' of conflict's consciousness helps to bind the AUKUS states together (ibid, drawing on Freud and Torgovnick 2008). This was true during the frontier wars of the nineteenth century and extended into the conflicts of the twentieth and twenty-first. As Timothy (2021 – appendix 5m) notes, succinctly, 'AUKUS is a partnership between allies who have, for over a century,

sent soldiers to fight and die together'. And, as Boris Johnson (2021 – appendix 5n) put it, 'I speak for the House when I say that I have no hesitation about trusting Australia, a fellow maritime democracy, joined to us by blood and history, which stood by Britain through two world wars at immense sacrifice'. Likewise, MP Daniel Kawczynski (2021 – appendix 5o) explained that he 'would describe AUKUS as historical allies joining forces again, reinforcing their military bonds, tempered over the heat of many conflicts'.

Anglosphere aphasia and sanitised shibboleths

In the theatres of modern conflict, recurrent coalition warfare continues to feed the idea of white, Anglo supremacy, and sustain the idea of the Anglosphere, just as the affective resonances of racialised frontier wars did previously. Today, however, compared to the conflicts of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, wars are infrequently narrated with explicit reference to racial markers (see, however, Thobani 2007 for contemporary examples). This change began around World War II, as 'white-supremacist concepts of race … informed organic nationalist notions of culture and nationhood' (Watson 2001: 458). Sanitised shibboleths – more palatable codewords such as language, culture, values – largely supplanted explicitly racist tropes. 'Emphasis on culture or language did not negate race; linguistic racialism had a long history, and the traits of the English-speaking people were often seen as expressed by and traveling with Anglo-Saxon blood' (Kramer 2002). For former Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer (2021 – see appendix 5r), it might be 'unfashionable to invoke Churchill's language of a fraternal association between the English-speaking peoples' but that did not negate its contemporary relevance. As Vucetic (2019) argues, 'by switching to the more neutral-sounding 'English-speaking peoples' in his writings and speeches, Churchill did not abandon his Victorian views so much as repackage them for mass consumption in the modern, 'post-colonial' era—a point emphatically made by Robeson, Du Bois and other African American critics of his speech'. Appeals to an 'English-speaking race' (appendix 5v), via talk of 'British character' (appendix 5z), bridges the gap from explicit naming of the 'Anglo-Saxon race' through to more sanitised appeals to language, culture, and institutions (appendix 5aa). Toni Morrison has articulated this repackaging as a norm against noticing whiteness (see Vitalis 2000). Far from helping, however, 'race-free discourses … keep international and domestic racial orders firmly entrenched' (Thompson 2013) or, as Lipsitz (2019: 23) puts it, 'race neutrality preserves white supremacy'.

The 'basis of AUKUS according to the participant governments was the shared values and political culture of the members and intensifying the integration of their Defence Forces to strengthen security in the Indo-Pacific. [However,] The inclusion of *these* member-states to engage in an increasingly insecure and overwhelmingly non-white region belies a more exclusionary concept of Self and Other' (Clayton and Newman 2023: 6-7). Absence and silence are *productive*. Silence is about the *active* rendering of information *inaccessible*: a 'productive expression of agency, rather than … its disempowered absence' (Cooke and Dingli 2018). This understanding is appropriate here, dealing with AUKUS as a hegemonic coalition, rather than marginalised voice. As Cooke and Dingli (2018) show, silences are 'renderable as enablers, openers, and mobilisers of action', offering the 'possibility of (re)collectivism, (re)inscription, and (re)configuration'. Within this particular understanding,

silence is purposive and communicative – less to do with yielding, exclusion, and subjugation than omission and concealment (Ibid; Schweiger and Tomiak 2022). As Guillaume and Schweiger (2018) elaborate, silence is *doing* and constitutive of identity.

Today, 'racist discourse' can operate 'through a rhetorically silent whiteness' (Crenshaw 1997: 270). This silence constitutes a *denial* of structural racialised conditions of possibility (ibid: 256). Silence, here, reflects the power of AUKUS states to deny racial underpinnings by omitting them. Their authorised justifications of the new security partnership 'sanction the rhetorical frameworks through which white individuals make sense of and justify' themselves (ibid). While silence here is oratorical or rhetorical, it has ideological underpinnings and implications. 'The absence of speech about whiteness signifies that it exists in our discursive silences', reifying it as a natural condition (ibid: 260). 'Whiteness is protected by silence' (Ibid: 272); even if silence is principled, it is unwittingly complicit (Ibid: 273). Derek Gregory (2004) has spoken of the West's 'colonial amnesia' and its role in making possible the interventions of the twenty-first century. I argue, here, that, even if accidental or well intentioned, colonial amnesia is an important, formative component of the AUKUS partnership. However, at this collective level – the level of states and the AUKUS security pact – the term aphasia is more appropriate, since it brings with it a greater intentionality and deliberate veiling which is appropriate to a partnership that actively hides – by attempting to forget – its troubling roots (see di Angelo 2018 on speaking out about racism and individual agency). This 'collective inability to speak about race' constitutes a 'racial aphasia' – an intentional forgetting (Thompson 2013).

Aphasia, then, as a concept, carries a greater intent, whereas 'amnesia disavows intent' (Thompson 2013). Like Gregory's 'colonial amnesia', 'recognizing the reality of racial aphasia links our racist pasts to the still racist present, perhaps connected by collective silences as much as by the persistence of oppression, domination and inequality' (Thompson 2013). But, for Stoler (2011: 128), aphasia is active dissociation – not a matter of ignorance or absence, but rather a 'dismembering, a difficulty in speaking, a difficulty in generating a vocabulary that associates words and concepts to appropriate things... a difficulty in retrieving a both conceptual and lexical vocabularies … and comprehending what is spoken'. Aphasia 'therefore emphasises the "calculated forgetting […] obstruction of discourse, language and speech" which form the basis of the mainstream silence on race and colonialism in IR theory' (Thompson, cited in Clayton and Newman 2023). Key to this silencing (and forgetting) is the role of the sanitised shibboleth:

> 'Part of the process of this racial aphasia is the transference of the content of racial division — along with its power hierarchy and negative difference — onto the concept of "culture". As the bio-essentialist basis of racial division was proved baseless, Eurocentrism stepped forward to take the baton of Anglo-Saxon supremacy into the new age of IR theory. As Hobson put it: "Eurocentric institutionalism locates difference purely in terms of culture and institutions". The narratives and content of racism were maintained but the context changed to cater to a new political international climate in which overt displays of … racism … were no longer tolerable' (Clayton and Newman, 2023).

Clayton and Newman's (2023) speculation on AUKUS was empirically confirmed by our interviews. Across thirty-five interviews on AUKUS and the Anglosphere, only one

interviewee spoke explicitly about race, and they were one of our academic participants. No diplomats, government or policy participants spoke about race. The one (academic) interviewee who raised race did so to explain the Anglosphere, noting the settler colonialism of empire and the fact that 'politically' race is not discussed because:

> 'that's a very uncomfortable kind of discussion to open up. But I think the fact is that the core of the Anglosphere is white' (see appendix 4a for full, long, quote).

They noted that even the term 'Anglosphere' does not get 'spoken about much' but remains 'there quite implicitly … always kind of bubbling under the surface' (ibid). It is this 'Anglosphere aphasia' that I foreground, here:

> 'Boris Johnson talked about … the US or Australia as being a kindred nation where the connections are human. They sort of dance around saying we're all white and English-speaking. They won't say that, but they use these sort of euphemisms to talk about that, basically, and to talk about the Anglosphere. These are often places that our closest partners, if that's the phrase that often comes out, is they're often white English-speaking countries. The term like-minded partners comes up quite a lot, but I think that's usually code for democracy. So, that can be applied to places like South Korea, Japan and other places. But I think when the language gets what I would call a bit more uncomfortable, it's when we're talking about, yeah, these kindred nations, that we have connections on a human level that's quite troubling to me, but I think that's what they mean. And I think that's code for the Anglosphere' (appendix 4a).

'Anglosphere aphasia' and 'sanitised shibboleths' thus go hand-in-hand, enabling and reproducing the Anglosphere *through* its simultaneous and deliberate omissions. Silence enables the continuity of the 'broader Pax Anglo Saxonica tradition', from which AUKUS emerged (appendix 4d). Leaving unspoken the formative affective binding of white military supremacy enabled the development of AUKUS – a security partnership designed to ensure that imbalance remains and continues to structure world politics in favour of the old Anglosphere coalition.

Repeatedly, interviewees emphasised AUKUS' sanitised shibboleths. Similarities in temperament and strategic culture (appendix 4g), shared history (appendix 4b), the notion that the AUKUS states acted as 'second brains' for each other (appendix 4h), extensive interoperability (appendix 4f), the deep symmetries and synchronisation of political and defence structures (appendix 4f), and the deeply personalised collective memory of sacrifice in war (appendix 4e) were all mentioned. But the unpalatable foundations of these ties went unspoken. One interviewee did note that there is no 'alternative narrative' to that of 'back to the glorious days of … when we were a great power and Britannia rules the waves' (appendix 4b). Generally, however, there was concurrence with the politically correct formulation of the rationale that AUKUS reflected an 'aligned vision of what a rules-based international order looks like' (appendix 4c), in lieu of discussion as to how that vision arose and what it might do. Interviewees were confident in the long-term and specific implications of the AUKUS pact to ensure cooperation for a generation (appendix 4b) and guarantee a coordinated response to potential conflict in and around Taiwan (appendix 4i). A commitment to act together was articulated with recourse to familial kinship - the 'most intimate partnership possible' – but not its racialised underpinnings. Critique was apparent, but delivered in terms of strategic implications and straitjacketing, rather than an evaluation of foundations. For example, it was noted that Australia had in effect – and at significant expense – culminated a 'multidecade effort to integrate ourselves effectively into US force

structure' by becoming an 'adjunct to the US Pacific fleet' (appendix 4i; see also Canberra Times 2021 in appendix 5d).

As Pears (2022) has argued, whiteness – and a norm of white (military) supremacy – is protected through silence, as aphasia ensures the norm perpetuates. It is not just that individuals (volitionally) decline to speak about race, although some surely do; rather, it is that speaking out is not an option due to the structural operation of whiteness. Race is rendered invisible to AUKUS elites precisely because whiteness is a naturalised identity marker. That this marker operates with such power is both confirmed by and indeed due to the fact it need not be spoken.

Together, white (military) supremacy and silent whiteness help to underpin a specific form of Anglosphere aphasia, in which sanitised shibboleths re-code historical narratives of racialised violence in terms more palatable for contemporary political relations. AUKUS therefore marks continuity, not change; it is the latest formalisation of long-established patterns of military cooperation. That military cooperation has played out in the racialised conflicts of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, for which the ground was set in the frontier wars of the nineteenth. The Anglosphere aphasia of AUKUS elites today perpetuates the affective and intoxicating allure of (white) military supremacy that helps to underpin the political possibility of a partnership built upon and to defend the Anglobal colour line.

Conclusion

This article has developed a novel analysis of race in world-order building, theorising the active and combined roles of whiteness, silence, and recurrent racialised coalition warfare in producing AUKUS' 'Anglobal security ontology'. The article has shown, first, one of the ways in which race is at the heart of world-order-building efforts – both historically and in the contemporary era – even though it has often been displaced in International Relations, as a discipline, by a sanitised focus on power and order (e.g., Acharya 2022; Persaud and Walker 2001; Sarabatnam's 2020; Shilliam 2023). Second, despite the critiques of adversaries, race remains unspoken in elite justifications of AUKUS, both in public and private. A 'silent whiteness' (Crenshaw 1997) pervades, despite the 'old Anglosphere coalition's' problematic roots (Bell 2020; Clayton and Newman 2023; Holland 2020; Vucetic 2011b). This silence is productive and political (e.g. Donnelly 2019; Guillaume and Schweiger 2019). Third, AUKUS' stated intentions to maintain liberal international order through military supremacy are a continuation of Anglosphere policy that has been racialised since foundation – through wars, both at 'home' and abroad.

Whiteness is not just a naturalised background condition; whiteness is an active racial marker that underpins world-order-building efforts, explicitly and tacitly (Howell and Richter-Montpetit 2020; Sabaratnam's 2020). The affective unity resulting from whiteness' infusion with bloody, repeated coalition warfare is exceptionally powerful, comprising an important part of AUKUS' 'imperial conditions of possibility'. Moreover, in conjunction, the intersection of the formative affective politics of race and whiteness, and the political productivity of silence, risks AUKUS' *continued* complicity in imperial projects (e.g. Vitalis 2016).

To more fully explore these conditions of possibility, and AUKUS' affective underpinnings, a critical research agenda is required that goes beyond geostrategy, geopolitics, and technology potentials. This must be paired to a call for open public and policy debate that acknowledges how a preference for terms such as culture or values enable the declaration of a non- or anti-racist security partnership, while continuing to include/exclude based on affective affinities built on a history of racialised alliance warfare and its associated politics of Othering (e.g., Lentin 2008). Given Pears' (2022) warning – speaking out is not an option due to the structural operation of whiteness – the creation of this space must be active and inclusive by design to create a structure conducive to dialogue. Such efforts will not necessarily lead to inexorable calls for AUKUS' disbandment. Rather, facing pressing global challenges, a critical research agenda and open debate may in fact further AUKUS' aims by enhancing its legitimacy.

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