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Intra-Caribbean Diplomacy and Imperial Negotiation; Edward Trelawny, the Marquis de Larnage, and Anglo-French relations in the West Indies, 1720–1748

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ABSTRACT

During the early modern period, concepts of power and authority were heavily contested between rival nations and nascent colonial empires. However, this negotiation was also present in the dealings between colonial officials and agents of the metropolitan government. As well as dealing with each other, the British governor of Jamaica and the French governor of southern Saint Domingue had to constantly negotiate with their superiors in Europe, and with Navy officers sent to enforce the metropoles' agenda in the region. By analysing the correspondence exchanged between these actors, we can understand how intra-Caribbean diplomacy worked and how specific individuals in the region, could and did influence the outcome of Atlantic conflicts.

KEYWORDS

Jamaica; Saint Domingue; authority; autonomy; empire; Caribbean

In March of 1748, the governor of Jamaica, Edward Trelawny, wrote to the Duke of Newcastle, the Secretary of State for the Southern Department. Trelawny was detailing the economic situation in the West Indies and advocating for an offensive against the French in Saint Domingue, amidst the War of the Austrian Succession, stating:

> 'French Hispaniola needs to be devastated by war, if we do not want them to flood the market with tons of sugar at very cheap prices and ruin our own planters'[1]

Trelawny and his French counterpart in Saint Domingue, Charles de Brunier Marquis de Larnage, had previously cooperated in maintaining an effective neutrality in the region. However, once Larnage died in office in November 1746, Trelawny instantly started to campaign for an offensive. Trelawny have stood as an obstacle in Vice-Admiral Vernon's attempts to mobilise Jamaica for war, but he readily supported Charles Knowles in his planning to assault the fortifications in the southern part of Saint Domingue. This article will analyse the reasons

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behind this shift in perspective and highlight the importance of intra-Caribbean diplomacy in Atlantic commercial networks and imperial ambitions.

This article is situated within the concept of new diplomatic history. Where traditional diplomatic history has prioritised the decisions of metropolitan chancelleries and the formal negotiation of treaties, this approach expands the scope of analysis to encompass the social, cultural and performative dimensions of diplomacy. John Watkins, whist introducing the concept of NDH, argued that diplomacy was a cultural, literary, and performative practice that transcended state borders.[2] Tracey Sowerby and Jan Hennings connected new diplomatic history with the emergence of trans-imperial networks, emphasising the negotiation of local actors, rather than the rigidness of state-diplomacy.[3] Scott Hamish advanced the argument claiming that the colonial elites were equally influential with the metropolitan aristocracy in directing foreign policies.[4] In the interdisciplinary manifesto about new diplomatic history, a group of scholars claimed that 'no actor or action is too small to impact diplomacy', and this article reiterates this notion by bringing the diplomatic actions of colonial governors in the foreground.[5]

This article is based on the body of extensive correspondence between Trelawny and Larnage, but also, on the letters they exchanged with their metropolitan superiors, like the minister of the *Marine* Count of Maurepas and the Duke of Newcastle, as well as the Navy officers sent to the Caribbean to enforce the metropoles' foreign policy. I treat the letters not as reports moving vertically up the imperial hierarchy, but as tangible examples of negotiation that created the environment for regional neutrality. Governors frequently contacted each other about various matters, and their correspondence is a valuable analytical tool to understand the nature of intra-Caribbean diplomacy. In the case of this article, Trelawny and Larnage took over their respective positions during a time of peace that brought prosperity and economic opportunities to their colonies. When war threatened this balance, they attempted to minimise its impact. The negotiating process that ensued is a testament to the fact that European colonial powers, such as Britain and France, and their direct representatives could not fully impose their vision on the colonies and had to treat with their governors, almost, as they would do with independent rulers. Their accord ended with Larnage's death, in 1746, and Trelawny began advocating for an offensive against Saint Domingue. Analysing the letters exchanged during this period can illuminate the complexities of the role Trelawny and Larnage played in maintaining the diplomatic status quo between Jamaica and Saint Domingue, and how colonial governors utilised personal connections, to influence metropolitan foreign policy.

Plantation Economies and Colonial Centres of Authority

The Anglo-French accord that Robert Walpole and Cardinal Fleury had cultivated, after 1715, meant that prior to 1748, neither Jamaica nor Saint Domingue

had been seriously affected by the ongoing conflict between the opposing coalitions led by Britain and France.[6] The bulk of the fighting between them took place in Europe and India. In the Caribbean, Britain's main rival was Spain, and after the disastrous Cartagena expedition in 1741, the Royal Navy focused on protecting British shipping lanes rather than pursuing further offensives.[7] The reason for the limited metropolitan involvement in the region can be attributed to two factors; the financial inability of the metropoles to consistently sustain an aggressive war policy in the region, and the efforts of colonial officials who understood the economic importance of stability. James Pritchard has argued that France was reluctant to divert naval and military resources to defend the colonies, since they should have been able to protect themselves, a notion that was shared by Britain, too.[8] However, Benjamin Darnell contradicts this notion, stating that there were periods when Versailles had the intention to invest more, but lacked the capacity.[9] Silvia Marzagalli expands on Pritchard's argument, stating that the port cities of metropolitan France cultivated networks that protected commerce and maintained France's link to its Caribbean holdings, in the absence of naval support.[10] War would have been disruptive to the flow of goods in and out of the colonies and would have forced the colonial governments to divert resources that were crucial to the prevention of enslaved rebellions and the retention of the internal status quo.

The maritime space of the West Indies had been, for many years, a frontier.[11] The Spanish viceroyalties on the mainland were already established and secure, but Spain's position in the Caribbean was challenged by English, French, Dutch and other maritime raiders, acting independently or sanctioned by their governments. By the middle of the seventeenth century, the Iberian dominance in the Americas had been disrupted and new colonies started to emerge, under the flags of Habsburg rivals. Madrid treated the newcomers as pirates and marauders and, indeed, piracy had been used very frequently as a tool by Whitehall, Versailles, and the Hague.[12] However, by the 1720s with the Golden Age of Piracy coming to an end, and relative peace reigning in the West Indies, colonies and metropoles focused their attention towards maximising their profits, and reinforcing the plantation complex of Jamaica and Saint Domingue.

To this end, the role of the colonial officials in the Caribbean was paramount, but they did not always coordinate with their superiors in the metropoles. Arthur Wilson has argued that under the ministry of Cardinal Fleury, France focused on isolating Britain diplomatically with an eye on the next major conflict between the two nations.[13] Walpole, the prime minister at the time, shared Fleury's conviction that peace was needed, and while Britain turned its attention to the *Asiento*, France made serious budget cuts to the *Marine*, the governing body of the French colonies, effectively ceding control of the Atlantic, in order to conserve resources.[14] However, French commerce did not suffer, and Guillaume Daudin suggests that the economic underpinnings

of Atlantic power remained intact in many ways.[15] French power projection may have been less overt, but influence persisted, and Fleury made clear to Walpole that France would not tolerate a significant disruption in the balance of power in the Caribbean, prior to Vernon's departure in 1739.[16]

In the meantime, Jamaica and Saint Domingue were engulfed in internal turmoil that threatened their stability, as well as their economic output. The British were in the middle of the First Maroon War, and in Saint Domingue the commercial privileges of the French West Indies Company (*Compagnie des Indes Occidentales*) had triggered a series of uprisings by the settlers who advocated for the removal of the company monopoly over the colony's trade.[17] Charles Frostin has argued that, although the main actors of the revolt were the poorer white settlers (*Petits Blancs*), they received support from the Dominguan planter class (*Grands Blancs*).[18] Both the poor and the rich settlers had been vocal opponents of the commercial monopoly of the Company, and the expulsion of its agents in January 1723 marked a pivotal moment in the relationship between Versailles and Saint Domingue.[19] After the end of the revolt, Amédée-François Frézier, the newly appointed chief engineer in Saint Domingue, argued that representatives of the metropolitan government needed protection from both external and internal threats.[20]

Jamaica did not experience similar settler insurrections, but it did have larger problems controlling the enslaved population of the colony, as well as the Maroon bands that operated in the island's interior. The First Maroon War lasted until 1740 and significantly hindered the economic capabilities of the colony. The doctrine that dictated that the colonies should pay for their own defence was put to the test several times during this conflict.[21] In 1727 Robert Hunter, the governor at the time, informed the Jamaican House of Assembly that he had petitioned Whitehall to send more regular troops to assist the militia in defeating the Maroons.[22] The Duke of Newcastle was hesitant at first, but as the War of the Quadruple Alliance was in full swing, and with reports arriving in London that a large Spanish force had been mustering in Cuba to assault Jamaica, he acquiesced.[23] It is unclear if the Secretary of State was concerned about foreign invasion or wanted to increase the presence of regulars in Jamaica to control the local government more efficiently. What is clear is that the protection of the *Asiento* was of great importance and Hunter informed the Secretary of State about the developments regarding Anglo-Spanish trade and the profits that were concentrated in Jamaica.[24] The Maroons posed a serious threat to the British position in the colony, and Whitehall wanted to protect the wharfs of Kingston, and to ensure the smooth resumption of the *Asiento* trade.

The volume of trade between the Caribbean and Europe was steadily rising, during the first quarter of the eighteenth century, despite the ongoing conflicts and the threat of maritime marauders. Both Britain and France commissioned privateers to disrupt each other's (and Spain's) trade and increase their own

share in Atlantic commerce.[25] However, this did little to deter merchants from both sides of the ocean from engaging in commercial activities to meet the rising demands of both the metropoles and the colonies for goods and, more importantly, enslaved labour. Table 1 shows the number of enslaved people that arrived in Jamaica and Saint Domingue in the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

The numbers on the table show a staggeringly greater number of enslaved people arriving in Jamaica compared to Saint Domingue, indicating a significantly faster-growing economy, since the plantation complex required large numbers of enslaved labour. A little over 10% of Jamaica's total can be attributed to the *Asiento*, as Table 2 shows. Many of the people that disembarked in Jamaica, were then transported to the ports of the Spanish Main, such as Veracruz, and Cartagena, or Spanish ports in the Caribbean, such as Havana and Santo Domingo. However, a number of enslaved people were being transported illicitly and, therefore, they were seldom documented. Greg O'Malley estimated that the South Sea Company, as well as interlopers, transported approximately 45,000 enslaved Africans to Spanish American ports via Jamaica.[26] This passing trade contributed to the colony's economic growth, with the increased activity in the colony's ports and wharfs.

Slavery was the main driving force for the plantation economies of Jamaica and Saint Domingue, and, consequently, for the establishment of eighteenth-century Atlantic capitalism.[27] The rapid development of large estates worked by enslaved labour led to an exponential increase in the export of crops like sugar, coffee, tobacco and indigo, among others, to the metropoles yielding huge profits to the planters, the merchants, and the government. James Knight, a contemporary planter in Jamaica, noted in 1746 that 'if we consider the immense value of what is imported from this island only […] and the great sums paid to His Majesty for dutys; the sugar colonies and more particularly this island, may very justly be deemed equal to as many gold or silver mines'.[28] Jamaica and Saint Domingue required large numbers of enslaved labourers and were behind only Brazil in human imports, as Table 3 shows.[29]

In 1738, Edward Trelawny's first task as governor was to stabilise the colony so that its production, which had suffered amidst the conflict with the Maroons, would resume and British commerce with its most valuable asset would

Table 1. Number of enslaved people arriving at Jamaica and Saint Domingue from West Africa, 1701–1725.[61]

Year Range	Jamaica	Saint-Domingue	Totals
1701-1705	27,986	607	28,593
1706–1710	28,146	1,568	29,714
1711–1715	29,287	10,003	39,290
1716–1720	35,539	18,953	54,492
1721–1725	43,134	15,514	58,648
	164,092	46,645	210,737

Table 2. Number of enslaved people departing Jamaica for Spanish ports in the Caribbean and the Spanish Main, 1701–1725.[62]

Year Range	Caribbean	Spanish Mainland Americas	Totals
1701–1705	120	0	120
1711–1715	0	604	604
1716–1720	1,150	4,182	5,332
1721–1725	1,347	11,807	13,154
	2,617	16,593	19,210

continue uninterrupted. Trelawny took advantage of the exhausted state of the Maroons and orchestrated two treaties that recognised their status as free men, whilst forcing them to assist the authorities hunt down escaped enslaved people.[30] With internal peace, relatively, secured Jamaica experienced a boom in its sugar production and exports to the metropole rose. The absence of any significant French naval squadrons in the region paired with the rare peace that reigned in the Caribbean for much of the 1730s meant that opportunities for business were encouraging. As a result, more Europeans migrated to Jamaica drawn by the prospect of financial gains and employment in the colonial government.[31] For reference, Knight moved to Jamaica around that time.

A similar trend occurred in Saint Domingue. From 1720 until 1744, France was officially at peace in the Caribbean and focused on expanding its commercial share and significantly invest in her colonies. Saint Domingue produced other commodities in higher quantities than Jamaica, like coffee and indigo, but sugar was both more profitable and more prestigious, since it required more land, more workers, and consequently, more capital to be invested. Sugar planters were considered part of the social elite, and they wanted to transform their economic potency into political power.[32]

Negotiating Neutrality and the Commercial Status quo; Correspondence Between Colonial Officials and Navy Officers

The Marquis de Larnage took office in November 1737. Both he and Trelawny understood the importance of internal peace and made significant efforts to appease the planters and to avoid the hostile policies of Hunter and Frézier. During the build up to the Cartagena expedition, Trelawny disagreed with the military leaders of the campaign, Admiral Vernon and General Wentworth. Vernon had requested from the Jamaican Assembly troops, victuals, and enslaved people to support his offensive against the Spanish. This was met

Table 3. Number of enslaved people that arrived in each colony, 1721–1750.

Year range	Spanish colonies (Caribbean and Main)	Jamaica	Saint Domingue	Brazil
1721–1730	1,563	96,609	2,151	11,334
1731–1740	7,030	93,219	62,357	145,837
1741–1750	4,514	82,438	63,574	183,424
Totals	13,107	272,266	128,082	340,595

with fierce opposition by the planters who did not want to lose their valuable enslaved labour and disrupt the production of their estates. Trelawny stood by the side of the planters despite his initial support for Vernon's request.[33]

Although an attack on the Spanish would yield immediate profits for the British in the form of loot, Trelawny and Larnage recognised that trade would provide more sustainable income. Even Vernon acknowledged this and did not want alarm the French with such a large military force so close to the French Antilles. Vernon wrote to Larnage that he came 'into these seas under my Royal Master's orders for maintaining the honour of the Crown and securing the commerce of his subjects'.[34] Notably, he did not explicitly state that he was mounting an offensive against the Spanish, although his letter contains numerous accusations against them. He reassured Larnage that his fleet's purpose was merely to ensure British trade continued uninterrupted. Vernon went as far as to suggest that French trade had been harmed by the efforts of the Spanish and referenced the recent Anglo-French alliance, to assure Larnage that he meant no harm to Saint Domingue, or the French Antilles in general. Vernon acted this way to assert his position as a superior to any colonial official in the Caribbean, including Trelawny, since he was sent there by the king. However, the governor was also a representative of the monarch, so a matter of jurisdiction arose between the admiral and Trelawny. Vernon assumed he was the ultimate authority in matters of foreign policy in the West Indies and that he commanded the resources of the British colonies in the region. Trelawny, on the contrary, did not want to upset the balance he had cultivated with the French, and risk the apparent security of Jamaica by committing to Vernon's offensive.

The letter that Vernon sent to the French governor holds a distinct significance in the context of Anglo-French relations. By referencing the recent alliance between their nations, Vernon wanted to portray himself and his expeditionary force as a tool to protect French interests, as well as British. He conveniently omitted the primary objective of the campaign to occupy and eventually annex Spanish territory, as this would have been seen by Larnage as a threat to the French.[35] Another reason for Vernon's correspondence with Larnage was to ensure that there would be no intervention by the French to support Spain. In 1733, the two Bourbon powers had signed the *Pacte de Famille* bringing a period of mutual animosity to an end and posing a renewed problem for the British and their operations in the Caribbean.[36] Officially, the terms of the pact demanded that France would have to come to Madrid's aid at the event of a British attack, but Larnage knew that, unless a large naval force was dispatched from France to support his own forces, he could not hope to defeat Vernon. Nevertheless, Larnage saw no obligation to intervene and prioritised Saint Domingue's stability. Maintaining the commercial status quo was of paramount importance, given the fact that Saint Domingue experienced a stable economic growth because of peace in the region.

However, Larnage's idle demeanour towards Vernon's force certainly did not come from a place of weakness. At the time, Saint Domingue was home to the Marquis d'Antin's squadron consisting of 22 ships of the line and tasked with the defence of the colony and French interests in the area.[37] Vernon's force was much larger, but he knew that if he antagonised the French, his primary objective to capture Cartagena would become a lot harder. Larnage correctly assumed that the British would not risk a French intervention, and assured the commander of the Spanish squadron anchored in Havana that the French were 'masters at sea'.[38] However, the governor was fully aware that should the British be successful in their campaign and annex parts of New Spain or New Granada they would be in a position of unrivalled strength and would disrupt the balance of power in the West Indies. Larnage while cognisant of the threat the British offensive posed to French interests in the region, understood the delicate diplomatic avenues he had to tread and although he seemed confident of France's naval strength he elected not to intervene. The Marquis d'Antin had orders to prevent any annexation of Spanish territory by Vernon even at the cost of war, but this would have surely disrupted Saint Domingue's trade. Larnage, fearing this development, certainly influenced the head of the *Marine*, Count of Maurepas, to recall the admiral in 1740 and leaving only a token force to defend Saint Domingue.[39]

Vernon was certainly pleased with the withdrawal of the bulk of the French warships, but his negotiations with Trelawny were a more pressing issue. The governor had rejected his request to commandeer enslaved labourers from Jamaica's plantations to assist the Royal Navy, and Vernon was very outspoken in his criticism of the governor. So much so, that supporters of the war in the Caribbean had to intervene. William Pulteney, an MP of the opposition was in frequent contact with the Admiral during his posting in Jamaica. In one such letter, after congratulating him for his seizure of Portobello, he urged Vernon to cooperate with Trelawney stating: 'Pray make my compliments to Mr Trelawny […] for it is great joy to me to consider that [Britain's] honour will be retrieved, and her trade restored by the union of two such worthy men such as he and you'.[40] It is evident that people in Britain were aware of the volatile situation between the two men and the fact that MPs had to write to Vernon to persuade him to cooperate with Trelawny speaks volumes about the importance of a unified British front in the Caribbean.

Trelawny was not totally against the war in the region, and he was certainly not a pacifist. His primary concern was the continuation of West Indian trade and the increase of Jamaica's share in it. He was no stranger to Whitehall's plans for the annexation of Spanish territory, but he had his own vision about how Britain should pursue further expansion. In a letter to the Secretary of State he stated 'Surely it will be better that no European Prince whatsoever had the entire possession so as to exclude the others [European powers] from trading with so great and rich part of the world, but that it should be in the

hands of the natives, who would naturally break into so many independent governments, none of which could arrogate to itself the commerce of the whole'.[41] Pares argues that Trelawny advocated for the dissolution of the Spanish Empire in Central America through British support for potential rebellions among the Creoles and the indigenous people.[42] In the same letter, he identified France and the United Provinces as potential trade partners, but only after Britain had established regional supremacy, stating 'I would not desire to exclude the Dutch or even the French from trading with the West Indies, but only with our own settlements […] tho' we should have […] the greatest benefit by possessing the most advantageous places for commerce'. He was open to future annexations, but he was careful not to upset the Jamaican planters by advocating for more sugar colonies. Trelawny's primary goal seemed to have been to supplant Curaçao and Saint Eustatius, as commercial centres in the Caribbean. The Dutch thrived every time war loomed over the region, and his accord with Larnage aimed at curtailing their influence.[43]

There was a strong sentiment in Britain for annexing more territory in the West Indies and in Central America. The fulfilment of Cromwell's Western Design, and the pioneering legacy of the Tudor 'seadogs played certainly a part, however, the driving force behind any plans by the government in Whitehall for more colonies in the region was sugar.[44] It was almost certain that any new colony acquired by Whitehall would soon adopt the plantation model and cultivate sugar. This might have been to the benefit of the metropole, but it would be disastrous for the existing planter class under the British flag. By 1740, British sugar fetched a high price and Philip Curtin argues that the access to North American and Irish markets meant that the Jamaican planters had an effective control of the plantation trade.[45] More sugar colonies controlled by Britain would have meant that the already established and prosperous plantations of Jamaica, Barbados, Antigua, etc. would had to compete in the same market, possibly having to lower their prices to maintain their competitive edge. Pares has argued that Jamaican planters had extensive connections with Members of Parliament and other influential policy makers in London and lobbied to avoid further conquests in the region.[46]

Coincidentally, Versailles was against any territorial expansion in the Caribbean, and its primary focus was the consolidation of its European holdings and the protection of its existing colonies. This was partly due to Fleury's policies towards Britain, and partly due to its history of strained relationships with the colonists. France already exacted huge profits from its Caribbean holdings and Maurepas was not ready to jeopardise this by annexing more territory. As a result, Larnage had a simpler task compared to his Jamaican counterpart. Anderson argues that the prospect of any newly acquired territory attracting settlers and resources away from France's existing colonies was not seen favourably at Versailles.[47] Although this has merit, we must address the fact that France did embark on a conquering spree over the previous decades,

albeit in Europe, and the *Marine* was notoriously frugal when it came to colonial investment, even before the King allocated these resources to the home front. Nevertheless, Maurepas intended to keep control of the Caribbean and not leave it to British hands. After he succeeded at securing more funds for the *Marine* he began organising armed escorts for French merchant fleets.[48]

Trelawny's proposition for the dismemberment rather than the annexation of the Spanish Empire would appease both sides of the British Atlantic. New markets would open for British goods, whilst the Jamaican planters could keep their high sugar prices. Trelawny and Larnage understood the source of their authority. Instead of aiming to simply placate their metropolitan superiors, they were vocal and active in promoting the interests of their respective colonies and their own vision for the region, even when they had to go against their governments.

However, Trelawny's carefully constructed plan to increase British power in the Caribbean through nonaggressive means was scrapped once the War of the Austrian Succession erupted and pitted Britain and France at the helm of opposing coalitions. After Vernon's disastrous attempt at seizing Cartagena and the reappearance of French warships in the region, thanks to the initiatives of Maurepas, Whitehall's position in the West Indies was under threat. Vernon had been recalled to England in 1742, but Trelawny still had to deal with Royal Navy officers that had very different ideas about how to conduct the war, now against France. Both governors, also tried to deter privateers operating from Jamaica and Saint Domingue, from raiding each other's jurisdiction. Larnage and Trelawny wanted to put an end to the raids, because they targeted plantations and carried away enslaved people, hampering the productivity of both colonies.[49]

French naval personnel also changed in the region, with the arrival of the Marquis de Caylus commanding a squadron recently arrived from Europe. His orders were to protect Saint Domingue and harass British trade, when possible. However, Larnage was quick to inform de Caylus about the delicate balance that he and Trelawny had cultivated and redirect the fleet towards the colony's economic objectives.

In a letter he sent to the new commander of the squadron around Saint Domingue, Larnage stated that 'the fleet that Monsieur de Macnémara must accompany to France is of great importance to the service of the King and the state […] he must convoy 76 ships, and his fleet is blocked by 19–30 warships'.[50] Larnage informed de Caylus of the current situation around Saint Domingue and stressed the importance of the safe departure of the ships. He, also, mentioned that the British blockade was not an issue, but he wanted to let de Caylus know that there were superior to his forces in the region. It is true that the Royal Navy squadron had more ships of the line, and the bulk of the French ships of the line went back to Europe with d'Antin. However, in the aftermath of Cartagena and the attack on Cuba, the

British had suffered numerous losses to disease and battles and were at a significant disadvantage compared to de Caylus' fresh mariners. Moreover, the Jamaica squadron did not have more than five ships of the line, at that time.[51] Larnage certainly was aware of this, and he prioritised the departure of the commercial fleet commanded by de Macnémara. The governor's insistence on the protection of the convoy is evident by the language he used: '*Monsieur de Macnémara doit convoyer la flotte*'. The ships that needed armed escort to France carried much of Saint Domingue's yearly produce, and Larnage elected to see to their safe departure, rather than assisting de Caylus in potential offensives against the British. Pares has argued that the focus on the convoy system was instrumental in the continuation of the French trade during the war, an initiative of Maurepas that Larnage was fully supportive of.[52] The governor, also, knew that each ship that sailed from France to transport Saint Domingue's crops, brought with it valuable victuals to the colony, on orders from Maurepas.[53]

The effectiveness of Larnage's and Trelawny's relatively peaceful settlement was immediately evident when the former died and was succeeded by Étienne Cochard de Chastenoye. The new governor lacked his predecessor's political acumen, and he could not maintain the careful diplomatic balance that Trelawny and Larnage had carefully crafted. De Caylus, free of Larnage's leash, proceeded to antagonise the foreign traders that were allowed to conduct their business in Saint Domingue, leading to increased regional tension. He was successful in expelling the Dutch traders, neutral during the war, which Versailles deemed essential for halting Saint Domingue's overreliance to foreign merchants, but after the war, Caylus allowed them to return, much to Maurepas' chagrin.[54]

Trelawny's and Larnage's carefully constructed system in the West Indies had been thoroughly disturbed by the death of the latter. The governor of Jamaica was forced to become a vocal advocate for an offensive against Saint Domingue, but one cannot neglect the fact that he was fully aware of Jamaica's economic output and how it compared with that of French Hispaniola. The accord between the two governors was based on the shared notion that Anglo-French hostilities would harm the smooth flow of trade in the region. They were aware that Jamaica and Saint Domingue were direct commercial rivals, in the eyes of their overlords, but without substantial support from the metropole, one could not harm the other. Additionally, the political acumen of both Trelawny and Larnage was such that they managed to maintain this neutrality, while resisting the pressure of men like Vernon and de Caylus. Trelawny understood that this was an opportunity that could not be missed, and it is possible that he used Larnage's death as the optimal timing to authorise an assault on Saint Domingue. It is important to consider that he did not exchange any significant correspondence with Chastenoye, possibly hinting at his lack of intention to maintain the apparent neutrality of the two colonies. Trelawny

might, also, wanted to test Chastenoye and gain an advantage before the inevitable cessation of hostilities. In 1748, Charles Knowles, the newly appointed commander of the Royal Navy in Jamaica, heeded Trelawny's advice and attacked the fortress of Saint-Louis-du-Sud in Saint Domingue.[55]

Although Vernon had written to Larnage to reassure him of his peaceful intentions towards Saint Domingue, he declared that should France join Spain in the war, the British would retaliate against Saint Domingue: 'Mr. Vernon offered it to the consideration of the Council of War, that in regard to the appearances there were of a speedy French War, he could not think of anything more likely for us to succeed in upon such an event, than immediately proceeding to make an attempt on Léogane and Petit Guave'.[56] Trelawny had co-signed the document, but given the state of the British forces after Cartagena an offensive seemed unlikely at the time. Moreover, Trelawny did not want to disrupt his accord with Larnage, but he could not appear to the Council of War as an opponent to a potential war with France. His acquiescence to Vernon's proposal seems more as a way of placating the Admiral, rather than fully supporting an offensive, at the current state of affairs.

Trelawny was a shrewd politician and understood that his longevity in office relied upon good relations with the planter dominated House of Assembly and, at least, a level of understanding with neighbouring colonial officials. During the five years between the start of the Anglo-Spanish War and that against France, Trelawny and the Marquis de Larnage exchanged a fair number of letters relating to inter-colonial matters between their respective dominions. In one such letter, the French governor asked Trelawny to return several French vessels captured by British privateers, in 1740 and 1741. His request was based on the fact that Britain and France were not at war at the time these were captured, meaning that the French ships were not lawful prizes.[57]

Colonial governors were frequently engaging in a form of separate diplomacy, ready to mend (if not outright) ignore metropolitan directives, if it suited their colony's interests. Additionally, the Caribbean was a microcosm where imperial jurisdictions were curbed, mended, and shifted frequently.[58] Moreover, Trelawny was in communication with the governor of Dutch Curaçao about the aggression of the British privateers, and it is safe to assume that this alternate foreign policy was in full throttle during his governorship.[59] However, he was prudent enough to enclose these letters to the Secretary of State and thus avoiding possible charges of treason.[60] Actions such as these were indicative of the negotiating nature of political power in the Caribbean, especially in matters of defence against foreign aggression, where agents of the Admiralty felt like they had to take precedence. The communication between 'rival' colonial officials did not mean the complete absence of aggression, but personal relationships nevertheless clearly played an integral part in inter-colonial diplomacy.

Conclusive Remarks

Trelawny's decision to fully endorse an offensive against Saint Domingue can be attributed to his determination to improve the position of Jamaican produce in the Atlantic markets, by inflicting a blow to Saint Domingue. His accord with Larnage was no longer in effect, and one can argue that both governors understood the limits of their roles. The prosperity of a Caribbean colony manifested through trade; the crops that it could produce and how readily it could make them available to a broader market. Since both Jamaica and Saint Domingue relied heavily on trade, stability in the region was paramount. However, during a period where metropolitan intervention in the Caribbean was very limited, merchant shipping was at peril. The principle of 'no peace beyond the line' and the sheer distance between the Caribbean and Europe meant that news relating to international diplomacy took months to reach their intended targets. Colonial officials acted, largely, independently and had to consider the ever-shifting reality of European diplomacy.

The most effective way of harming a rival sugar colony's trade was to commission privateers and attack either its supply lines, or its supply of enslaved labour. Most of the Caribbean colonies relied on other territories for their supply of victuals, and disrupting these yielded immediate advantages. With the acquisition of the *Asiento* Britain, nominally at least, had an edge over France in the transatlantic slave trade. However, it needed to adequately protect its merchant lanes to take full advantage of the newly opened Spanish market. Internal problems in both colonies did facilitate the need for smooth relations, and these were also byproducts of the general Anglo-French entente of Walpole and Fleury.

The arrival of Trelawny and Larnage coincided with a gradual return to hostilities between their respective nations, but their accord for the retention of the status quo in the Caribbean had a profound effect in the way diplomacy was conducted. Jamaica and Saint Domingue were rapidly developing a need for enslaved labour to work their plantations, and safeguarding this became a priority. By communicating with each other, both governors coordinated their actions and provided their respective domains with the security they needed to conduct their business. They did not hesitate to come at odds with imperial agents, such as Navy commanders, but the actions of Trelawny and Larnage showcased that they preferred peace between their colonies, rather than war, not strictly because of personal sympathy, but because it was more profitable. When Larnage died and was replaced by Chastenoye, this accord came to an end and Trelawny was eager to use the resources of the Royal Navy to inflict heavy damage in Saint Domingue's ability to defend its produce. The attack may have damaged the fortifications, but it did little to hinder the flow of sugar out of French Hispaniola.

Thus, the end of the 1740s brought with it an end to a period of relative autonomy in the West Indies. Larnage's death in 1746 and Trelawny's

resignation in 1752, saw the end of the colonial governor as a politician as well as a military commander. In Jamaica the Royal Navy officer responsible for the attack on Saint Domingue in 1748, Charles Knowles became governor, and he implemented a stricter model of administration, in line with Britain's renewed desire of effectively controlling its colonies. In Saint Domingue, Chastenoye remained in office for two years before he was replaced by the Count of Conflans, a Navy officer and a favourite of Maurepas. Both Britain and France implemented tighter trade regulations and the appointment of military leaders as governors showcased that a new imperial era was dawning, one dominated by stricter metropolitan control.

Notes

1. Edward Trelawny to the Duke of Newcastle, 12 March 1748, CO 137/58, TNA
2. Watkins, "Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe."
3. Sowerby and Hennings, *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c.1410-1800*.
4. Scott, *The Birth of a Great Power System, 1740–1815*.
5. de Boer et al., "Provincializing "New' Diplomatic History: An Interdisciplinary Manifesto."
6. On the Anglo-French Alliance in the 1720s see Black, "French Foreign Policy in the Age of Fleury Reassessed."
7. On the War of Jenkins' Ear see also Chapman, *Disaster on the Spanish Main: The Tragic British-American Expedition to the West Indies During the War of Jenkins' Ear*.; Schmitt, "Virtue in Corruption: Privateers, Smugglers, and the Shape of Empire in the Eighteenth-Century Caribbean."p. 80-110; Young and Levy, "Domestic politics and the escalation of commercial rivalries: Explaining the War of Jenkins' Ear, 1739–1748."
8. Pritchard, *In Search of Empire: the French in the Americas, 1670-1730*.p. 356
9. Darnell, *Maritime Power and the Power of Money in Louis XIV's France: Private Finance, the Contractor State, and the French Navy*. p. 30–37
10. Marzagalli, *Les boulevards de la mer: Bordeaux, le négoce international et les trafics maritimes, XVIIe–XIXe siècles*.
11. On the frontier nature of the Caribbean see also Nanton, *Frontiers of the Caribbean*. Boucher, "The Frontier Era of the French Caribbean, 1620s-1690s."
12. On piracy in the Caribbean see also Lane, *Blood and Silver: A history of piracy in the Caribbean and Central America*.; Lane, *Pillaging the empire: global piracy on the high seas, 1500-1750*.; Apestegui Cardenal, *Pirates of the Caribbean : buccaneers, privateers, freebooters and filibusters, 1493-1720*.; Arnold, "Corsaires, Aventuriers, Flibustiers et Pirates: Identité Régionale à la Frontière de l 'Empire Espagnol dans la Caraïbe."p. 213-227; Rediker, *Villains of all nations : Atlantic pirates in the golden age*.; Hennessy-Picard, "La piraterie atlantique au fondement de la construction des souverainetés coloniales européennes."online, last accessed 02/02/2025, URL : http://journals.openedition.org/champpenal/9275, DOI : https://doi.org/10.4000/champpenal.9275
13. Wilson, *French foreign policy during the administration of Cardinal Fleury, 1726–1743 : a study in diplomacy and commercial development*.p. 318

14. Riley, *The Seven Years War and the Old Regime in France: The Economic and Financial Toll*.p. 164–165
15. Daudin, "Profitability of Slave and Long-Distance Trading in Context: The Case of Eighteenth-Century France."
16. Lenman, *Britain's Colonial Wars, 1688-1783*.p. 69
17. On the Jamaican Maroons see also McKee, "From violence to alliance: Maroons and white settlers in Jamaica, 1739–1795."p. 27-52; Bilby, *True-born Maroons*.
18. Frostin, *Les révoltes blanches à Saint Domingue aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* p. 131–135
19. Thorpe, "In Defence of Sugar: The Logistics of Fortifying the French Antilles under the Regency, 1715-1723."p. 75
20. Ibid. p. 76
21. Graham, "Fortification, Engineering, and Empire in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Jamaica."p. 47
22. Robert Hunter to the Assembly of Jamaica, 15 February 1728, CO 137/53, TNA
23. The Duke of Newcastle to Robert Hunter, 17 February 1728, CO 137/53, TNA
24. Robert Hunter to the Duke of Newcastle, 18 January 1733, Calendar of State Papers Colonial Series America and the West Indies 1733, p. 23
25. Registers for Declarations for Letters of Marque Against Spain 1719-1739, HCA 26/29-32, TNA; Letters of Marque Against France 1744, HCA 26/4, TNA; Registers for Declarations for Letters of Marque Against Spain and France 1744-1745, HCA 26/22, TNA
26. For a more detailed analysis on the Asiento see also O'Malley, *Final passages : the intercolonial slave trade of British America, 1619-1807*. p. 221–222
27. Burnard and Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica*.p. 3
28. Knight, *The Natural, Moral and Political History of Jamaica, and the Territories thereon depending; From the first Discovery of the Island by Christopher Columbus to the Year 1746*.p. 552
29. Sourced using data provided by https://www.slavevoyages.org/ (last accessed 15/02/2025)
30. Price, *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*. p. 272
31. Brown, *Tacky's Revolt: The Story of an Atlantic Slave War*.p. 29
32. Burnard and Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica*. p. 3–4
33. Ranft, *The Vernon Papers*.p. 18–19
34. Edward Vernon to Larnage, 23 February 1739, Orders and Other Papers Related to the West Indies, VER/1/2 f. 95, Caird Library, National Maritime Museum
35. Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies*.p. 71
36. Lenman, *Britain's Colonial Wars, 1688-1783*.p. 60
37. Ogelsby, "Spain's Havana Squadron and the Preservation of the Balance of Power in the Caribbean, 1740-1748."p. 477
38. Ibid.p. 478
39. D'Antin to Maurepas, 22 December 1740, MAR B/4/50, AN
40. William Pulteney to Vernon, 27 March 1740, *Vernon Papers*, Publications of the Navy Records Society, vol 99, p. 79
41. Edward Trelawny to the Duke of Newcastle, 15 January 1740, CO 137/57, TNA
42. Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies*. p. 74–76
43. Klooster, "Curaçao as a transit center to the Spanish main and the French West Indies." Jordaan and Wilson, "The eighteenth-century Danish, Dutch and Swedish free ports in the Northeastern Caribbean: Continuity and change,"---.
44. On the seventeenth century English incursion into the Caribbean see also Barratt, *Cromwell's Wars at Sea*.; Venning, "The Western Design."; Armitage, "The Cromwellian

Protectorate and the languages of empire."p. 531-555; Pestana, *The English Conquest of Jamaica*

Oliver Cromwell's Bid for Empire.; Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire: Labor, Slavery, and the Origins of the British Atlantic Empire*.

45. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History*.p. 140
46. Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies*. p. 79
47. Anderson, *The War of the Austrian Succession, 1740-1748*.p. 180
48. Rule, "Jean-Frédéric Phélypeaux, Comte de Pontchartrain et Maurepas: Reflections on His Life and His Papers."p. 369; Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean; a Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815*.p. 249–250
49. The Marquis de Larnage to Edward Trelawny, 2 February 1745, CO 137/57, TNA
50. The Marquis de Larnage to the Marquis de Caylus, 9 May 1746, COL C8/A57 f. 79, ANOM
51. Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies*. p. 266
52. Ibid.p. 315
53. Maurepas to the Marquis de Larnage, 17 March 1744, COL B/78, ANOM
54. Maurepas to the Marquis de Caylus, 6 March 1749, COL B/87, ANOM
55. Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739-1748*.p. 122
56. Resolutions of a General Council of War Held at Spanish Town, Jamaica, 28 June 1742, *Vernon Papers*, Publications of the Navy Records Society, vol 99, p. 252
57. The Marquis de Larnage to Edward Trelawny, 11 April 1741, CO 137/57, TNA
58. Mulich, "Microregionalism and intercolonial relations: the case of the Danish West Indies, 1730–1830."
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61. https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database#tables (last accessed 05/02/2025)
62. https://www.slavevoyages.org/american/database#tables (last accessed 05/02/2025)

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