Racial Sovereignty

Debates[1] around sovereignty are back on the map, having been reinvigorated in popular discourse around Brexit and the election of Donald Trump. Across both political contexts, it is now common to hear sovereignty invoked as a response to numerous contemporary issues: globalisation, deindustrialisation, international trade-agreements, immigration, development, energy policy, terrorism, human rights *et cetera*. Less prevalent are discussions of its meaning. Sovereignty is widely assumed to denote 'taking back control' over a nation's politics and 'independence' from outside forces. Presented in this way, sovereignty appears disconnected from the considerably more contentious politics of race that have characterised Brexit and Trump's election (Bhambra 2017). In fact one curiosity of contemporary uses of sovereignty is its repeated appearance alongside explicit disavowals of racism. As one British newspaper, *The Sun* (2017), wrote: 'Brexit voters were "mainly driven by taking back control of law-making powers from EU" – not racism'.

That such appeals to sovereignty are presented by their proponents as relatively unproblematic is perhaps indicative of the concept's resonance with common-sense notions of the role and function of the nation-state. Less acknowledged, by both proponents and critics alike, is how these seemingly 'race-blind' demands for sovereignty have been deployed to articulate a set of politics that are nonetheless racialised. The slogan 'taking back control', for example, has expressed ideas of authority and independence alongside fears of perceived threats from racialised Others (in the form of immigration, terrorism, or non-European culture). The idea of sovereignty has therefore been central to the articulation of postracial discourses, involving the 'self-conscious disavowal of racism and racist intent, while simultaneously serving to attack or problematize the existence or behavior of certain racialized groups' (Pitcher, 2006, p.535).

In contemporary debates around sovereignty, then, we find a conundrum: how and why is it that this 'essentially contested' term remains so uncontested (Leigh and Weber 2018)? This question should not be unfamiliar to International Relations (IR) scholars. Despite important interventions from critical perspectives, orthodox conceptions of sovereignty as the foundational grammar of 'the international' remain resilient (Costa Lopez et al, 2018, p.491). Here too, sovereignty is typically defined as 'authority over a territory occupied by a relatively fixed population, supposedly necessary to protect that territory and its citizens from external [and internal] threats' (Leigh and Weber 2018). It

is notable, then, that long-held scholarly assumptions about modern sovereignty within IR shares a common language with the politics of Trump and Brexit.

This article therefore asks: what might IR say about these mobilisations of its core disciplinary concept? How might moving outside of IR into interdisciplinary conversations around race help us understand contemporary uses of sovereignty? Is it possible to think about sovereignty independently of race? In this article, I argue against the dominant wisdom in IR that sovereignty and race are analytically and historically discrete. In contrast, I show the ways in which race permeates and structures modern sovereignty, whereby 'claims to sovereignty are woven through and require a specific relationship to race' (Leigh and Weber, 2018).

I suggest that the underexplored relationship between race and sovereignty is best resolved by the term 'racial sovereignty'.[2] My use of racial sovereignty draws its inspiration from similar theorisations of race in the ideas of 'racial capitalism' (Robinson, 1981) and 'racial states' (Goldberg, 2002). Like these terms, racial sovereignty denotes a conceptual drawing together of social relations, histories and practices typically understood as unrelated. Racial sovereignty is a term which bridges the analytical and historical separation of race and sovereignty, offering an alternative theorisation of sovereignty in which the structuring effects of racism are disclosed and opened for analysis. I suggest using the term racial sovereignty can give us a better purchase on both historical formations of sovereignty and contemporary calls for its renewal in a context of racist resurgence.

This article therefore contributes to interdisciplinary conversations on the question of race and racism. Although discussions of race and racism are present in IR (see among others Anievas, Manchanda and Shilliam, 2014; 2017 Henderson, 2013; Jones, 2008; Krishna, 2001; Sabaratnam, 2019; Thompson 2013; Vitalis, 2015; Younis 2018), they have at times overlooked their contestation as categories of analysis outside of the confines of the discipline. This 'united front' has undoubtedly been useful in carving out a space of possibility – where discussions around race and racism *can* take place in IR – but they also have the effect of glossing over some otherwise profound theoretical and political differences. I say this less to pick a fight but more to suggest that an attentiveness to these points of contestation can enable IR as a discipline to actively participate in debates around racism today. That is, if discussions of racism outside of the discipline can inform IR debates on sovereignty the reverse may also true: a focus on sovereignty might help us better understand racism.

This is especially pertinent in a context where contemporary discussions around race are regularly weighed down by fixations on identity and culture (which are important 'but not to the exclusion of all else',

Bhattacharyya, 2018: 2). In this article, I argue that this tendency has (in small part) been produced by 'the orthodox account' of sovereignty as a distinctly postracial discourse generated within IR. In contrast, this article conceptualises the materiality of racism by prompting an analytical focus on the specific practices denoted by racial sovereignty. In drawing together authority, territory and population as its defining components, sovereignty is arguably a distinctive racialising practice in its capacity to affect how we understand the classifications of, relationships between, and the technologies of control over lands and peoples. These are always racialised issues. More precisely, this article aims to show how *racial sovereignty* is a practice of *racialisation* which emerges as a response to *colonial crisis:* 'the crisis occasioned when colonisers are threatened with the requirement to share social space with the colonised' (Wolfe, 2016: 14). Although at first glance such a definition might appear applicable only in certain historical moments, I argue the opposite is true: racial sovereignty is a mode of analysis which captures practices that extend and circulate beyond specific acts of colonisation.

In the first section, I demonstrate how the 'orthodox account' of sovereignty in IR has generated an analytical separation of race and sovereignty and, with it, produced IR's contribution to postracial discourse. In the second section, I provide a closer explanation of the terms 'racial sovereignty', 'racialisation' and 'colonial crisis'. The purpose of this section is to reconnect the relationship between race and sovereignty that has otherwise been denied by the orthodox account. In the third section, I show how the making of racial sovereignty can be found in a set of practices mobilised by English settlers during the 17th century colonisation of Virginia. By demonstrating the co-articulation of sovereignty and racialisation through practices of colonial dispossession, I connect histories of sovereignty and colonial violence that have otherwise been abstracted from and obscured the orthodox account. In the fourth section, I argue that the Virginian experience is not simply of historical interest but helps us better understand criticisms of 'recognition' found in the anticolonial tradition. By reviewing these criticisms, this section helps us understand racial sovereignty as structural and ongoing, rather than a finished matter. In the fifth section, I demonstrate how contemporary assertions of racial sovereignty in the context of Brexit disclose an otherwise concealed colonial crisis. I then conclude with the claim that interrogations of racial sovereignty are not solely of historical interest but carry political significance for our understanding of the world today.

Containing race in the orthodox account

Rob Walker (1993: 166) once famously warned, 'the very attempt to treat sovereignty as a matter of definition and legal principle encourages a certain amnesia about its historical and culturally specific character'. Attempting to interrogate the historical and cultural specificity of

sovereignty has therefore been a core part of IR's collective research programme and one of its foundational disciplinary myths (Osiander, 2001). And yet, although numerous engagements have sought to overcome the amnesia that Walker lamented (Bartelson, 1995; Weber, 1998; Walker, 1993), the relationship between race and sovereignty remains underexplored (for exceptions see Anghie, 2005; Doty, 1996a; Grovogui, 1996; Mbembe 2001; Puar, 2017; Salt, 2018; Shilliam, 2006; Weber, 2016).[3] One curiosity in the study of sovereignty is therefore why – despite these critical engagements – the significance race and racism continues to be so effectively concealed.

In this section, I argue that the analytical and historical separation of race and sovereignty is not accidental but produced by a set of discursive moves in the 'orthodox account' of sovereignty's history. The orthodox account is far from the only story of sovereignty but is targeted here because of its significance and durability, from its first classical treatment in English School histories of the 1980s (see Watson and Bull, 1984), through the constructivist and liberal hegemony in the 1990s and 2000s (see Jackson, 2007; Philpott, 2001; Reus-Smit, 2001; Ruggie, 1993; Strang, 1996), right up to more contemporary iterations (see Clapton, 2017; Holsti, 2018; Reus-Smit, 2013). Such is the continual reproduction of the orthodox account that it now functions as an 'IR common-sense'. It is therefore interrogated here as symptomatic of a discursive procedure through which race is separated from sovereignty, analytically and historically, forming IR's own distinctive contribution to postracial forms of thinking. A typical synopsis of the orthodox account – drawn from the above citations – goes something like this:

Around the 16th-17th century, European states broke the shackles of religious authority and established mutually recognised sovereign states. Sovereignty made 'differentiation' the constitutive element of modern territorial states; it articulated absolute conceptions of authority within political communities (an 'inside') and exclusivist legal distinctions between them (an 'outside'). Institutionalised in the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, the defining components of modern sovereignty – authority, territory, population and recognition – were pulled together and combined. Meanwhile, with colonialism, these European states were also busy conquering other parts of the world, often at the expense of 'political authorities' elsewhere. To help them in this endeavour, Europeans constructed norms that distinguished between 'civilised' and 'uncivilised' states. European states imagined themselves as having reached the requisite standard of civilisation to legitimately possess (and recognise each other as possessing) sovereignty. In contrast, non-European states were imagined by Europeans to be uncivilised and therefore incapable of self-rule and sovereignty as such. European sovereignty over these non-European domains was subsequently justified as part of the civilising mission of colonial tutelage. It was only with post-WWII decolonisation

that this hierarchy was challenged by the uncivilised and *recognition* was bequeathed by the colonisers to formerly colonised states. So, while colonialism once informed a historical division between who is and who is not recognised as sovereign, this was eventually overcome through the universal extension and realisation of the sovereignty principle to formerly colonised nations.

How does the orthodox account separate race and sovereignty? In a particularly suggestive discussion, Sankaran Krishna (2001) outlines two discursive strategies that produce a wilful amnesia around race within IR. The first, 'abstraction', serves to disconnect IR's object of study from its constitutive colonial histories and social relations of violence, dispossession and alienation. The second, 'redemption', inscribes within IR narratives a set of deferred promises that these constitutive violences will eventually be overcome. Drawing on Frederic Jameson, Krishna argues both abstraction and redemption are 'strategies of containment', which 'allows what can be thought to seem internally coherent in its own terms, while repressing the unthinkable . . . which lies beyond its boundaries' (Jameson cited in ibid. 406). Containment is:

> 'a means at once of denying those intolerable contradictions that lie hidden beneath the social surface, as intolerable as that Necessity that gives rise to relations of domination in human society, and of constructing on the very ground cleared by such denial a substitute truth that renders existence at least partly bearable' (Dowling cited in ibid.).

To Krishna's discussion, I add the idea of 'closure' to make sense of the orthodox account's distinctly postracial character. Closure is the means through which racism is presented as a 'solved problem' in international relations and locked-off as an object of analysis; when it comes to race the 'case is closed'. It is through closure that the otherwise 'intolerable contradictions' that undergird the construction of sovereignty are made internally coherent. In the second section, I propose ways of thinking that might unearth these intolerable contradictions. Before I do, let us interrogate how they are denied in the orthodox account by examining its strategies of 'abstraction' and 'redemption' in turn.

Firstly, the orthodox account presents Europe as a unique world-making agent and a prime mover of history, where the innovation of modern sovereignty is first generated within its pristine boundaries and then 'diffused' elsewhere. This claim rests on a geo-historical abstraction whereby European states are viewed as self-propelling actors that are hermetically sealed from external – non-European – relations, histories, relations or influences. In this Eurocentric narrative, colonialism acts as a force through which already fashioned European norms are spread and universalised, but does not figure as a structural condition that (re)produces those norms (Bhambra 2007: 91).

Arguably, this is itself an outcome of the idea of sovereignty, which conceptually demarcated the modern state 'as the object of empirical inquiry with an inside and an outside where the outside (e.g., the colonies) was not seen as having a relation to the inside' (ibid. 109). Here, the racial hierarchies that colonialism produced and functionally depended on are treated as distinct from and outside of European modernity. Put differently, the spatial separation of inside/outside produced by sovereignty generates an associated historical closure around the role of race in its origins and making. With this Eurocentric assumption in place, the orthodox account is able to generate theorisations of sovereignty by abstracting from racialised histories of European colonial violence, dispossession and alienation (Krishna, 2001: 401-2).

Secondly, we see in the orthodox account strategies of redemption, 'of overcoming the alienation of international society that commenced in 1492' (ibid.: 402). Whereas in Krishna's critique this is a 'deferred promise', the orthodox account of sovereignty offers closure: an overcoming that has already been completed. It does so by narrating the story of sovereignty as one of progress in the liberal image, where racism is presented as a momentary blip (perhaps even a necessary one), in the otherwise universal realisation of an international society of formally equal sovereign states. Progress – overcoming the racist blip – is achieved through the principle of recognition, the idea 'that every other state had the right to claim and enjoy its own sovereignty as well' (Wight, cited in Ruggie, 1993: 162). In the orthodox account, decolonisation confirms this image of progress; a moment in the unfolding and extension of formal equality among states, where those previously excluded by racism are eventually recognised.

To be clear, it is not my intention to judge the historical record of national liberation here, nor deny its transformative effects. Instead, I want to draw attention to the discursive work recognition does in the orthodox narrative. That work is redemption, containment and closure. Recognition affects the containment of racism by reaffirming the conceptual separation of race and sovereignty. It does so by conflating the particular outcome of a historical process with a general explanatory concept through which that process is ultimately analysed. The reification of recognition thus delivers, through three moves, an internal coherence to sovereignty while repressing its internal contradictions. Firstly, recognition becomes central to the definition of sovereignty, a *sine qua non,* a necessary and sufficient condition: for a state to be sovereign it must be recognised as such by other sovereign states. Secondly, it delimits the analytical scope of race to discursive and/or legal struggles over the recognition of colonised peoples within the confines of the already existing state-system. Thirdly, it removes from view the contested character of anticolonial demands and, in particular, perspectives in the radical

anticolonial tradition that have been (and still are) critical of projects that conclude with state recognition. The reification of recognition in the orthodox account thus facilitates a redemptive closure in which both the state-system and racism are understood as settled. The former is naturalised as the only possible reality of world politics. The latter is presented as a problem solved through the recognition of those previously excluded from 'international society'. Via redemptive closure, the orthodox account consigns racism to the past while reaffirming the present validity and future existence of the state-system. Case closed.

The orthodox account thus produces a distinctively IR version of postracial ideology, by 'fixing "real" racism solely in historical events' (Lentin, 2016: 34) and disavowing its contemporary reproduction. In treating race and racism as anachronisms, 'the continuities between racisms past and present are made undecidable', separate and deniable (ibid. 35). Consequently, interrogations of race and racism are either avoided or 'related principally to the attitudes and actions of singular regimes and individuals' (ibid. 34). In the postracial study of sovereignty race and racism are, at worst, irrelevant. At best, racism could perhaps be studied outside of the disciplinary boundaries and concerns of IR, as a secondary or 'domestic issue' concerned with questions of identity and culture (Anievas, Manchanda and Shilliam, 2014: 9; Henderson, 2007: 330). Through the orthodox account the conceptual separation of race and sovereignty is inscribed into the very disciplinary definition of IR.

Racialisation, colonial crisis and sovereignty

There is therefore much at stake in developing a distinctly IR-theorisation of racism, which is able to recover its materiality and structural character. This section is concerned with how we might theorise the co-articulation of race and sovereignty through the idea of racial sovereignty. To help us do so, consider the following three passages from authors outside of IR. Although each are writing from very different places and disciplines, all describe race in connection to the ways authority, territory and population are produced, ordered and classified through colonial practices.

Firstly, Achille Mbembe (2001: 32):

> 'The [colonial] government related... to a territory that constituted the colony. The colonial territory had its space, its shape, its borders. It had its geological make-up and its climates. It had resources; it had its soils, its minerals, its animal and plant species, its empty lands. In short, it had its qualities. There were, above all, the people who inhabited it, their characters and their customs... their ways of acting and thinking, their habits, the events they have lived. It is these people who were labelled natives. They constituted the raw material, as it were, of government. They had to be enclosed in relations of subjection, initially known as "politique des races" and later "politique indigène."'

Secondly, la paperson (2017: 5):

> 'In the alienation of land from life, alienable rights are produced: the right to own (property), the right to law (protection through legitimated violence), the right to govern (supremacist sovereignty), the right to have rights (humanity). In a word, what is produced is whiteness. Moreover, it is not just human beings who are refigured in the schism. Land and nonhumans become alienable properties, a move that first alienates land from its own sovereign life. Thus we can speak of the various technologies required to create and maintain these separations, these alienations, Black from indigenous, human from nonhuman, land from life.'

Thirdly, Gargi Bhattacharyya (2018: 73):

> 'This question – of the interplay between populations and territories – returns again and again in considerations of history, violence and global (in)justice. However, in the discussion of 'race', it is more usual for particular populations to be regarded as embodiments of depleted territories. Even when displaced from regions "classified as underdeveloped", bodies are read as already depleted.'

For each of these authors, race is inseparable from what Bhattacharyya describes as 'associative chains' between populations, territories and authority, which 'works to transform some spaces into geographical incarnations of racialized populations' (ibid.). These associative chains are not linear, but instead cross-hatched or tangled, whereby colonial claims and practices coagulate and collapse authority, populations and territories into each other, through alienation, dispossession, death, extraction, enclosure and/or exploitation. It is through the differentiating effects of these practices (for example possession/dispossession; life/death) that various tangles of authority-population-territory are hierarchically classified into categories of white and not-white[4]; human, non-human and not-quite-human (Weheliye 2014).

In this understanding, race and racism are the doctrinal termination points of these tangled associations. The analytical secret of race is not to be found in the ascriptive identities or cultures we find at the conclusion of this tangling. White, black, brown, indigenous, etc are not cultures or identities (la paperson, 2017: 10) but assemblages (Weheliye, 2014; Puar, 2007) of the processes, social relations and struggles that precede and produce them. Race and racism are effects (Ahmed, 2002: 47) of the enactments through which colonial relations are created and reproduced, and products of colonial dispossession and domination.

These enactments have been conceptualised by various authors as *racialisation* (among others Ahmed 2002; Banton, 1977; Wolfe, 2016) which is 'prior to and not limited to racial doctrine' (ibid. 10). Racialisation denotes those practices whereby 'colonialism refashions its human terrain' and 'put race into action', through dispossession, alienation, extraction, enslavement, enclosure, genocide and categorisation (ibid.). In particular, racialisation is apparent in specific, localised, techniques and strategies of domination deployed in certain conjunctures of *colonial crisis*: 'racialisation represents a response to the crisis occasioned when

colonisers are threatened with the requirement to share social space with the colonised' (Wolfe, 2016: 14).

As a practice, racial sovereignty is one particular but prevalent kind of racialisation, a specific strategic response to colonial crisis. More precisely, racial sovereignty conceptualises the conjunctural enactments whereby associative chains between authority, population, territory are tangled together. Racial sovereignty denotes those technologies of colonial governance that seek to 'promote social stability in the face of instabilities and insecurities' (Goldberg, 2002: 39), 'when the naturalness of the given order is shaken' (Doty 1996a; 141), by collapsing together authority, population and territory into differentiated and hierarchically classified 'units'. The practice of racial sovereignty is a practice of racialised ordering.

In contrast, *as an analytic*, the study of racial sovereignty is about grasping and untangling these associative chains of authority-territory-population as distinctly racialized formations. This is useful in the following two ways, which I present for the way in which they might disturb the strategies of abstraction and redemption in the orthodox account. Firstly, racial sovereignty revises the conceptual image we have of world politics. Racial sovereignty is not contained by the nation-state, although it may often be articulated through it. Take, for example, the role of colonial companies in establishing and administering territorialised authority in the 17th-19th centuries; or the contemporary prevalence of outsourcing security companies that manage infrastructures of military conquest, enforce borders or administer carceral practices in the criminal justice system. The mobilisation of non-state technologies in the making of racial sovereignty burst the bounds of state-centric approaches. However, while racial sovereignty breaks from territorialised thinking it does not transcend space and geographical difference. Instead, racial sovereignty depends on differentiation which may, at times, require spatial compartmentalisation (Fanon, 1963) or bordering practices that segregate, canalise and contain racialised populations.

Consequently, racial sovereignty emphasises hierarchy not anarchy in 'the international system'. But racial sovereignty as an analytic escapes the spatial binaries that extant theorisations of hierarchy hinge on: West/Rest, North/South, developed/underdeveloped, core/periphery. For example, in the case of settler-colonialism, core and periphery are not spatially distinct and geographically distant but congealed 'on selfsame land' (Tuck, Guess, Sultan, 2014). These binaries collapse also when grappling with the racialisation of 'non-indigenous' peoples within the European metropolis (Bhattacharyya, 2018: 18-19; Turner, 2018). There is a 'spatial immediacy' (la paperson, 2017: 3) to these kinds of racialisation which does not comfortably map onto classical spatial binaries. From the vantage point of racial sovereignty, and in contrast to the geo-historical abstractions of the orthodox account, the colonies are

never outside of Europe, or more accurately Europe is never outside of its colonies.

Secondly, by situating the making of racial sovereignty as a response to colonial crisis, it can be studied historically, conjuncturally and relationally. Neither of its component parts – race or sovereignty – are fixed or stable but continually contested and subject to 'coincidences of different relations of power' (Robinson, cited in Bhandar, 2018: 13). This means, on one hand, that there are 'no guarantees' that a particular articulation of race and sovereignty 'will appear in the same configuration across time or jurisdictions' (ibid. 13). The specificity of any given racialised bundle of authority-territory-population requires untangling through a historical inquiry of the contestations and coincidences behind its making and articulation.

On the other hand, the disputed relations at the heart of racialisation also serve as reminder that racial sovereignty is never 'complete' but is subject to resistance. The authority of racial sovereignty does not ride over racialised territories and populations untrammelled, as if they are mere objects to be mastered (as much as sovereigns might wish this was the case). Racial sovereignty is not *absolute* authority (as much as it might claim to be). Instead, racial sovereignty always encounters resistance: uprisings, revolutions, riots, escape and everyday struggle mark the 'intolerable contradictions' of racial sovereignty.

The prevalence of resistance moreover indicates the structural character of racial sovereignty. This has been well captured in settler-colonial studies (SCS) and its description of settler sovereignty as a 'structure not an event' (Wolfe, 2006), requiring continual reproduction through strategies that reinscribe colonial authority onto the land and over the people inhabiting it.[5] In this regard, racial sovereignty cannot only be understood as a declaration of authority over a territory, nor theorised primarily from a reading of this declaration, but historicised through its enactments: alienation, dispossession, enclosure, death, extraction, exploitation. As Alissa Macoun and Elizabeth Strakosch note, 'the flipside of invasion being a structure not an event is that sovereignty is a constant performance claiming to be an essence' (quoted in Wolfe 2016: 36; cf. Weber, 1998). Racial sovereignty is therefore not a 'done deal' (Kauanui, 2016) but an ongoing process, as much part of the present as the past. This way of thinking jars uncomfortably against the redemptive closure in the orthodox account. The ongoing global struggle against racism and colonialism exposes the unsettling contradictions central to redemptive accounts of sovereignty which conclude with state recognition.

This section has developed two claims. Firstly, the analytic of racial sovereignty generates a distinctive image of world politics in which relations between coloniser and colonised are revealed in their spatial

immediacy. This attunes us to the role of racialisation in forming particular bundles of authority-territory-population, and sovereignty as such. By subverting the Eurocentric abstraction in the orthodox account we are better able to reconnect the coeval emergence of sovereignty and race. Secondly, the analytic of racial sovereignty helps disclose resistance to it as a practice. This challenges the redemptive closure of recognition in orthodox accounts and helps us see how even after recognition, racism remains an central to the practice of – or appeals to – sovereignty. In the next two sections I demonstrate these claims in turn.

Sovereignty in the Virginia Colony

As suggested in the first section, any 'genealogy of sovereignty that is confined to a Europe with its drawbridges up is necessarily an incomplete genealogy' (Krishna, 2001: 414). A compelling response to this Eurocentric partiality has been offered by Jordan Branch, who argues modern sovereignty was invented in the 'New World' rather than within Europe (2012; but see Goettlich, 2018). According to Branch, modern – territorially defined – sovereignty emerged as a novel way of articulating competing claims between European colonialists over the newly 'discovered' lands of the Americas. First expressed in Iberian colonial projects of the late 15th century such practices became 'unmistakable' (ibid. 284) in the early 17th century thanks to the proliferation of English company charters issued for the settlement of North America. For Branch, declarations such as the 1606 Royal Charter of Virginia marked the first articulations of authority derived from 'ideas of geometric cartography', using 'cartographic territoriality to assert control' over 'empty spaces' (ibid. 284-285).

These declarations demonstrate the 'peripheral origins' of sovereign statehood, colonial inventions that would eventually redefine the character of political authority in Europe. Branch calls this process 'colonial reflection', whereby novel practices were first perfected in the 'New World' before eventually being transported back to, and applied in, Europe. The 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, rather than marking the beginning of modern sovereignty, was notable for 'the continuing absence of cartographic or geographic language of the kind being used in the New World' (ibid. 287). It wasn't until the 19th century that political rule based on linear territorial exclusivity became the norm in Europe. This took place only '*after* the usefulness and legitimacy of linearly bounded authority claims were made clear by centuries of colonial practice' (ibid. 292).

By emphasising the colonies and reversing the direction of diffusionist causality, Branch provides a compelling alternative to the orthodox account. Nonetheless, despite his widened empirics, Branch's study of sovereignty remains a matter of diplomatic history, whereby 'the

definition of the modern international system... came about predominantly as an unintended consequence of the actions of European rulers' (ibid.). Branch's focus on colonialism expands the geographical stage on which these European diplomatic activities play out – the Americas, the 'New World', the 'extra-European' – but the story IR as a tale of Great Power conflicts remains. In turn, the history of sovereignty for Branch is one of its declaration: a series of discrete diplomatic events in the form of European edicts, treaties, and charters. In contrast, indigenous presence on colonised land is acknowledged by Branch but only in passing, and explained away as a legal problem that was solved through 'an innovative application of natural law principles' (ibid. 284). That Branch does not mention race in his alternative account is therefore indicative of a wider set of discursive procedures: talking about Eurocentrism without mentioning racism (Sabaratnam, 2019); treating colonialism as an event rather than a structure (Wolfe, 2006).

How might we re-read this history from the analytic of racial sovereignty? A closer interrogation of one of Branch's cases – the 17th century colonisation of Virginia (or rather Tsenacommacah) – can help us see how sovereignty was less declared through treaty but produced in response to colonial crisis. The following historical exposition is presented to give a clearer view of the formation of this colonial crisis in the Virginia colony and how English settlers responded to it through the interrelated practices of racialisation and sovereignty formation. Recovering this history, I suggest, provides a corrective to the geo-historical abstractions in the orthodox account.

English claims in Virginia rested on the 'discovery doctrine'; the idea that possession and/or sovereignty over lands could be declared and claimed by those who first occupied and productively used otherwise 'empty' and 'unimproved' territory. The 1606 Charter effectively declared the Americas *res nullius*, giving English settlers, in its own words, 'licence to make habitation, plantation, and to deduce a colony of sundry of our people into that part of America, commonly called Virginia . . . not now actually possessed by any Christian Prince or people' (Hening, 1799: 57-66). Notably, during the drafting of the Charter, objections were raised within the Virginia Company that any acknowledgement of indigenous presence on these lands would lead to future legal dilemmas, as it had done in Spanish colonial projects a century before (Williams, 1990: 202-204). Consequently, the English proceeded on the assumption that sovereignty over Virginia required no legal justification and would simply manifest itself. The imagined lack of native possession over these lands, the very absence of the native, was therefore a precondition for territorial claims in the 1606 Charter.

The problem for the English was that these lands were not empty nor were they unimproved. Native inhabitation (the indigenous Powhatan

confederacy was home to around 9,000 people) and cultivation of land was starkly demonstrated when indigenous communities provided food and shelter to the first English arrivals who were struggling to survive on unfamiliar terrain. The reality of native presence therefore structured the 'interlude between the theoretical conquest inherent in discovery and the reality of effective conquest, manifest in extinguishment' (Wolfe 2016: 144). Effective conquest – through an eventual construction of a strict division between English and Powhatan land and a territorial demarcation between inside and outside – was only definitively established in the 1630s, long after the 1606 Charter had been written (Vaughn, 1978). Markedly, in 1611, on the eve of the 1612 Charter, proposals were made to establish demarcated borders separating English land from Powhatan land, but were rejected by colonial governors. This suggests that the making of sovereignty was not exhausted by its declaration, but assembled over time in response to colonial crisis.

Key to this assembly was racialisation, a set of practices which hierarchically classified and differentiated native populations to facilitate settler domination. The English articulated this in two contrasting ways. The first involved descriptions of 'the savage' as noble: not-quite-human, little better than beasts, but salvageable through English tutelage. Here, the colonial project was one of 'salvation', teaching 'savages' to abandon their cultures, norms and social relations through intermarriage, conversion and education in English ways. The second image of was that of the monstrous 'savage', the native as bestial, demonic and not-human. In this image, indigenous peoples were considered unassimilable, beyond the pale of civilization and an existential threat. Here, the colonial project was one of 'extirpation' and 'perpetuall warre'.[6]

The English relationship with the Powhatan confederacy oscillated between these two images. In this regard, the two images of 'the savage' were reflections of different strategies deployed by settlers in response to colonial crisis. Although nonidentical and indeterminate, these strategies were indicative of an underlying continuity in the practice of racial sovereignty: colonial dispossession. Nonetheless, one strategy won out. The English eventually abandoned attempts at assimilation and turned to the unequivocal pursuit of 'unrestrained enmity toward' and 'almost total separation' from 'the savages' (Vaughn, 1978: 58).

There were two turning points which informed this 'policy shift'. The first was the formation of the tobacco plantation and, by 1619, an explosion in its profitability. This confirmed a change in English colonial aims from a geopolitical and religious rivalry with Spain to a commercial enterprise justified 'on grounds of economic efficiency' (Williams, 1990: 193). Extractivist methods used by English cultivators rendered tobacco production a land intensive enterprise (Craven, 2006). As profitability rose, European settlers flocked to Virginia, bringing indentured and

enslaved labour to their plantations and generating a near exponential demand for new settlements (Horn, 1988: 179; 184). Under these demands, the fact of native presence on potentially cultivable land appeared in the minds of the English as a 'hindrance', an 'obstacle to colonial growth' and an intractable problem (Arneil, 1996: 77). Subsequently, indigenous communities came to be seen less as potentially convertible subjects but more as 'the dehumanized entry barrier to the lawfully mandated sovereignty of the English over the underutilized, savage lands of the New World' (Williams, 1990: 194). The second turning point was an act of indigenous resistance. On March 22nd 1622, the Powhatan confederacy, increasingly frustrated with the widening English incursions onto their land, conducted a coordinated attack on the Virginia Colony. 347 English settlers were killed in a day, reducing the colony's population by a quarter. The English response was brutal, turning to a strategy of total war against indigenous communities regardless of whether they had supported the uprising of 1622. Over the course of a decade long conflict, the English established an infrastructure which separated coloniser from colonised. This involved permanently expelling Powhatans from colonial territories and conjoining regions, redefining Virginia as an exclusively English domain and forbidding any relations or communications with indigenous peoples (other than those diplomatically sanctioned). By 1634, the English had built and fortified a palisade, with lookouts instructed to shoot any indigenous peoples attempting to pass:

> 'The palisade established a country of uncontested English control, a land without Indians, whether Powhatan enemies or the friendly tribes who had been allies during the war. East of the palisade, Tsenacommacah had been transformed permanently into Virginia, its native inhabitants pushed beyond the frontier.' (Kruer, 2009: 93).

The construction of the palisade marked the culmination point of decades long practices of settler-colonial violence, dispossession and racialisation, bringing together – effectively rather than theoretically – those defining components of modern sovereignty: territory, authority and population (in 1634, a local government was established in Virginia, putting in place 'a full-fledged hierarchical territorial organisation' Sack, 1986: 135). This was more than simply the manifestation of a pre-given declaration in the 1606 Charter. Instead, the construction of sovereignty was the specific strategic means through which English settlers responded to a particular colonial crisis.

It was therefore inseparable from race. The palisade marked an act of colonial dispossession which structured the racialisation of Powhatan peoples and territories, collapsing them into a single target of English settlement and domination. As an infrastructure of bordering, the palisade indicated a territorial dividing line between the space of the 'civilised' and space of the 'savage'. This division served to legitimise the violence which secured the civilised 'inside' from the anarchic and uncivilised 'outside'

where violence could be legitimately and freely exercised. Hence, 'the layers of meaning and history packed into the expression "beyond the pale", a phrase conjuring what lies outside the bounds of "propriety and courtesy" but also "protection and safety"' (Brown, 2010: 57). To modify Wendy Brown's discussion of enclosures (ibid.), there is first dispossession and then the sovereign.

We can thus trace how racialised distinctions between the English and indigenous peoples during this period became articulated through two pillars of racial sovereignty – one relating to population, the other to territory. The first pillar: indigenous peoples unequivocally took, in the minds of the English, the form of the monstrous (rather than 'noble') 'savage': unconvertible, threatening and beyond the pale. The second pillar: racialised distinctions were inscribed onto territory, as articulated through the ideology of 'improvement', which drew together emergent practices of capital accumulation, colonial dispossession and racial thinking (Bhandar, 2018). The improvement of land through use became a necessary marker, in English discourse, of a progression out of 'the state of nature' into 'civilisation'. In contrast, the absence of private ownership on indigenous land indicated for the English a 'state of primeval simplicity' (ibid. 48), a wasteland that was lacking improvement. The racialised distinctions between cultivated land and wasteland subsequently became 'the basis upon which European colonial powers justified their legal doctrines of *terra nullius* and discovery' (ibid. 49).

Together, the racialisation of indigenous peoples and lands was affected by colonial claims to authority over them. This was vividly captured in Edward Waterhouse's *A Declaration of the state of the Colonie and Affaires in Virginia,* published as the official Virginia Company report on the 1622 uprising. In this document, Waterhouse (a Company secretary) classified 'the savages' as nonhuman: 'beasts... more fell than Lions and Dragons' (in Kingsbury, 1905). Waterhouse's publication also propagandised for warfare as a means of dispossession:

> 'our hands which before were tied with gentleness and fair usage, are now set at liberty by the treacherous violence of the Savages... we, who hitherto have had possession of no more ground than their waste... may now by right of War, and law of Nations, invade the Country, and destroy them who sought to destroy us... Now their cleared grounds in all their villages (which are situated in the fruitfullest places of the land) shall be inhabited by us.' (ibid.)

This text is revealing not just for the assertions of sovereignty and racism alongside each other. Although these moves are striking, we also see how acts of dispossession structure the seemingly contradictory racialisation of indigenous territories as simultaneously 'waste' and 'fruitfullest'. When read from the analytic of racial sovereignty, however, there is no incongruity at all. These images can coexist precisely because they are cohered through the practice of racial sovereignty in two ways. Firstly, land was made 'waste' by the English not just ideologically but through

colonial conquest and in particular the methods of 'feed fight'. This involved the devastation of indigenous means of subsistence by looting the products of their cultivation, clearing villages or destroying crops altogether (Lee, 2010). The racialised term 'waste' as a marker of 'savagery' was not already given in the materially of the land, nor was it solely an ideological invention, but had to be produced by colonial dispossession. Secondly, this same dispossession rendered the land 'fruitfullest'. Here Waterhouse expressed a wider colonial discourse that assumed land abundance was natural, a coincidence of where 'savages' were 'situated', rather than the result of indigenous labour. After all, improvement was the basis for English possession (and, eventually, a marker of their whiteness). This assumption however could only be sustained by alienating indigenous peoples from their land and abstracting that land from their labour. In sum, it was dispossession that transformed Tsenacommacah into Virginia; Waterhouse's declaration that 'their cleared grounds... shall be inhabited by us' was an assertion of racial sovereignty as a practice, tangling together authority-territory-population through the conceptual abstraction and concrete erasure of indigenous life.

Reading Virginian colonisation through the analytic of racial sovereignty recovers the missing colonial history in the orthodox account on which the separation of race and sovereignty depends. As a mode of analysis, we have seen how racial sovereignty can be used to disclose the relationship between race and sovereignty. Through this analysis, we have seen the operation of racial sovereignty as a practice in which race and sovereignty are co-articulated as a response to colonial crisis. We have also seen how the practice of racial sovereignty generates the very abstractions that contain and therefore deny its racial character. As a practice, racial sovereignty is constantly trying to hide its tracks through strategies of containment and closure. As an analytic, racial sovereignty helps us recover and critique the concealed trails of its continuing circulation.

Beyond All Recognition

So this is not the end of the story. By 1644, following the defeat of two further indigenous uprisings, Virginia was recognised as sovereign by the Powhatan confederacy. The treaty between settlers and natives ratified a legal separation of Virginia from Tsenacommacah, including reserve land for Powhatan inhabitation to the north of the York river. This treaty moreover prevented Powhatan movement through, or residence in, Virginian territories, stating 'any Indians do refare to or make any abode upon the said tract of land, upon pain of death, and it shall be lawful for any person to kill any such Indian' (Henning, 1799: 323-25). The treaty also 'retained the right to expand English territory at will' (Kruer, 2009: 97). It therefore marked the use of recognition as a means of extending English authority 'via indigenous communities who had subordinated

themselves within an English-dominated hierarchy' (Lee, 2010). By co-opting some indigenous communities as 'native leadership', the English encouraged greater hierarchy among indigenous groups in order to divide resistance.

This act of recognition was deployed as a settler practice of racial sovereignty, a response to colonial crisis. Recognition helped constitute a 'founding violence', which 'underpinned not only the right of conquest but all the prerogatives flowing from that right' (Mbembe, 2001: 25). It pulled together those component parts of sovereignty – populations, territory and authority – by creating 'the space over which it was exercised' and asserting 'itself as the sole power to judge its laws' (ibid.). At the same time, recognition was racialising, giving 'the natives a clear notion of themselves in proportion to the power that they had lost', whereby 'anything that did not recognize this violence as authority, that contested its protocols, was savage and outlaw' (ibid. 26).

1644 is therefore notable, not as an event, nor because it signals an isolated moment where conquest, sovereignty or racialisation was completed.[7] Nor does it mark the end of indigenous resistance. Instead, the violence of 1644 (and all that followed) problematises strategies of redemption in the orthodox account, precisely because recognition presupposes a settler existence and futurity that requires indigenous erasure. As Macoun and Strakosch argue,

> 'Simultaneous occupation is an inherently problematic state for settler polities, given that settlers assert a complete jurisdiction over the territory and the presence of Indigenous political societies prevents this claim from being actualized. Because of this disruption, colonialism is always framed as an inherently temporary state which will soon end and give way to completed settler sovereignty. In this way settler colonialism entrenches and sustains itself "on the basis of its own eventual demise."'

Recognition – when posited as the conclusion of settler-native struggles – enables redemptive strategies of containment and closure, inasmuch as it represses ongoing resistance to colonialism while making the authority of settler sovereignty appear coherent and complete. This is perhaps why the idea of recognition has received such thoroughgoing criticism in the anticolonial tradition. Frantz Fanon's (1967) revision of Hegel's master-slave dialectic is instructive for the way he resituates the attendant struggle for recognition in a colonial context. Fanon argues recognition is not mutually and reciprocally defined but instead bestowed by and for the master to sustain their dominance. By persuading the slave into accepting a relation of hierarchy, and their subordinate position within it, recognition generates a psycho-affective prop that simultaneously obscures (contains) and reproduces colonial relations. This argument has since been brilliantly marshalled by Glen Sean Coulthard (2014) in his critique of recognition. Coulthard explains how:

> 'in situations where colonial rule does not depend solely on the exercise of state violence, its reproduction instead rests on the ability to entice Indigenous peoples to *identify*, either implicitly or explicitly, with the profoundly *asymmetrical* and *nonreciprocal* forms of recognition either imposed on or granted to them by the settler state and society.' (ibid. 25)

Both Fanon and Coulthard therefore offer a warning: in colonial contexts, forms of recognition that preserve the categories of both native and settler involve internalising the racialised hierarchies on which these relations rest and accepting the future existence of the coloniser. Recognition reproduces the generative structures of colonial domination, leaving its substantive hierarchies intact (Coulthard, 2014: 35-40).

Fanon is less appreciated for how this critique of recognition might apply to international relations, despite his extensive work on struggles for national liberation. In these writings, Fanon was critical of delimiting visions of national liberation that ended with the removal of former colonial rulers. Without reconfiguring colonial hierarchies internationally, liberation would remain an unfinished project: 'colonialism and imperialism have not settled their debt to us once they have withdrawn their flag and the police force from our territories' (Fanon, 1963). Fanon was wary that these limited visions would, tragically, sustain subordination and dependence to former colonial powers, while reproducing class and racism within and between newly liberated nations (ibid.).

Fanon offered these arguments not to dismiss demands for recognition as unimportant. Instead, he suggested recognition would become problematic when envisaged as an end-in-itself (Go, 2013: 218). In contrast Fanon, like many of his contemporaries, understood national liberation as beginning a revolutionary project of 'worldmaking' (Getachew, 2019) – a localised starting point in the longer, international, struggle against colonialism. A unifying theme in Fanon's work is therefore the incompleteness of decolonisation when limited to a politics of recognition. Equally, Fanon resisted heralding recognition as the conclusion of debates around colonialism, race and sovereignty.

I discuss Fanon against Virginia not to argue that all forms of recognition follow the same historical patterns. Nor am I primarily concerned with whether he was 'right'. Instead, Fanon is instructive because his critique of recognition articulates the memory of movements for liberation that did not stop at recognition. That Fanon continues to inspire contemporary anticolonial and antiracist struggles indicates moreover the enduring significance of this political tradition. These movements historically and contemporaneously disturb the redemptive closure in the orthodox account by continually breaking out of its strategies containment and declaring the debts of colonialism unsettled.

Reading with Fanon might therefore help IR rethink the place of recognition in its disciplinary histories. But this would require a longer and more substantive study than what can be offered here. Instead, these criticisms of recognition render visible the ongoing substantive hierarchies of colonial domination that undergirds international politics. By demonstrating how racialized practices of sovereignty burst the bounds of what is formally promised by recognition, this intervention also moves us away from exhausting the analytics of race and racism through discussions of culture and identity. Our discussion of racial sovereignty must therefore return to an analysis of the ongoing character and materiality of its practices. To do so, I now outline what racial sovereignty might say about the revival of sovereignty talk in the politics of Brexit.

Brexit: Colonial Crisis Comes Home

By turning to Brexit, I do not seek to conflate different histories and practices of racial violence. Nor am I arguing that either race or sovereignty should be treated as stable entities that are unchanging, absolute and complete. Instead, my intention in this section is to demonstrate how practices of racial sovereignty are not limited exclusively to the specific context of settler-colonialism but are entangled with, refracted through and rearticulated in different geographical and historical contexts where colonial relations are apparent. This section therefore considers whether contemporary claims to and desires for sovereignty in the context of Brexit disclose an otherwise disavowed colonial crisis in Britain.

In exploring this idea, I moreover hope that the analytic of racial sovereignty might draw on, connect with and build on wider examinations of Brexit's racialized politics. For example, Sweta Rajan-Rankin (2017) has noted the prevalence of the racializing distinctions between 'us and them' during the Brexit campaign, as well as the marked increase of racist hate-crime after the referendum. For Satnam Virdee and Brendan McGeever (2018: 1807), these hate-crimes were notable given the references to Brexit that accompanied their enactment and that they targeted not just EU migrants but people racialized as Muslim, brown and black. Tina Patel and Laura Connelly (2019) have shown how anti-immigration rhetoric offered a new, 'more palatable' and 'post-racial' mode through which hostility to racialized others could be articulated. Gurminder Bhambra has argued that concerns around migration have secured their 'legitimacy' by conjuring racialized images of an imagined 'white working class'. While legitimising 'analyses that might otherwise have been regarded as racist' (Bhambra, 2017: 214), a focus on the specifically white experiences of economic dislocations brought about by globalisation has displaced 'structures of racialized inequality from the conversation' (ibid. 218). For Robbie Shilliam (2018), then, those discussions around the economy and migration that focussed on the white

working class were framed by long-held racialized distinctions between 'deserving' and 'undeserving poor'.

What role did sovereignty play in these dynamics? After all, sovereignty was cited, alongside immigration, as the main reason people voted Leave (Carl, 2018). It was the third most used term in media coverage of Brexit in 2016, behind only 'immigration' and 'economy'. Sovereignty was moreover most commonly mobilised alongside and in connection with these latter terms (Moore and Ramsay, 2017). Calls for sovereignty also primarily helped articulate a desire for 'control' 'autonomy', 'self-determination', 'independence' and 'liberation', often in opposition to the perceived effects of globalisation and, especially, immigration.

This trend was not separate from the wider discourses of racialisation that marked Brexit. Reclaiming sovereignty from the EU was regularly framed by prominent Leave campaigners as a question of national security against a Muslim threat on and within Britain's borders. For example, Nigel Farage drew an unfounded connection between migration from Syria and terrorist attacks in France and Belgium, to claim the 'EU's open borders make us less safe' (see Virdee and McGeever, 2018: 1806). The Leave EU campaign presented migration as simultaneously an EU imposition *and* security threat, given in the racialized figure of the Muslim. Leave EU's "Breaking Point" poster infamously 'pictured Middle Eastern refugees queuing at Europe's borders. The subheading read: "We must break free of the EU and take back control"' (ibid.).

Across these racialized threats of terrorism and immigration, sovereignty was presented as the mechanism through which Britain could 'take back control'. That is, while fears of racialized threats may explain what drove some to vote Leave, sovereignty articulated the means through which that threat would be eventually dispelled and contained. Sovereignty, was therefore about fairly conventional, but ultimately racialized, concerns around authority over a territory and the need to protect that territory and its population from external and internal threats.

Contemporary calls for sovereignty in the context of Brexit therefore disclose a response, albeit disavowed, to a colonial crisis 'coming home'. In making this claim, I follow a number of interventions that have situated their analysis of Brexit in the historical context of British colonialism and the specificity of its moment of collapse (Bhambra, 2017; El-Enany, 2016; Patel and Connolly 2019; Shilliam, 2018; Virdee and McGeever, 2018). 'Colonial crisis coming home' here denotes the coming together of two dynamics that have defined post-WWII Britain. Firstly, the collapse of the British empire initiated a transformation in the 'imagined community' of Britain, from a multiracial Commonwealth to a predominantly white nation-state. This change occasioned 'a crisis of national identity that called into question the boundaries of the political

community. Who was to be considered on the inside and who was to be considered on the outside?' (Doty, 1996: 124). Gilroy (2004) has aptly described this moment through the socio-psychological affect of 'postcolonial melancholia'. The loss of imperial hegemony at once produced a feeling of 'aching loss' (ibid. 95) and a 'guilt-ridden loathing and depression', which today combine in 'Britain's xenophobic responses to the strangers who have intruded upon it more recently' (ibid. 98). 'Incomers', Gilroy writes, are 'unwanted and feared precisely because they are unwitting bearers of the imperial and colonial past' (ibid. 110).

Secondly, the end of empire also signalled the beginning of so-called 'mass migration' from the colonies to the imperial metropole, famously marked by the 1948 arrival in London of the HMT *Empire Windrush*. Although often presented as an effort to 'rebuild Britain', Windrush signified the beginning of a structural shift in colonial relations, conditioned by the dual crisis of imperial involution and over-accumulation:

> 'The relative-surplus population or 'surfeit' drawn on from the Caribbean and Indian sub-continent to fuel post-war British capitalist expansion was both a product of an over-accumulation of capital in Britain fostered by imperial protection as well as a product of the specific forms of capital accumulation' (Harris, 1993: 9).

The integration of this 'surfeit' effectively, albeit partially, rehabilitated a racialized colonial regime of labour by reassembling it in the British 'homeland'. Here, policies enacted by employers, the state and trade unions enforced a hierarchy of labour, which assigned Caribbean and South Asian workers more precarious employment on lower wages, at longer and more unsociable hours, in semi- and unskilled jobs (Harris, 1993; Lewis, 1993). This racialized labour regime was moreover upheld through discriminatory practices in housing, education and policing, racist enactments of street violence, and ever-narrowing conceptions of British citizenship (Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies 1982).

The tension between these two aspects – postcolonial melancholia on the one hand, the presence of racialized labour exploitation on the other – were early manifestations of the colonial crisis coming home, a growing anxiety felt by colonisers over the requirement to share the British mainland with the colonised.[8] With these shifts, the racializing practices that had long been exported to Britain's 'peripheries' were transferred to and progressively internalised into its 'core'.

In echoes of the Virginia experience, the British response to this crisis oscillated between the strategic poles of assimilation and exclusion. The former presented assimilation as a linear process whereby racial enmity would eventually give way to accommodation as 'aliens' shed their 'outmoded' and 'strange' behaviours and became Anglicised. Exclusionism was articulated through the idea of repatriation; the wholesale removal of

'foreign' elements from Britain to prevent the dilution and eradication of British culture. Most infamously argued in Enoch Powell's *Rivers of Blood* speech, repatriation expressed fears of Britain being 'swamped' by non-white people, eventually outnumbering the 'ethnically white' and rendering them a 'minority' in their 'own nation'.

Both assimilationist and exclusionist discourses drew on racializing practices that inscribed the hierarchies they presupposed on the body of the colonised. This included the construction of a number of racialized and gendered characteristics in those who arrived from the colonies through which they were marked as 'foreign', 'alien', 'black' and 'brown'. First perpetuated in media and political discourses as moral panics, before becoming more widely embedded as 'common sense', such constructions included: criminality; sexual promiscuity and overbreeding; lack of hygiene; atavistic cultural or religious practices; rootlessness; despotic family structures; laziness; absentee parentage; unruly and exceptionally unintelligent children; an unique propensity to misogyny and homophobia; overly sensitive and/or overly aggressive dispositions; violence (Lawrence, 1982). On the assimilationist side, these were characteristics to be eradicated through British tutelage. On the exclusionist side, these were intractable threats that would lead to the decay of Great Britain.

These racializing responses to colonial crisis were accompanied and reinforced by enactments of racial sovereignty. Since WWII, a succession of British government policies have redefined citizenship and national belonging in ways that transformed conceptions of what constitutes British population, territory, and authority. Ever growing restrictions on non-white migration from the Commonwealth (and beyond) were introduced through the Commonwealth Immigration Acts of 1962 and 1968, the Immigration Act of 1971 and the British Nationality Act of 1981 (Doty, 1996: 130-133). Each act narrowed the definition of British citizenship to specifically white Britons, while turning 'darker' British subjects – those from the Caribbean, Asia and Africa – into migrants, foreigners and aliens. Each act, moreover, was accompanied with novel practices through which the racialization of citizenship could be enforced. For example, the 1962 Act created provisions to deport Commonwealth citizens. The 1968 Act was marked by the opening of the first immigration detention centre in Harmondsworth, with additional centres opened after the 1981 Act.

Brexit, with its associated demand for sovereignty, is but the latest iteration of this much longer racialized response to colonial crisis. Appeals to sovereignty in the context of Brexit are effective precisely because they are so readily associated with long durational practices of racial sovereignty that have reconfigured articulations of authority, territory and population by narrowing the confines of British citizenship, national

belonging and identity to whiteness. They are moreover effective in articulating a perceived solution to and protection from racialized threats – the immigrant; the terrorist – themselves constructed and rendered problematic through these same practices of racial sovereignty When read as a response to colonial crisis, contemporary appeals to sovereignty disclose their racialized substance, as a desire to reinscribe racialized authority over the territory and population of Britain, and demarcate inside from outside through racialized acts of bordering.

Conclusion

Today, the materiality of racial sovereignty is most vividly expressed in the increasing visibility of the border. Enforced destitution, street policing, immigration raids, citizenship deprivation, detention, deportation, death – these practices expose both a high watermark of racial sovereignty's efficacy but also the increasing normalisation of its racialising practices. IR should be attentive, then, to the effect it has in contributing to this normalisation through mobilisations of its core disciplinary concept. In particular, this article has offered a way of criticising and moving beyond the containing and closing effects of the 'orthodox account'. In doing so, it has sought to uncover the long durational, ongoing and structuring effects of racial sovereignty in contemporary world politics in ways that cut across the specificity of – and variances between – its different articulations. Analysing these longer genealogies of racial sovereignty suggest contemporary articulations might be especially acute but are not exceptional. Equally too, the struggles against racial sovereignty today act as a reminder of its ongoing salience but also that it remains far from a settled matter.

Beyond IR, I offer this account of racial sovereignty as an alternative way of thinking about race that shifts our discussions beyond identity and culture. I especially hope that a focus on racial sovereignty can help us unearth the ways in which its practices and technologies circulate across differently racialised peoples. I do so, however, with three ambiguities (and therefore areas for further research) in mind. Firstly, we should be aware of, the analytical and political dangers of conflating different racisms, different racialising practices and the different colonial relations behind them (Bhattacharyya, 2018: 76-78). As I have argued, racialisation is not fixed but always uneven and combined in its assembly and adaptive in response to its contestation. The contingency of racialisation therefore necessitates its historicisation across different spatial and temporal contexts. Although I have argued racial sovereignty circulates, this circulation needs to be studied in its specificity to avoid the sort of abstractions that I have criticised the orthodox account for.

Secondly, as we have seen, sovereignty was a key goal in anticolonial projects seeking independence from imperial domination and remains a

central demand in liberation movements today (Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Reynolds, 1996; Salt 2018; Younis 2018). Future investigations might question to what extent the notion of 'colonial crisis' and 'responses to it' can be subverted and rerouted by the colonised in acts of resistance. Could sovereignty be practiced in ways that are distinctly antiracist? Alternatively, how far could the claim 'sovereignty is racialised' be put into productive discussion with criticisms of anticolonial nationalism? Thirdly, it remains uncertain whether the current hypothesis should be restricted to an analysis of European colonial projects, past and present. Can postcolonial and non-Western sovereignties be read through the lens of racial sovereignty (Hansen and Stepputat, 2005)? These ambiguities and questions, I hope, will provide useful prompts for research among those seeking to grapple with both sovereignty and racism today.

Notes

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2. Although the term 'racial sovereignty' is used by Inderpal Grewal (2013) in a discussion of extra-state violence, I use it to refer to wider practices through which 'authority', 'territory' and 'population' are drawn together.
3. These authors have primarily focused on questions of discourse, uneven applications of sovereignty, or alternative articulations of sovereignty. I seek to contribute to these discussions by studying sovereignty as a *practice* which does the work of *producing* racialized differentiation *independently* of any discursive or uneven application.
4. 'Not-white' is used for brevity and to indicate a normative centring of whiteness rather than any homogeneity across differently racialised groups.
5. I draw on SCS clumsily (Wolfe says 'invasion is a structure, not an event'), caught between the specificity of settler-colonialism and indigenous struggle on one hand, and claims that settler technologies circulate and extend beyond specific settler-colonial contexts on the other (la paperson, 2017). Racial sovereignty is a means of thinking between these positions rather than a way of equivocating settler-colonialism with other racialising practices.
6. These terms come from, respectively, Francis Wyatt, governor of the colony and Edward Waterhouse, company secretary. All archival references are drawn from collections in Hening (1799) and

Kingsbury (1905). I have amended spelling within quotations for consistency.

7. Conterminous with the process described here, enslaved Africans were forcibly brought to Virginia in increasing numbers over the course of the 17th century, to work the tobacco plantations. By 1691, to institute a form of social control over enslaved Africans, Englishness as a marker of social status gave way to the explicitly racialised term 'white' (see Allen, 1997).
8. This is *not* to argue that people moving to Britain from its colonies were harbingers of a racial crisis. Nor is it to argue that racism did not exist in Britain prior to Windrush (for a corrective to such arguments see Lawrence 1982).

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