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“Anglo-American power in the wake of Brexit and America First: A crisis at the heart of the liberal international order”

## Abstract

Britain and America the architects of the post-1945 Liberal International Order are in relative decline and have lost confidence in the LIO to retain their dominant status in relation to the rise of non-western powers including China. Hence, both Britain and America are trying to revive the Anglosphere by reasserting their power and authority amid racial, security, escalating tensions, and increasing danger of military conflict, especially given Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The AUKUS trilateral military pact, alongside the long-established Anglospheric ‘Five Eyes’ system, and the Quad, marks a significant step in the shift from broad ‘conengagement’ of China to a more militarized and cyber-securitized selective containment and rollback strategy while remaining broadly embedded in economic, commercial and financial interdependency with China. Anglosphere-EU relations also exhibit ambivalent tendencies. We demonstrate these anxieties by analysing the xenophobic, conflictual, pragmatism of the Trump administration; the policy continuities of the Biden administration; and the policies of ‘Global Britain’. The article shows that the Anglosphere’s campaign against China’s rising status is not a new cold war but is best understood in Gramscian-Kautskyan terms as ‘managed enmity’ within a turbulent, competitive but interdependent system. Furthermore, neither liberal nor realist theories grasp the complexities of Sino-Anglospheric relations because they fail to uncover the Anglosphere’s global historical, racialised, and cultural roots or its ideological power that has forged notions of trust and institutional primacy and cooperation amongst its racialised core membership.

Key words: Anglosphere; AUKUS; America First; Global Britain; China; EU; Gramsci; Kautsky; Race.

## INTRODUCTION

New research reveals a growing interest in the role of the Anglosphere as a global power (Wellings et al, 2019). Despite being difficult to define, the Anglosphere – alliance, strategic partnership, network, <https://www.cips-cepi.ca/more-than-a-spy-alliance-the-five-eyes-today/>) – there is no question of the its growing significance as the global distribution of power shifts towards the East, especially China. We argue that the Anglosphere is an *imperial transnational historic bloc* of powers rooted in nineteenth century racialised Anglo-Saxonism, British imperialism and the white dominions of the Commonwealth. After 1945, the Anglo-American alliance forged in WWII consolidated in the ‘rules-based liberal international order’ (Vucetic, 2011; Elkins, 2022). The Anglosphere represents dense networks exclusive to its five core powers (Britain, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand) that cooperate in intelligence, immigration, counterterrorism, military security, etc. Historically, the networks have been inward-looking and operational, with indirect external effects. However, as the global hierarchies of power shift, the Anglosphere is increasingly active as a global force within existing multilateral institutions as well as towards strategic competitors such as China and Russia (Legrand, 2020; <https://www.cips-cepi.ca/more-than-a-spy-alliance-the-five-eyes-today/>). This is borne out by the recent barring or restricting from the Anglosphere’s 5G roll outs relevant technologies from China’s Huawei (<https://www.npr.org/2022/05/20/1100324929/canada-bans-chinas-huawei-technologies-from-5g-networks>). The Anglosphere is therefore a security community, a cultural-linguistic English-speaking bloc with shared blood ties, rooted in empire, war, and the liberal international order (LIO). Its significance

intensified in the President Trump and PM Johnson era – of Brexit and America First – as the LIO has loosened due to internal tensions and global power shifts (Vucetic, 2021).

We argue that realist and liberal-internationalist theories legitimise the liberal order, characterise the Anglosphere as a force for good, as an equally elite and mass-led hegemonic project, or a mixture of both. Our theoretical approach recognises those approaches but highlights the imperialistic, racialised, and hierarchical foundations of the Anglosphere. We underscore the growing interest in racial, colonial and class-based analysis of global politics. Significantly, our approach contributes to a deeper understanding of Anglo-American power, regarding their declining position in the global system, and their anxieties about decline that is prevalent in Anglospheric discourses about America First, Global Britain and attitudes to non-white powers like China, in addition to the European Union (International Strategic Analysis, 2020; [https://www.isa-world.com/news/?tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=575&cHash=4527ce6f1a6634cbec0f2c26d6f7f00e](https://www.isa-world.com/news/?tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=575&cHash=4527ce6f1a6634cbec0f2c26d6f7f00e)).

The notion that the Anglo-Americans, the architects of the post-1945 order, are declining and have lost confidence in the LIO's ability to maintain their relative dominance over emerging non-western powers, is growing in its significance (Parmar, 2019). By extension, the Anglosphere's leaders seek to reassert their authority due to racial, security and economic challenges, along with Russia's invasion of the Ukraine, which could lead to wider military conflict. Initiatives including the AUKUS trilateral military pact (between Australia, UK, and US), alongside the Anglosphere's 'Five Eyes' and related networks, the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue between the US, India, Australia, and Japan), and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (14 states including US, Australia, India, Japan, New Zealand, among other mostly Asian states) represents a major shift from broad 'conengagement' of China to a more militarised and cyber-securitised policy designed to contain, rollback and subordinate China, whilst attempting to maintain economic, commercial and financial interdependency with China (Oliver Turner and Inderjeet Parmar, Eds., *The United States in the Indo-Pacific*, 2020 Manchester UP). Anglosphere-EU relations exhibit similar ambivalent tendencies (ISA, 2020 International Strategic Analysis; "Are the United States and European Union Destined to Break Up?"; [https://www.isa-world.com/news/?tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=575&cHash=4527ce6f1a6634cbec0f2c26d6f7f00e](https://www.isa-world.com/news/?tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=575&cHash=4527ce6f1a6634cbec0f2c26d6f7f00e)). The chapter highlights the continuities and intensification of the racial and xenophobic attitudes of the Trump administration, mirrored by the Biden administration, and reflected by 'Global Britain'. We show that the Anglosphere's campaign to contain China's rise is not a new cold war, but is better understood in Gramscian-Kautskyan terms as a complex effort to 'manage enmity' and conflict, within the context of a competitive interdependent and racialised system. (Shuhong Huo and Inderjeet Parmar, 2020; "'A new type of great power partnership?' Gramsci, Kautsky and the role of the Ford Foundations' transformational elite knowledge networks in China," *Review of International Political Economy* 27, 2, 2020). Overall, we argue that neither liberal nor realist theories explain the complexities of Sino-Anglospheric relations, nor do they correctly recognise the Anglosphere as a racialised global system, founded on historical, military, cultural, material and ideological power. The Anglosphere expresses enduring sentiment, kinship, trust, deep structures, and interests (Wellings et al, 2019).

The chapter begins with a description and analysis of the Anglosphere as a core aspect of transatlantic relations, and the LIO, as it relates to the distribution of global power. We move on to show how the Anglosphere coordinates its dense ecosystem of policy, security, military and intelligence networks through which funds, ideas, people, and policies flow. We then evidence the economic-financial power

dimension of the Anglosphere, before highlighting 'Trumpist' and 'Global Britain' orientation to the world and how elites infuse their ideas in policy outcomes. Finally, we challenge mainstream theoretical explanations of the Anglosphere by drawing on the work of Antonio Gramsci which emphasizes class, racial and imperial hierarchies, embedded in the Anglosphere (Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1971) and Karl Kautsky (Kautsky, "Ultra-imperialism," *Die Neue Zeit*, 1914; <https://www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1914/09/ultra-imp.htm>). Ultimately, we define the Anglosphere as an ultra-imperialist power paradigm, founded on a transnational historic but plastic global order, committed to globalising economies whilst maintaining an Anglo-led interstate system whilst absorbing a 'rising' China and an increasingly assertive EU.

### Understanding the roots of the Anglosphere

At heart, the Anglosphere is a non-treaty-based association of English-speaking people whose original migration from Britain created an enduring diasporic identity. Its core members consist of Britain, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. Although some scholars and government figures view the Anglosphere as a force for good, its history is much more sinister. The Anglosphere is considered a conduit of liberal internationalism, capitalism, and democracy. However, the above is both narrow, historically inaccurate and fails to grasp the Anglosphere's continuing legacies (Kenan Malik, "We should not allow the Anglosphere to distort the history of liberty," *The Guardian* 26 September 2021; <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/sep/25/the-anglosphere-is-just-a-cover-for-the-old-idea-of-white-superiority>). Simply put, the Anglosphere rests on a history of imperialism, colonial violence, and exploitation of indigenous peoples (including genocide). Race, ethnic kinship, and class represent key factors that underpin the transnational relationships which sustain the status of the Anglosphere. Indeed, within academia, elite attitudes regarding the British empire are often decoupled from the exploitative and militaristic roots championed by the British state and its mercantile class' acquisition of territories inhabited by non-whites. 'Whiteness' and 'race' are ignored by the Anglosphere's proponents (Camilla Schofield, "Short Take: Toward a Global History of White Supremacy", n.d; <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/racism-racialisation/transcript-toward-global-history-white-supremacy>).

While membership of the Anglosphere reputedly extends beyond its core states, we suggest empire's evolution into 'Commonwealth' was a strategic neo-colonial move by Britain to tacit control over colonial resources to halt Britain's global decline. Domestically, all five nations (despite superficial changes) are led by white elites with a powerful grip on the state apparatus state. The leadership and governance of the Anglosphere reflects its original elitist, racial and cultural foundations. Likewise, most Asian and African states are (generally) peripheral within the world's major governance structures - IMF, World Bank, WTO, G7, among others. Hence, Olusoga argues that the equal inclusion of the non-white majority, in the Anglosphere is an imperial fantasy (ref), despite, as Furedi shows, the West's attempts to forget its racist past. The Anglo-Americans were forced to pursue reforms and public relations exercises to maintain their moral authority in the post-1945 world due to the emergence of independent Asian and African nations, and cold war competition with the USSR and China (Furedi, 1998; Dudziak, 2011, Ledwidge, 2013). These post 1945 domestic and international reforms (Ledwidge, 2013) represented strategically-managed change as opposed to uprooting the mentalities, structures, and networks of the racialised-class system. Paradoxically, in regard to China, whose rise and continuous growth threatens Western hegemony, whilst also creating opportunities, drives the Anglosphere to 'congame' China (Huo and Parmar, 2020).

Given that the Anglosphere is rooted in British but particularly English cultural, linguistic, economic, and racial expansionism (S. Virdee and B McGeever, "Racism, Crisis, Brexit," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41, 10, 2018), it was designed to promote the power and interests of the British diaspora via both limited assimilation and continued hegemonic control. As previously stated the aforementioned changes in the global and domestic landscape prompted shrewd politicians across and beyond the Atlantic to refashion and reformulate their rhetoric on race and culture (after successive challenges from people of colour both domestically and internationally) which fuelled the apparent emergence of an egalitarian and inclusive international system that touted the rule of law, good governance, free trade, racial equality, and capitalism (Parmar, 2016; Morey, 2021)<sup>1</sup>. Shifts in domestic and international politics forced the transnational Anglo-American elite to change their image and rhetoric in order to direct their attention towards a new enemy. The post-1945 speeches of Churchill and other anglophile internationalists presented the Anglosphere as a bulwark against the totalitarianism of the emergent Soviet Union (Srdjan Vucetic, "The Fulton address as racial discourse," in A.P. Dobson and S. Marsh, eds., *Churchill and the Anglo-American Special Relationship*; Routledge, 2017). To summarise, the Anglosphere was never truly disconnected from the staunch racial hierarchy derived from Anglo-Saxonism that, despite some nuances, was akin to Nazi 'herrenvolk' theory. We argue that the contradictions and continuing legacies of race, class and cultural hegemony are still interwoven into the domestic and foreign policies of 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain and America. The Anglosphere stood for, and to an extent still does, the following:

1. White supremacy or cultural hegemony
2. The alleged civilisational superiority of English-speaking whites which legitimised colonialism and continues to validate their standing in the global hierarchy
3. The belief that the English have played a profoundly important and benign role in international affairs via capitalism, diplomacy, and military power
4. That English exceptionalism has made them naturally suited to wielding global power

Those characteristics explain why the settler outposts of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States engaged in the large-scale cultural and physical eradication, and subjugation, of 'their' native populations. It is impossible to separate White supremacy from the historic construction of the Anglosphere nations, nor is it possible to separate their contemporary foreign and domestic policies from the current "culture wars". Although the Anglosphere is Eurocentric, it is specifically British or English, which explains both Brexit and the Brexiters' frustration with the EU due to their failure to leverage the EU to promote British interests (Virdee and McGeever, 2018). This indicates Britain's historic desire to create an alternative transnational Anglocentric global power bloc. However, it would be naïve to ignore the divergent historical and contemporary tensions that currently reflect the specific interests of the Anglosphere's states. However, the racial and ethno-centric model of Anglophile power politics suggests that cultural, economic, political and military challenges to Western racial hegemony are prioritised as *threats to the old*, English-speaking power bloc and thus are deemed *antithetical to the international rules-based order*. Indeed, the rise of non-white nations is perceived as problematic as

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<sup>1</sup> Those concepts are promoted as universal principles but are actually ideas and norms that validate and reinforce an Anglospheric worldview. Inderjeet Parmar, "Racial and imperial thinking in international theory and politics: Truman, Attlee, and the Korean War," *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 18 (2) 2016, pp.351-369; see also, Maribel Morey, *White Philanthropy: Carnegie Corporation's An American Dilemma and the Making of a White World Order* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2021).

their racial and cultural identities challenged established norms (Alexander Barder, *Global Race War: International Politics and Racial Hierarchy*, OUP, 2021). Historically, the ascendance of America or other European powers is decidedly more palatable than the rise of China whose expansion has been characterised as the “yellow peril” (Oliver Turner, *American Images of China*; Routledge, 2014). In addition to China, Russia, Iran, Pakistan and India, are similarly viewed as threats to the old order first as a possible alternative power bloc, and secondly due to their non-white credentials, a dire civilizational threat to the established order. Demographic factors such as declining birth rates among whites in contrast to the population growth of non-white populations in the world are seen as problematic. The above is exemplified by US white nationalists’ fixation regarding ‘replacement theory’ and the ‘swamping’ metaphors employed in discourses on immigration. This, coupled with the increasing strength of the BRICS’ economies, has provoked overt and covert fears for the survival of the post-1945 Western hegemonic system.

Rather than assuming that the Anglosphere is a force for good, IR scholars must be more critical of the Anglosphere’s conceptual frameworks, institutional logic, and the identity profiles of its global networks. Scholars should show how the Anglosphere’s hidden or overt racialised and ethno-centric worldview impacts on the content of both domestic and foreign policy, and on a variety of other issues, such as immigration, race relations, and neo-colonial exploitation of weaker nations. Such issues are reflected in the contemporary ideological conflicts related to race, class and the Left-Right schisms in Western politics. All of the above have found expression in Brexit and the right-wing white nationalism peddled during the Trump presidency. Trump’s anti-immigrant statements regarding Africans and Mexicans rest on the foundational racial and cultural logic of the Anglosphere. This attitude was crudely displayed by the Western media’s coverage of Ukrainian refugees in the wake of the Russian attack of 2022 – who they referred to as “blond, blue-eyed, relatively civilised, European,” and not Syrian or Iraqi, etc (Inderjeet Parmar, “A humane analysis of a violent international order,” forthcoming 2022, Forum on “Putin’s Ukraine Aggression,” *International Politics Reviews*). Here, the global challenges to Western hegemony might explain why the Anglosphere has gained more political and conceptual currency in recent years (Wellings and Mycock, 2019; Alex Lo, “A desperate call for an ‘Anglosphere’ against a rising China, *South China Morning Post*, 9 February 2021; <https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3121169/desperate-call-anglosphere-against-rising-china>).

Given that mainstream IR theories generally ignore the significance of race and colonialism in global politics (Anievas, Manchanda, and Shilliam, Eds., *Race and Racism in International Relations*, 2015; Gani and Marshall, Eds., *Race and Imperialism in International Relations, International Affairs*, 2021; <https://academic.oup.com/ia/issue/98/1>; Barder, 2021; Ledwidge, 2013), the Anglosphere provides an opportunity to understand this highly significant international phenomenon, which allows further theorising regarding the synthesised influence of neglected transnational ideas, experiences and practices. The Anglosphere then represents a system of comprehensive and securitised power – an imperial transnational historic bloc – which quite possibly attained full spectrum dominance in the past. It is hard to define, there are disagreements over its membership – over its aims or whether it can survive in our new world disorder, but the Anglosphere is alive as an idea, material reality, and operational in both formal and informal transnational elite networks. Whether it is an imagined community or not its historical pedigree and world-historical influence, make it a powerful international entity.

Still, despite ‘shared ‘blood ties’ and (Anglo-)American liberal-internationalist traditions, Trump’s ‘America First-ism’ and, PM Johnson’s post-Brexit Britain, and the Indo-Pacific region’s security framework, challenged the Anglospheric alliance. However, irrespective of challenges, adherents and critics suggest that what the core powers of Anglosphere ‘do’ is wage and win wars and build the governing structures that ‘order’ the world, echoing the work of Mead’s *God and Gold: Britain, America, and the Making of the Modern World* (2007).

We suggest that racial Anglo-Saxonism is the hidden ‘ghost in the machine’, not necessarily intended to be up front and centre due to its controversial hierarchical political character. And that pragmatic, softly spoken Anglospherism is powerful and consequential, but quintessentially English and outwardly genteel. It is Nye’s (2004, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*) soft, hard, and smart power rolled up into one multi-dimensional force. The Anglosphere is an almost perfect embodiment of the intangible, institutional, coercive and consensual combination that Gramsci calls ‘hegemony’ (Hoare and Nowell-Smith, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* 1971; Lawrence and Wishart).

Here the longevity of Anglospherism is its promise of opening its membership to *acculturated* Anglo-Saxons which is expressed in the American exceptionalist ‘melting pot’ theory of American society and the outward multi-raciality of Britain and the British commonwealth of nations. For example, the rise of Rishi Sunak and the cohort of non-white Conservatives suggest that anyone can eventually become an Anglo-Saxon (Parmar, 2016), even if enduring systemic racism helps perpetuate the structures of white hegemony.

### **The Anglosphere – its operational system of security, intelligence and policy networks**

Legrand (2019; 2020) highlights 36 operational networks within the Anglosphere, that convene regular meetings and conferences led by senior elected and civil service officials. These networks preside over policing, social welfare, internal affairs, cyber-security, infrastructure, education, borders, immigration, and finance. Their discussions are based on a Memorandum of Understanding – which is neither formally nor legally binding but based on mutual trust. They infrequently issue public reports, court publicity, and are exclusive to the 5 core states. They transcend the nation-state, operate as transnational ruling elite collaborations, cut across notions of soft and hard power, *securitise* practically all aspects of governance, and develop the basis of shared understandings and approaches to global issues, problems and challenges (Vucetic, 2021).

In addition to the Five Eyes intelligence-gathering and sharing programme, officially known as the Technical Cooperation programme, there is a *Quintet of Attorneys-General* that meets annually. The latter hosts the *Five Eyes Law Enforcement* group that is in permanent conference. A *Five Country Conference* brings together immigration and customs officials, encompassing the *Migration 5* and *Border 5*. The *Five Country Ministerial* consists of ministers responsible for national security, transnational crime, terrorism and ‘radicalisation’. It has several sub-networks including the *Critical Five*<sup>2</sup> and the *Aviation 5* that manage critical infrastructure and aviation security matters. The Critical 5 plays a key role in “developing ‘shared narratives’ of security” (Legrand, 2019; *The Architecture of Transnational Policy Transfer*, Routledge, 2021).

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<sup>2</sup> [START HERE](#)

In addition, the Technical Cooperation programme brings together the Anglosphere's military-scientific communities, ABCANZ promotes the interoperability of its armies, AUSCANNZUKUS coordinates its navies, ASIC its air and space interoperability capacities. At the same time, the Anglospheric core powers also collaborate with and maintain interoperability with their NATO allies (<https://web.archive.org/web/20091112150228/http://www.abca-armies.org/History.aspx>). Leading Anglospherists, in the wake of Brexit, also proposed to form CANZUK as the basis of a third pillar of western civilisation alongside the United States and EU (Bell and Vucetic, 2019).<sup>3</sup>

Legrand shows how the various Anglosphere groupings express their common identity, traditions, concept of “cohering global trends and threats”, and strong sense of “Anglospheric solidarity”.<sup>4</sup> Anglosphere members' identity is based on wartime solidarities from World War II onwards, as well as twenty-first century threats. That shared history of solidarity extends into valuing human rights, the rule of law, and trust-building across the Anglosphere. It is clarified in these interactions and rare publicly-available communiques that the central role in balancing security against rights lies with senior officials. It presents the basis on which soft powers and values become embedded in the language of security – become securitised, blurring the line between hard and soft power, material and cultural forms. This is further evidenced when the Anglosphere is described by officials as a globally-interdependent formation facilitating legitimate trade and movement of peoples, in a world of threats, which further binds the bloc. The threats facing the Anglosphere are declared to be, according to Legrand, “global, new and urgent,” requiring deeper and greater cooperation and solidarity. (Legrand, 2019, Wellings and Mycock, p.73).<sup>5</sup>

Legrand (2020) shows the Anglosphere has consciously developed a “two-level strategy that mobilizes a concerted Anglosphere axis of global action for economic or political gain.” The first level is via concerted action within multilateral international organizations, such as the UN or WTO. The second is as “a polylateral international organization to develop regulatory standards and conditions for finance and technology firms, and exert global pressure independent of the diplomatic horse-trading and stalemates found in IOs [international organisations]”. Hence, numerous initiatives emerged focused on Anglosphere members of multilateral organisations and post-Brexit international trade agreements. As the US state department noted, the Anglosphere states have “combined central government spending of more than USD 600bn in 2017... [enabling] ... significant financial leverage and policy options...” (Legrand, 2020).

The Anglosphere states are also united in exerting “political pressure on antagonist states – prominently China and Russia – outside of the political stalemates in traditional IO forums, and second to produce autonomous trade regulation” (Legrand, 2020). For example, Anglosphere foreign ministers released a joint statement against China's Hong Kong security law, while Anglosphere ambassadors jointly condemned Russia's stance on LGBTI rights. Anglosphere pressure is set to intensify especially as “a counter to China's growing influence in telecommunication technology via Huawei and potentially their dominance in energy too.”

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<sup>3</sup> D. Bell and S. Vucetic, “Brexit, CANZUK, and the legacy of empire,” *British Journal of Politics and International Studies* 21, 2 (2019), pp.367-382.

<sup>4</sup> Legrand in Wellings, p.69.

<sup>5</sup> Legrand, p.73.

Hence, by 2022, Huawei had been barred or restricted on security grounds by the Anglosphere (AP, 2022).

There is a “strategic shift” towards an “externalized” attitude “attempting to set the terms of global trade, security and governance. Though these trends are developing, they augur an Anglosphere axis set on international consensus where the group of five can achieve it and contestation where it cannot” (Legrand, 2020). Vucetic adds that China has threatened to “blind” the Five Eyes should they encroach its sovereignty, while Japan has mentioned adding “more eyes” to the traditional core 5 (Vucetic, 2021).

### **Anglosphere as an economic and financial force**

The Anglosphere is also a major global commercial, economic and financial force, with structural power. Although the level of intra-Anglosphere trade has decreased from around two-thirds to one-third of their total trade, it remains vast in world terms (John Ravenhill and Jefferson Huebner, “The political economy of the Anglosphere,” 2019, p.99 – in Wellings and Mycock). Fichtner argues that the Anglosphere plays a key role in promoting the neoliberal model of political economy through its robust and early support of globalisation. Global finance is dominated by the Anglosphere, especially the Wall Street-City of London powerhouses, and intra-Anglosphere financial ties (particularly Anglo-American) constitute the world’s largest bilateral financial ties. Their value stood at \$US4.7 trillion in 2016, which Fichtner calls “persistent structural power”. While New York and London are financially intertwined, the Australian and Canadian systems constitute the Anglosphere’s “outer layer” that helps sustain Anglo-American dominance. The Anglosphere’s share of global GDP is down, however, from 40% in 2009 to 33% in 2015. Conversely, its share of global financial wealth increased from 46% to 54% since 2009 (Jan Fichtner, “The Anglosphere Dominance in Global Finance, and the Consequences of Brexit,” *The Duck of Minerva*, 11 August 2015; <https://www.duckofminerva.com/2016/08/the-anglosphere-dominance-in-global-finance-and-the-consequences-of-brex-it.html>; and Fichtner, “Perpetual decline or persistent dominance? Uncovering Anglo-America’s true structural power in global finance,” *Review of International Studies* 43, 1, 2016)).

The interconnections and linkages of Anglosphere economies with China are also highly significant. For example, British-China total trade in 2020 stood at \$US93.4 billion while the value of foreign investment between them stood at \$US3.5 billion. Total Chinese investment in the UK tops US\$143 billion. There have been discussions regarding British and Chinese membership of the CPTPP as well as a free trade agreement between them (Eric J. Jiang, UK-China investment and trade: what’s next?” International Bar Association, 10 December 2021; <https://www.ibanet.org/dec-21-uk-china-investment>). Australia-China trade is highly significant: between 35-40% of Australia’s exports go to China and 20% of its imports are from China (Satyajit Das, *The Guardian* 31.5.22; “The sheer size of the China trading relationship is why Australia has to share its feasts and famines with Beijing,”; <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/31/the-sheer-size-of-the-china-trading-relationship-is-why-australia-has-to-share-its-feasts-and-famines-with-beijing>). China’s investments in Australia quadrupled from \$US19 billion in 2010 to \$US87 billion in 2016 (Deloitte Access Economics, Partners in Prosperity: The benefits of Chinese investments in Australia,” 2017; <file:///C:/Users/sbbj163/Downloads/deloitte-au-economics-benefits-chinese-investment-in-australia-130617.pdf>). US FDI in China in 2020 alone equalled over US\$120 billion, an increase of 9.4% over 2019, while China’s investments in the US in 2020 totalled US\$38 billion (USTR, 2020; <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/china-mongolia-taiwan/peoples-republic-china>).

The Transatlantic economy remains fundamental to the world economy, generating US\$5.5 trillion in total commercial sales annually, employing around 15 million workers, and accounting for over 35% of world GDP in purchasing power terms. While transatlantic trade equals 25% of global exports, the US and Europe account for 70% of the outward and 60% of the inward stock of FDI. Nevertheless, China's importance for US commercial sales has grown in significance, although at US\$293 billion in 2013, they remained less than the equivalent in Ireland (US\$313 billion). But US affiliate income levels in China (US\$7 billion dwarfed those for Spain, Germany and France, individually (D.S Hamilton and J.P. Quinlan, *The Transatlantic Economy 2016*; Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University, 2016).

The Anglosphere is clearly a full-spectrum global force with various types of 'capital' or power – in the Bourdieusian sense - which in itself is highly valued as an attractive and also coercive means of compelling compliance. However, scholars often pay little attention to Anglospheric soft power and its maintenance of the LIO. We argue that aside from military conquest, the Anglosphere's greatest strength is cultural, economic, linguistic, civilizational, and racial and ethnic power to undergird its global security. We use the term 'capital' to represent both an idea or material force that may be leveraged in both symbolic and material ways. Our use of 'capital' corresponds to and is derived from the work of Bourdieu: "The gaining of control over resources depends upon agents' capital and the skill (or fortune) with which they invest it." Again, 'capital' is not an exclusively material resource (such as financial wealth) but is also symbolic (degree of prestige or honour) and cultural (cultural knowledge and competence' (<https://literariness.org/2017/05/09/the-sociology-of-pierre-bourdieu/>).

### **Trumpist and Global Britain Attitudes**

According to Rachman, China's increasingly aggressive behaviour triggered retaliatory action from the Anglosphere, especially from the Trump administration but with the support of Britain, Canada and Australia. The trend was therefore set for the Biden administration to continue the confrontation – via "extreme competition" - despite EU reservations. The EU signed a major investment deal with Beijing in December 2020 over US objections while Franco-German leaders warned of the dangers of anti-China rhetoric. But the Anglosphere states "are more inclined to take the American view that a rising China is a threat that must be countered" (Rachman, 2021; FT, 8.2.21, "Why the Anglosphere sees eye to eye on China"; <https://www.ft.com/content/ed2d9c00-c8df-4efc-a1ad-63bc8e97bd25>). Yet, Russia's war on Ukraine has pushed the Anglosphere and EU closer together, including on China's role, although the EU still does not fully align with the Anglosphere, particularly over energy imports from Russia, or China's possible honest broker role in the Ukraine war (Paul Haenle, Phillipe Le Corre, 2022, "Russia's Invasion of Ukraine has Jeopardized the China-EU Relationship"; <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/05/10/russia-s-invasion-of-ukraine-has-jeopardized-china-eu-relationship-pub-87107>; FT, "Europe's fight to stay united over war in Ukraine," 29 July 2022; <https://www.ft.com/content/de9056bf-9121-4b17-b569-f5e889e4eff0>

Ironically, therefore, despite his ‘isolationist’ and transactional rhetoric, President Trump’s administration operated almost entirely within Anglospheric norms and expectations. Vucetic (2020) argues that the Trump years saw a remarkable increase in the bloc’s media visibility, as well as its openness to “diplomatize” and “politicize” the Five Eyes partnership. Trump was aggressive towards China over economic and trade practices, labelled it a ‘strategic competitor’, and condemned its state-driven protectionist policies that allegedly harm US companies, violate international norms, and pollute the environment (White House, ‘2020 Strategic Approach to the People’s Republic of China’; <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/U.S.-Strategic-Approach-to-The-Peoples-Republic-of-China-Report-5.24v1.pdf>).

Trump started a prolonged trade war, claiming to decouple their economies, prohibiting technology transfer, blacklisting Chinese high-tech companies, and tightening export controls on sensitive technologies to end-users in China. Despite being critical of Trump’s failures, Biden continued with similar policies and rhetoric and has yet to remove Trump’s tariffs. ‘America First’ and ‘Extreme Competition’ may not differ fundamentally after all (Shihui Yin and Inderjeet Parmar, 2021; “Under Biden, the fundamentals of Sino-US relations will remain the same,” 22 February; <https://thewire.in/world/joe-biden-fundamentals-sino-us-relations-remain-donald-trump>).

Trump simultaneously intensified Sino-US rivalries and rhetoric for a ‘new cold war’ over freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific and alleged Wuhan lab leaks of the Covid-19 coronavirus. Underpinning this was Trump’s racial-civilisational attitudes to China (and non-white peoples generally) which mobilised Sinophobia on a large scale. Covid-19 was labelled the ‘Chinese virus’ to delegitimize China and global institutions, highlighting its culpability in suppressing information and hoarding medical equipment (“Biden’s COVID-19 Origins Report Leaves the Lab Leak on the Table, Vanity Fair, 2021; <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2021/08/bidens-covid-19-origins-report-leaves-the-lab-leak-on-the-table>). The World Health Organisation (WHO) was criticised as “China-centric,” and defunded. Trump also backed “medical/vaccine nationalism” aimed at developing the first coronavirus vaccine breakthrough to control supply, boost corporate profits and US geopolitical interests. The administration deployed rhetoric about Covid-19 and China to narrate a “clash of civilizations” (Inderjeet Parmar and Thomas Furse, “The Trump administration, the far right and world politics,” *Globalizations* 2021). Kiron Skinner, as director of the US state department’s policy planning staff, argued that the ‘clash’ was predicated on racial-civilizational criteria because “it’s the first time that we will have a great power competitor *that is not Caucasian*” [emphasis added]. Skinner noted that “when we think about the Soviet Union and that competition, in a way it was a fight within the Western family. Karl Marx was a German Jew who developed a philosophy that was within the larger body of political thought ... that has some tenets even within classical liberalism. ... That’s not really possible with China. This is a fight with a really different civilization” (Abraham M. Denmark, “Problematic thinking on China from the state department’s head of policy planning,” *War on the Rocks*, 2019; <https://warontherocks.com/2019/05/problematic-thinking-on-china-from-the-state-departments-head-of-policy-planning/>). This perpetuated “yellow peril” myths, justified anti-China policies, and denied findings of China scholars (“Kerry Brown: The Academic Defending the Chinese Perspective”, Interview in Quartz magazine, May 18th 2021, <https://qz.com/2005978/kerry-brown-the-academic-defending->

[the-chinese-perspective/](#); see also, X. Pu and C. Wang, “What does China think about China’s rise?” *International Affairs blog*, 2018; <https://medium.com/international-affairs-blog/what-does-china-think-about-chinas-rise-26ce67b1cffb>). The administration co-opted human rights discourse, selectively defined China’s oppressiveness in contrast to the West and cast Trump as a *defender and reformer* of the American-led LIO. The ‘clash of civilisations’ narrative linked to Trump’s neo-mercantilism by reframing free trade and multilateralism as Western weakness. Trump’s withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, imposition of tariffs and various hawkish appointments, blended protectionism and anti-elitism, linking a strategy of industrial consolidation with anti-immigrant sentiment (Parmar and Furse, 2021).

Yet, the US remains interlocked as an economic power, financially interdependent with China. China has the world’s largest holdings of foreign currency reserves (over US\$3 trillion), the majority of which are in US dollars, and over 20% of US treasury securities (N. Salidjanova, “Report on China’s Foreign Exchange Reserves and Holdings of U.S Securities,” US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 21 March 2014). US corporate relations with China continued to increase during 2016-2020 despite Trump’s anti-China rhetoric and policies which were, at least partly, motivated at ‘opening up’ China, rather than destroying its. Phase One Trump’s US-China trade deal illustrated seemingly contradictory conflictual and cooperative relations between US corporate interests, the Trump administration, and Sinophobia on the US far-right (Parmar and Furse, 2021).

Space prohibits an extensive analysis of Global Britain narratives rooted in imperial nostalgia, recovering past glories and roles as legitimisation at home of post-Brexit national greatness (Global Britain, 2021; “Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy,” <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy>). There are clear anti-China undertones, as well as ambivalence about the EU’s capacity to assert itself on the global stage behind Anglo-American conengagement strategies (Oliver Turner, “Global Britain and the Narrative of Empire,” *The Political Quarterly*, 2019). UK Prime Minister Johnson’s racialised attachments to the Anglosphere are well established, despite coded language that simultaneously ‘others’ non-white Commonwealth peoples (Eva Namusoke, “The Anglosphere, Race and Brexit,” in Wellings and Mycock, 2019). This ‘othering’ of the non-white Commonwealth is strongly indicated in Johnson’s vision of Global Britain in the 2021 Integrated Review. In it, Australia, New Zealand, Canada are discussed separately from the broader Commonwealth countries, although the US is mentioned in that very section, as united by a shared history and the Five Eyes programme (Global Britain, 2021; pp.69-70). Johnson and US President Biden

signed a grand declaration called “The New Atlantic Charter” in 2021 that claims continuity with the original 1941 Atlantic Charter signed by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and PM Winston Churchill. The original Charter enshrined the right to self-determination to white Europeans states – excluding colonised Africans and Asians. The new Charter commits to upholding the rules-based order, human rights, opposing external interference in the internal affairs of nations, and threats to “freedom of navigation and overflight and other internationally lawful uses of the seas” (UK HMG, 2021; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-atlantic-charter-and-joint-statement-agreed-by-the-pm-and-president-biden/the-new-atlantic-charter-2021>). The latter is clearly directed at China’s claims in the region.

The America First and Global Britain approach towards the EU differs significantly from their approach to China, but remains ambivalent about the EU: issues regarding trade, EU disagreement over the relationship with China, the bloc’s over-reliance for its security on the United States, and disagreements over Russia’s role in security and energy terms. The EU is seen as an irritant and competitor (International Strategic Analysis, 2020; Haenle, Le Corre, 2022; FT, 2022), including since outbreak of the Ukraine war.

In foreign policy, despite coercive rhetoric, interpenetrations with China—trade, investments, students — are dense, enduring, even if under pressure from specific administrations (*Global Britain*, 2021, pp.28-32; 70-76). The Anglosphere states have little interest in China’s collapse – unlike the goals of the anti-Soviet cold war – and much to gain and maintain from a China *subordinated* to western power. The world has shifted beyond liberal postwar arrangements. The issue is on what or whose terms, and through which methods, is the world system of interlocked relationships to function. Anglospherists are committed to perpetuating their own power and diminishing China’s (HJS, *Breaking the China Supply Chain: How the ‘Five Eyes’ Can Decouple from Strategic Dependency*; London, May 2020; <https://henryjacksonsociety.org/publications/breaking-the-china-supply-chain-how-the-five-eyes-can-decouple-from-strategic-dependency/>).

### **Gramscian-Kautskyian analysis versus dominant frameworks**

How may we conceptualise and theorise the Anglosphere’s role in world politics? Though realist and liberal theorists’ arguments undoubtedly have some traction, neither accurately teases out current or

future dynamics and trajectories. Realists' principal, and timeless, argument suggests near-inevitable inter-hegemonic war between the US and China (Graham T. Allison, *Destined for War?* Houghton-Mifflin 2017). Meanwhile, liberals categorise the US-led regional order as largely positive-sum 'benign' collaboration. Yet, liberals fail to contend with both changing relative power dynamics, and rising levels of inequality of reward within societies, at least partly fuelled by capitalist globalisation (Huo & Parmar, 2020). Finally, liberals and realists fail to acknowledge that the LIO and its Anglosphere core is capable of hierarchically-co-opting and integrating emerging powers, enabling them to challenge, and potentially re-shape, rival forces.

The Anglosphere is, we argue, an imperial transnational historic bloc, a formulation derived from Gramscian hegemony theory, but combined with Kautsky's concept of 'ultraimperialism' (see also overlapping approaches: Ian Taylor, "Transnationalizing Capitalist Hegemony: A Poulantzian Reading," *Alternatives* 42, 1, 2017; Xing Li, "Conceptualizing the Nexus of 'Interdependent Hegemony' between the Existing and the Emerging World Orders," *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 7, 3 2014; and David Chen, "A theory of dialectical transnational historical materialism for China's state capitalism and the China-US rivalry," *Third World Quarterly* 43, 7, 2022). Kautsky's approach denotes transnational ruling elites' and classes' collaboration based on shared interests even within a competitive and conflictual system, and expresses the complexities of global transitions that witness simultaneous selective collaboration, accommodation, competition and simmering underlying conflicts of interests. Such transnationalism, however imperfect, is consequential in diminishing the chances of outright great power military conflict. The common market/EU is an excellent example of this, forged in the aftermath of two bloody world wars caused by European states. This is, in essence, what the 'Long Peace' since 1945 refers to. We argue that the Anglosphere should be viewed in a similar way. It is an "extraordinary partnership", embedded within it an enduring, probably permanent, transnational historic bloc (a hierarchical but unified diverse ruling coalition). It combines multiple states and political parties, elite knowledge networks of think tanks and academic institutions, corporate networks, and strong levels of civil society support. This constitutes deep, enduring, strategically, culturally and racially-underpinned relationships.

Global interpenetrations within the Anglosphere also encompass broad aspects of the LIO, and non-Anglosphere states and economies, including the EU and, importantly, China, as detailed earlier. China's opening up to the world was a Chinese elite project that was fully supported by American, British, German and other states, multilateral institutions, and private corporations and corporate foundations

(Huo and Parmar, 2020). It was US and Chinese recipients of public funds and private foundation grants, from the late 1970s to the present, who formed transnational networks to open up opportunities for exchanges of people, money, and ideas. The debate over 'ideological' differences between neoliberal Anglosphere and Chinese ideas about state-economy relations hardly rivals the contradictions of western capitalism in regard to the communist USSR. Neither does China have anything resembling a military alliance like the Warsaw Pact, let alone NATO, and no network of pro-Chinese political parties across the world. This is not a cold war (Stephen Walt, "I knew the cold war. This is no cold war," *Foreign Policy*, 2018; <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/12/i-knew-the-cold-war-this-is-no-cold-war/>).

Gramscian elite knowledge networks (imperial transnational historic bloc) blend well with the Kautskyian conception of 'ultra-imperialism', providing a more powerful explanation of the recent and future trajectories of regional and China-Anglosphere relations. Kautsky's concept contends that to exploit the world's people and resources, ruling classes form international class-based alliances (Kautsky, 1914). Those alliances lead to co-operation across a range of domains as determined by the balance of power between dominant states. While competitive, they help moderate competition via common rules, and official and unofficial diplomacy. Understanding Anglosphereic hegemony as consisting of transnational elite knowledge networks, in which are embedded key elements of the power elites of other great powers, best explains Sino-Anglosphere relations' 'ups and downs' as interdependent and interpenetrated powers jostling for position while cooperating on several fronts. It also explains the domestic sources of class-based resistance and turbulence in the relationship, as imperial transnational elites try to manage popular opposition to the effects of globalised interdependence and the redistributions of work that led to economic change, and rising inequalities.

## **Conclusion**

We have shown that the Anglosphere is a self-conscious, broadly united, historically-rooted, heavily-institutionalised, and racially and culturally-underpinned association of English speaking-powers at the heart of the LIO and of world political economy. It is under pressure from the 'rise' of Asia and the BRICS, especially China, and from domestic political resistance to inequality, declining living standards, rise of ultra-nationalism, and domestic political instability. The Anglosphere defines as threats a number of factors and forces and is intensifying its unity and power projections through new agreements like AUKUS, renewing existing bodies like the Quad, and militarising and securitising strategies and rhetoric. This is aimed at exerting pressure on China and other perceived 'revisionist' powers, including via racialised-civilizational

messaging and mobilisation that has numerous effects, including restrictions on non-white immigration and rising violence against Asians, (A. Elias, J. Ben, F. Mansouri and Y. Paradies, “Racism and nationalism during and beyond the Covid-19 pandemic,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2021), as well as US and other government programmes such as the China Initiative that target Chinese nationals (Margaret K. Lewis, “Criminalizing China,” *Journal of Law and Criminology* 111, 1, 2021; MEP Claire Daly, “That hostility to China was orchestrated,” 19 January 2022; <https://www.tellerreport.com/news/2022-01-19-mep-claire-daly--that-hostility-to-china-was-orchestrated.B1xX-fUBTK.html>). Such tendencies are, themselves, deeply-rooted in the British empire, Anglo-Saxonism, and white supremacist ideologies that criss-cross the Anglosphere (Camilla Schofield, n.d.; Barder, 2021).

The world and interstate relations are in a turbulent, transitional phase, an organic crisis destabilising established institutions, norms and their underlying liberal ideology. This suggests that the major crises of order, although partly attributable to hyper-globalisation, are largely domestic in character, with spill-over effects in international politics. These structural-level sources of instability and resistance are only partly replicated at the global level due to the unequally beneficial (to elites) interpenetrations and interdependencies characterising intra-Anglosphere relations, Anglosphere relations with the EU and China, not to mention a broader range of powers (Japan, S. Korea, India, for instance) embedded in security, economic and financial relationships. Therefore, and with due regard to the many sources of global turbulence, we conclude via Gramscian-Kautskyian theory that the probabilities of outright military conflict among great powers are low particularly due to the range of interdependencies and interpenetrations between the rival powers. The greater dangers lie within nation states.