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THE BORDER-SEAS OF A NEW BRITISH EMPIRE: SECURITY AND THE
BRITISH ATLANTIC ISLANDS IN THE AGE OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

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To: Dean John F. Stack, Jr.
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

This dissertation, written by Ross Michael Nedervelt, and entitled *The Border-seas of a New British Empire: Security and the British Atlantic Islands in the Age of the American Revolution*, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgement.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family and friends.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

THE BORDER-SEAS OF A NEW BRITISH EMPIRE: SECURITY AND THE
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by

Ross Michael Nedervelt

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Professor Jenna M. Gibbs, Major Professor

“The Border-seas of a New British Empire” explores the relationship between the rebellious thirteen colonies and the British Atlantic Islands of Bermuda and the Bahamas, and how the “on the ground” impact of the American Revolution explains not only why they did not join the rebellion—despite initial sympathy for the cause—but illustrates also the long-term political, cultural, commercial, and military transformation wrought by the war and its aftermath. To understand the British Atlantic islanders’ allegiances during the American Revolution and the impact of the islands’ loss on the United States, this dissertation employs Atlantic, borderlands and border-seas, and security interpretive methods of analysis. This work pays close attention to Bermudian and Bahamian colonial documents, trade records, newspaper reports, and correspondence to illuminate the pragmatic and fluid nature of the islanders’ loyalties during the conflict. Records from the Continental Congress, American patriot diplomats, British colonial administrators, and the Admiralty reveal how American and British officials came to understand the British Atlantic Islands as strategic assets in the post-revolutionary war Atlantic world.

In 1775 and 1776, American patriots' interactions with the neighboring British Atlantic Islands endeavored to solidify the revolutionary United States' sovereignty and international security by pursuing plans to expand their territory beyond the North American mainland to avert future British military threats. The United States' inability to wrest Bermuda and the Bahamas away from Britain through military force or diplomatic negotiations in 1783 constituted significant losses. Britain's retention of both colonies enabled the Royal Navy and subversive British agents to challenge the nascent republic's sovereignty in the western Atlantic and along its southeastern borderlands. British entrenchment at its Atlantic islands, and subsequent efforts to undermine American sovereignty, precipitated the War of 1812 and the United States military's actions in Spanish Florida in 1819. "The Border-seas of a New British Empire" concludes that American patriots' inability to annex Bermuda and the Bahamas forced the independent United States to fight a series of skirmishes and wars between 1783 and 1819.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AGI	Archivo General de Indias
AO	Audit Office
BJAMH	Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History
BL	British Library
CO	Colonial Office
CSP:CS	Calendar of State Papers: Colonial Series
CUST	Records of the Boards of Customs
CWS	Correspondence of William Shirley
HCA	High Court of the Admiralty
HSP	Historical Society of Pennsylvania
JBTP	Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations
JCC	Journals of the Continental Congress
LAC	Library Archive of Canada
MHS	Massachusetts Historical Society
PBF	Papers of Benjamin Franklin
PGW:RWS	Papers of George Washington: Revolutionary War Series
PRO	Domestic Records of the Public Records Office

RDCUS

The Revolutionary Diplomatic
Correspondence of the United States

T

Treasury Papers

TCP

Tucker Coleman Papers

INTRODUCTION

Britain's victory over France in the Seven Years' War and domination of the Atlantic manifested Robert Walpole's vision of a great "blue-water empire," and secured the safety of her North American, Atlantic island, and Caribbean colonists from interference by competing European empires.¹ The Royal Navy's supremacy in the Atlantic allowed North American and Caribbean merchants and vessels to connect British and European manufactured goods, Caribbean sugar, African slaves, and the fruits of North American farms and fisheries to markets around the Atlantic world. Britain's emergence as the dominant European colonial force in India opened new commercial routes and opportunities to the east, and brought greater quantities of tea, spices, and fine artisanal goods to the metropole and American colonies.² Indeed, for Britons and British colonists alike, the first couple of years following the Seven Years' War represented the dawn of an era of great optimism and prosperity.

Victory, however, came at a significant financial and political cost to the metropole. The administration's revenue policies fragmented the British Atlantic world as colonists engaged in debates and protests over the constitutionality of internal imperial

¹ Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 37; Daniel A. Baugh, "Great Britain's 'Blue-Water' Policy, 1689-1815," *International History Review* 10, no. 1 (Feb., 1988), 33-58.

² Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 177-178, 417-418; P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America c. 1750-1783* (New York and Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005), 182-206, 207-228, 229-272; Jonathan Eacott, *Selling Empire: India in the Making of Britain and America, 1600-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 168-226.

taxation. Through the enactment of the Sugar Act of 1764, Stamp Act of 1765, Townshend Acts of 1767, the Tea Act of 1767, as well as the American Colonies Act of 1766 (commonly called the Declaratory Act), Parliament and successive British administrations attempted to solidify and assert their authority over the American colonies. Parliamentary action endeavored to reform taxation and customs regulations within the expanded British Empire.³ Colonial protestors mounted a vigorous and violent opposition against the administrations' internal taxes in the thirteen mainland colonies' port cities, while British Caribbean, Atlantic island, Florida, and Canadian colonists exhibited a spectrum of reactions spanning from protests to acquiescence.⁴ The colonial protests and anti-parliamentary tax resolutions polarized the circum-Atlantic political debate over colonial rights, imperial authority, and sovereignty in the British Atlantic

³ *Acts of the Privy Council of England, Colonial Series*, eds. W. L. Grant and James Munro, vol. 4, 1745-1766 (London: H.M.S.O., 1911), 569-572; "Beginnings of Parliamentary Taxation for Revenue: The Sugar Act of (Apr. 5) 1763" in *Colonies to Nation, 1763-1789: A Documentary History of the American Revolution*, ed. Jack P. Greene (1967; reprint, New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1975), 19-24; "Prohibition of Legal-tender Paper Currency: The Currency Act of (Apr. 19) 1764" in *Colonies to Nation*, ed. Jack P. Greene, 25-26.

⁴ Benjamin L. Carp, *Rebels Rising: Cities and the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 18, 40-41, 44-45, 81-82, 122, 152, 189-190, 224; Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1979), 292-311, 325, 328, 332, 341, 351, 354-355, 372, 374, 381; S. D. Clark, *Movements of Political Protest in Canada, 1640-1840* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), 56-57, 76; Wilfred Brenton Kerr, "The Stamp Act in Nova Scotia," *New England Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (Sept., 1933), 552-566; Wilfred Brenton Kerr, "The Stamp Act in Quebec," *English Historical Review* 47, no. 188 (Oct., 1932), 648-651; Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, "The Stamp Act Crisis in the British Caribbean," *William and Mary Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (Apr., 1994), 203-226; Donna J. Spindel, "The Stamp Act Crisis in the British West Indies," *Journal of American Studies* 11, no. 2 (Aug., 1977), 203-211; Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 89-92, 92-96, 98, 100-104, 107-108, 127, 274, 277-278; Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 211, 228, 229, 230, 231; J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *Florida in the American Revolution* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1975), 16-17; Wilfred Brenton Kerr, "The Stamp Act in the Floridas, 1765-1766," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 21, no. 4 (Mar., 1935), 463-470.

world.⁵ Consequently, the central drama between the discordant metropole and thirteen North American colonies had a profound influence on the livelihoods and political beliefs of colonists residing outside the two regions.

For people in the British Atlantic Islands, the years from 1763 through 1775 represented a period of increasing uncertainty marked by the need to improve their political and economic status quo. Following the end of the Seven Years' War, the Bahamas crashed from the wartime boom driven by privateering and salvaging into an economic malaise as it struggled to bring in commercial wealth.⁶ Parliament's postwar revenue measures placed additional stress on the Bahamas' economy, and the mainland's boycotts threatened the archipelago's near total reliance on North American supplies and commercial income.⁷ The colony's general funds necessary for both the government continuing to function and maintaining Forts Nassau and Montagu dried up.⁸ Similarly, Bermudians faced disruptions to their transatlantic trade networks, and devastating breaks

⁵ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, Enlarged Edition* (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press, 1992); H. Trevor Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience: Whig History and the Intellectual Origins of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965).

⁶ Michael Craton and Gail Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One: From Aboriginal Times to the End of Slavery* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1999), 157-166; Michael Craton, *A History of the Bahamas* (1962; reprint, Glasgow and London: Collins, 1963), 144-146, 149-153.

⁷ Thomas Shirley to the Board of Trade, 9 December 1768, CO 23/8/3-5.

⁸ Peter Henry Bruce, *Bahamian Interlude: Being an Account of Life at Nassau in the Bahama Islands in the Eighteenth Century, reprinted from the Memoirs of Peter Henry Bruce, Esq.*, introduction by Richard Kent (London: J. Culmer, 1949), 50; Peter Henry Bruce, *Memoirs of Peter Henry Bruce, Esq., a Military Officer, in the services of Prussia, Russia, and Great Britain. Containing an account of his travels in Germany, Russia, Tartary, Turkey, the West Indies, &c., as also several very interesting private anecdotes of the Czar, Peter I, of Russia* (London: T. Payne and Son, 1782), 385-388; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 164, 167; Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 138-139.

in their food supply-lines.⁹ By early 1775, the British Atlantic islanders faced isolation from the mainland colonies, famines, economic depression, privateers seizing their vessels, and threats of foreign naval assault.¹⁰ The economic and physical survival of both colonies necessitated the need to chart their own course by working around American and British trade restrictions. Politically, they sought to support the defense of the colonial legislatures' sovereignty over their internal affairs, and simultaneously retain the naval protection afforded by the British Empire.

Within the western Atlantic, the British Atlantic Islands possessed a noticeable but unrealized potential: they were the gateways for Atlantic commercial empire. The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos bordered the Straits of Florida, Windward and Mona passages that connected the agricultural and mineral wealth of the Caribbean, Central and South America to markets in Europe, Africa, and other parts of the Americas. Controlling these two positions threatened rival European kingdoms and imperial economies. Bahamian pirate and privateering nests thrived on targeting shipments of gold, silver, sugar, tobacco, and other goods from the Spanish and French dominions in the greater

⁹ Michael J. Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 386-387, 425, 427; Wilfred Brenton Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution: 1760-1783* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1936), 88-92. "Meeting of the Delegates of the Several Parishes...to Consider of the Measure to be Pursued to Supply the Inhabitants of These Islands with Provisions," 15 May 1775.

¹⁰ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 375-448; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 88-92; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 157-171; James A. Lewis, *The Final Campaign of the American Revolution: Rise and Fall of the Spanish Bahamas* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991); "To the Commissioners of the Navy Board of the Eastern Department, January 16th 1778" in *Out-Letters of the Continental Marine Committee and Board of Admiralty, August, 1776-September, 1780*, ed. Charles Oscar Paullin (New York: De Vinne Press, 1914), 1:195; John Brown, "To the Commissioners of the Navy Board of the Eastern Department, August 22d. 1780" in *Out-Letters of the Continental Marine Committee*, 2:249; "To Captain Samuel Nicholson, June 25th 1779" in *Out-Letters of the Continental Marine Committee*, 2:90; John Brown, "To the Commissioners of the Navy Board of the Eastern Department" in *Out-Letters of the Continental Marine Committee*, 2:160-161.

Caribbean.¹¹ Conversely, foreign control of these islands threatened to cut off Britain and British North America from the sugar islands produce and wealth, while also threatening the slave-majority sugar islands with uprisings as North American shipments of foodstuffs and provisions varied between inconsistent and nonexistent.¹²

British administrators in Whitehall, however, devoted little military and monetary resources to strengthening their positions at these commercial crossroads during much of the pre-revolutionary eighteenth century. British colonial and military officials' policies and expenditures centered around directly defending and supporting Britain's North American and Caribbean plantation colonies against slave revolts and attacks by the French, Spanish, and Dutch empires. Colonies and port cities exporting lucrative sugar, tobacco, coffee, rice, and indigo cash crops that generated income for the British government were the strategic locations the British Empire endeavored to defend. Other island colonies, like Bermuda and the Bahamas, that did not produce significant exportable commodities deemed valuable by British administrators and European markets did not receive analogous degrees of financial, defensive infrastructure, and military support that Britain's Caribbean sugar islands obtained.

Britain's acquisition of Quebec, French North America, and Spanish Florida at the Seven Years' War's conclusion solidified its hold on the eastern North American

¹¹ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 104-114; Alexander Moore, "Marooned: Politics and Revolution in the Bahamas Islands and Carolina" in *Creating and Contesting Carolina: Proprietary Era Histories*, eds. Michelle LeMaster and Bradford J. Wood, *The Carolina Lowcountry and the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2013), 256-272; Mark G. Hanna, "Protecting the Rights of Englishmen: The Rise and Fall of Carolina's Piratical State" in *Creating and Contesting Carolina: Proprietary Era Histories*, eds. Michelle LeMaster and Bradford J. Wood, *The Carolina Lowcountry and the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2013), 295-318.

¹² William Shirley to Lord Halifax, 20 July 1764, CO 23/16/15-16.

continent by removing competing European colonial powers. In the North Atlantic, British merchant ships and Royal Navy warships plied the shipping lanes tying together the far-flung ports, cities, and British subjects at North America, the Caribbean and Atlantic islands, and the British Isles. Above the Tropic of Cancer, traversing the Straits of Florida and Bahama Islands, Britain reigned supreme.¹³ The American rebellion and successful independence of the United States threatened commercial, military, and territorial supremacy in the Atlantic that Britain established with victories over France and Spain in the Seven Years' War.

American patriot officials and the Continental Congress at the Revolution's outset grasped the necessity of a continental independent United States for minimizing the security threats caused by borderlands and border-seas with European colonial powers. Patriot officials and military commanders, however, struggled with the realities of their own limited military power and their revolutionary cause's appeal outside the thirteen colonies. The British Caribbean's sugar islands supported the metropole's attempts to quell the North American insurrection. Continental force's attempts to conquer Canada and annex the Floridas proved costly endeavors that drained munitions, manpower, and treasure.

The United States' independence created a new border region that stretched across the western Atlantic, which forced British colonial and military officials in the administrations of Lord North and William Pitt the Younger to begin to reconceptualize the British Atlantic Islands' importance in the British Atlantic world. Imperial policies

¹³ The Tropic of Cancer is approximately 23°26'12.3" north of the Equator and is the northern most latitudinal line where the sun is directly overhead during the summer solstice.

that reformed land ownership in the Bahamas encouraged settlement by displaced American loyalists from the Lower South and East Florida, and consequently deepened Bahamians' affinity and loyalties towards the British metropole and strengthened local opposition towards the United States. The British Atlantic Islands embodied bridges between the fractured pieces of post-revolutionary British America, which connected Britain's Canadian territories with the British Caribbean colonies commercially and militarily in the western Atlantic. The Admiralty and War Office invested significant sums of money in the development of Bermuda as a naval base midway along the United States' Atlantic coast, and funded Lord Dunmore's defensive fortifications and improvement projects at New Providence Island.

While the United States and Britain grappled with the archipelagos' importance to their security, Bermudians and Bahamians underwent a sea change of loyalties and allegiances over the course of the American Revolution. Bermudians' and Bahamians' reliance on the mainland for provisions and trade put the islands within the thirteen colonies' influence. In the Revolution's opening years, Bermudians and Bahamians petitioned the Continental Congress for supplies, offering munitions from their colonies' stockpiles as payment, to maintain commerce. But as the war entered its third and fourth years its cumulative impact dampened enthusiasm for the Patriots' cause, which turned the islanders towards supporting Britain in the hopes of securing regular arrivals of provisions. In transitioning from being Patriot-sympathizers to more Loyalist aligned, the British Atlantic Islands' change in loyalties can be understood as a unique occurrence in comparison to the other colonies of the loyal British Atlantic, such as the staunchly loyal Caribbean sugar islands.

“The Border-seas of a New British Empire” examines the Atlantic islands’ motivations for not joining the thirteen mainland colonies in rebellion against Britain in a similar way that Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy has done with the British Caribbean. In his seminal work, entitled *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean*, O’Shaughnessy’s examination of the major British sugar colonies of Jamaica, Barbados, the Leeward and Windward islands during the Imperial Crisis and the American Revolution answers the question of why the British Caribbean was not motivated to join the North American colonies’ rebellion against Great Britain.¹⁴ O’Shaughnessy argues that the British Caribbean colonists did not have an underlying desire to rebel against the Britain, and he notes that the Caribbean colonists’ loyalty was not due to either the threat of military coercion or the impracticality of rebellion.¹⁵ He builds upon his previously published articles on the Stamp Act Crisis and the West Indian lobby to highlight the divergent paths of the British Caribbean and the North American colonies.¹⁶

My work illuminates the Atlantic colonies’ roles in the American Revolution, which previous historical works dealing with Bermuda and the Bahamas have not effectively addressed. The historical works dealing primarily with Bermuda and the Bahamas offer varied analytical discussions on the non-sugar colonies within an Atlantic world context, and

¹⁴ O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xi-xiii, xiv-xvi.

¹⁶ O’Shaughnessy, “The Stamp Act Crisis in the British Caribbean,” 203-225; Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, “The West India Interest and the Crisis of American Independence” in *West Indies Accounts: Essays on the British Caribbean and the Atlantic Economy in Honour of Richard Sheridan*, ed. Roderick A. McDonald (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 1996), 126-149; Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, “The Formation of a Commercial Lobby: The West India Interest, British Colonial Policy and the American Revolution,” *The Historical Journal* 40, no. 1 (Mar., 1997), 71-95.

little discussion on the islands' relationships with mainland America during the revolutionary period. Historians Gail Saunders, Michael Craton, Patrice Williams, and Christopher Curry have largely focused on the development of Bahamian identity and the racial transformation of Bahamian society following the American loyalist settlement in the late eighteenth century.¹⁷ Wilfred Brenton Kerr's *Bermuda and the American Revolution, 1760-1783* lays out the impact of the Revolution on Bermuda's political situation and connections with mainland America and the British metropole.¹⁸ Michael Jarvis' study, entitled *In the Eye of All Trade*, depicts the American Revolution as an important turning point in Bermuda's commercial and economic role within the British Empire—moving from a commercial trading colony prior to the Revolution to a major base for the British Royal Navy.¹⁹ Of these historians and their works, only Jarvis attempts to understand the American Revolution's impact on an Atlantic colony within an

¹⁷ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*; Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*; Patrice M. Williams, "Politics of Salt: The Turks and Caicos Islands Issue, 1764-1848" (M.Phil. thesis, University of the West Indies at Mona, Jamaica, 2002); Christopher Curry, *Freedom and Resistance: A Social History of Black Loyalists in the Bahamas* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017); Christopher Curry, "Liberty Extended, Liberty Denied: The Black Loyalist Quest for Freedom in the Bahamas" (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 2011); Gail Saunders, *Slavery in the Bahamas, 1648-1838* (Nassau, The Bahamas: D. G. Saunders, 1985); Gail Saunders, *Bahamian Loyalists and their Slaves* (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1983).

Additional works on the Loyalist settlement and the transformation of race and society in the Bahamas include: Paul Shirley, "Migration, Freedom and Enslavement in the Revolutionary Atlantic: The Bahamas, 1783-c.1800" (Ph.D. diss., University College London, 2011); Rosalyn Howard, "The Promised is'Land: Reconstructing History and Identity among the Black Seminoles of Andros Island, Bahamas" (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1999); W. H. James, *Exuma: The Loyalist Years, 1783-1834* (Nassau, The Bahamas: Media Enterprises, 2011); A. Deans Peggs, *A Short History of the Bahamas* (Nassau, The Bahamas: Deans Peggs Research Fund, 1959); James Martin Wright, *History of the Bahama Islands, with a special study of the abolition of slavery in the colony* (Baltimore: Friedenwald, 1905);

¹⁸ Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*.

¹⁹ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*; Michael J. Jarvis, "'In the Eye of All Trade': Maritime Revolution and the Transformation of Bermudian Society, 1612-1800" (Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 1999).

Atlantic world context, and analyze the intercolonial connections and the Revolution's impact on these Atlantic world commercial and kinship networks.

My study adopts similar approaches to Marshall and Jasanoff to illustrate that the British Atlantic Islands underwent an analogous shift in focus following the Revolution, but it was a shift that moved the islands towards Britain and strengthened the empire's authority in the western Atlantic. This work also presents an additional dimension to the ongoing imperial interpretation of the American Revolution and the British Empire. Scholarship on the reconfiguration of the British Empire during and after the American Revolution has centered on Britain's shift in its imperial focus away from the Atlantic and towards Africa and India.²⁰ The work of Loyalist historians, such as Maya Jasanoff's *Liberty's Exiles*, has advanced the importance of both black and white American loyalists in the settlement, development, and advancement of the British Empire during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.²¹ American and British historians addressing the global or imperial turns of the American Revolution, particularly P. J. Marshall in *Remaking the British Atlantic* and *The Making and Unmaking of Empires*, frame the conflict in terms of a pivot point in which Britain shifts from the Atlantic to Africa and India, as well as a counter reaction that sought to limit colonial authority and strengthen imperial rule.²²

²⁰ Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires*; Eacott, *Selling Empire*, 168-226.

²¹ Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011).

²² P. J. Marshall, *Remaking the British Atlantic: The United States and the British Empire after American Independence* (New York and Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012); Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires*.

Finally, Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" as an interpretive method is an important means of analyzing how American patriot leaders, British officials, and Bermudians and Bahamians conceptualized the British Atlantic Islands within the revolutionary and post-revolutionary Atlantic world.²³ In applying an imagined communities perspective to the British Atlantic Islands during the era of the American Revolution, the Atlantic island colonies and their inhabitants emerge as a part of an Atlantic zone that American patriot and British officials contested to include within their borders by the war's conclusion. American patriot officials' conceptualization of the British Atlantic Islands relationship with and inclusion in a post-revolutionary United States, also compliments and expands upon the scholarship about revolutionary American identity and American patriots' conceptions of the United States.²⁴ In James D. Drake's recent work, entitled *The Nation's Nature*, argues that colonial and revolutionary Americans understood and conceptualized themselves through "metageographies," which used common language, culture, and lineage to construct a "geopolitical vision for the

²³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Revised Edition* (New York and London: Verso, 1991).

²⁴ James D. Drake, *The Nation's Nature: How Continental Presumptions Gave Rise to the United States of America* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2011). Previous relevant works on nationalism prior to the Constitution's drafting and ratification include: John M. Murrin, "A Roof without Walls: The Dilemma of American National Identity" in *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity*, eds. Richard R. Beeman, Stephen Botein, and Edward C. Carter II (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 333-348; Jack P. Greene, "State and National Identities in the Era of the American Revolution" in *Nationalism in the New World*, ed. Don H. Doyle and Marco Antonio Pamplona (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 61-79; T. H. Breen, "Interpreting New World Nationalism" in *Nationalism in the New World*, ed. Don H. Doyle and Marco Antonio Pamplona (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 41-60; Martin Brückner, *The Geographic Revolution in Early America: Maps, Literacy, and National Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Jack P. Greene, *The Intellectual Construction of America: Exceptionalism and Identity from 1492 to 1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America, Volume 1: Atlantic America, 1492-1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986).

future.”²⁵ For Patriot leaders like Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane, and St. George Tucker, Bermuda and the Bahamas were part of an expanded United States that the revolution was in the process of uniting. An imagined communities interpretation also puts the Loyalist resettlement and military fortification policies of British administrative officials, military commanders, and Bermuda’s and the Bahamas’ governors into a broader narrative of solidifying British loyalty and identity during the empire’s post-revolutionary imperial reconstitution.

Until recently, historians have mostly devoted their attention to analyzing the relationship between Britain and the thirteen colonies during the revolutionary era, much less consideration has been paid to understanding the influential association the rebellious mainland on the empire beyond North America. Although fresh analysis remedies the dearth of scholarship about the American Revolution in the British Caribbean islands of Barbados, Jamaica, and the Leeward Islands, the Atlantic islands have not received similar attention. The scant scholarship on the Bahamas, Bermuda, and the Turks and Caicos during the revolutionary period centers predominately on the American loyalists’ settlement in the Bahamas and the end of Bermuda’s circum-Atlantic commercial trade. Another strand of contemporary British imperial scholarship situates the island colonies, especially the Bahamas, within a broader narrative of empire building and reconfiguration, which saw the British government shift its imperial focus to Africa and India during the nineteenth century.

²⁵ Drake, *The Nation’s Nature*, 8.

Scholarship on the British island colonies, both Atlantic and Caribbean, during the American Revolution has advanced sporadically over the past fifty years. The Caribbean islands have received the most attention during the mid-1970s, coinciding with the American bicentennial. The scholarship did not coalesce around a particular island colony, empire, or major historical argument. Yet, the historical literature from this period has laid much of the groundwork for later studies on the British Caribbean and the American Revolution. Major themes of slave resistance and subsistence, privateering and smuggling, and colonial reactions to imperial policies are critical angles of analysis from which to understand the British sugar colonies' actions and positions during the Revolution.

American patriot diplomats like Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane grasped the implications of encompassing borderlands and zones of misunderstanding that a future independent United States might face. British, European, and American settlers' westward progression across the North American continent during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries has channeled scholars' attention towards the Great Lakes and western frontiers.²⁶ More recent studies, such as Kathleen DuVal's *Independence Lost*, shift the narrative of the American Revolution in the frontier to the

²⁶ Some major examples include: Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderlands of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006); Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, and Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010); Patrick Spero, *Frontier Rebels: The Fight for Independence in the American West, 1765-1776* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2018); Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1815: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, Studies in North American Indian History (New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Collin G. Calloway, *The Indian World of George Washington: The First President, the First Americans, and the Birth of the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities*, Studies in North American Indian History (New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Gulf Coast and Mississippi valley regions.²⁷ Yet, borderlands and border-seas in the Age of the American Revolution proved a daunting, omni-directional challenge that threatened the fledgling United States.

The early modern western Atlantic and northern Caribbean emerged as their own unique places of entanglement. Ships sailed inter-colonial and trans-Atlantic routes with multinational and multiracial crews, while islands and ports served as sites of imperial and international exchanges. European empires, navies, privateers, pirates, merchants, and sailors alike defined both these physical spaces and their own identities through contestations for supremacy. Borderlands and common spaces that separated territories, states, and empires in the revolutionary Atlantic world emerged as places where personal, colonial, and national identities became malleable or hardened as circumstances and events shaped peoples and societies. Maritime historians, led by Nathan Perl-Rosenthal and Christopher Magra, have highlighted the Atlantic and Caribbean border-seas as locations early Americans forged their new identities as citizens of the independent United States, and struggled against superior European imperial navies to cement recognition of their new republic.²⁸ Remote places, like Bermuda and the Bahamas, also

²⁷ Kathleen DuVal, *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution* (New York: Random House, 2015); David Narrett, *Adventurism and Empire: The Struggle for Mastery in the Louisiana-Florida Borderlands, 1762-1803*, The David J. Weber Series in the New Borderlands History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

Additional works include: Gonzalo M. Quintero Saravia, *Bernardo de Gálvez: Spanish Hero of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018); Light Cummins, "The Galvez Family and Spanish Participation in the Independence of the United States of America," *Revista Complutense de Historia de America* 32 (2006), 179-196; Robert V. Haynes, *The Natchez District and the American Revolution* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008); Henry O. Robertson, "Tories or Patriots? The Mississippi River Planters during the American Revolution," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 40, no. 4 (Oct., 1999), 445-462.

²⁸ Nathan Perl-Rosenthal, *Citizen Sailors: Becoming American in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2015); Christopher Magra, *Poseidon's Curse: British Naval Impressment and Atlantic*

built their identities through the Atlantic and its border regions, but the American Revolution forced them to reckon with their colonial societies' developed identities and to forge new ones as displaced Loyalists, the British military, new ministerial policy from London, and the Atlantic world's changing dynamics reshaped their worlds.

In applying Atlantic history, borderlands and border-seas studies, and security methodological frameworks, the British Atlantic Islands' role in the American Revolution and the post-revolutionary Atlantic world emerges. The political ideas and diplomatic strategies of Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane highlight American revolutionary leaders' concerns about maintaining the United States' sovereignty while encompassed by border territories, particularly those claimed by Great Britain, where disagreements and misunderstandings could throw the nation into war. The British Atlantic Islands constituted one such region, and perhaps more significant in their post-revolutionary impact on the United States than previously acknowledged when considered over a broader chronological scope that extends into the late 1810s and early 1820s. From an Atlantic and security viewpoint, the American patriots' raids on the islands in 1775 and 1776 fit into a broader context and narrative that shows the British admiralty's overreaction to a potential threat to the empire's shipping lanes to and from the Caribbean, which permitted France's Mediterranean-based Toulon fleet to enter the

Origins of the American Revolution (New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Christopher Magra, *The Fisherman's Cause: Atlantic Commerce and Maritime Dimensions of the American Revolution* (New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Additional works examining the maritime Atlantic's elements as revolutionary spaces during the late eighteenth century include: Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*; Paul A. Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront: American Maritime Culture in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Carp, *Rebels Rising*, 40-106; Julius S. Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (New York and London: Verso, 2018), 38-75, 159-201.

Atlantic and harass the Royal Navy at Rhode Island, New York, and the Caribbean in 1778.

Bermudian and Bahamian government documents, court testimonies, and petitions form important, often unavoidable, means of Bermudians and Bahamians giving a lasting voice to their experiences during the American Revolution. For the Bahamas, non-government documents from the American Revolution are infrequent, appearing sporadically through the newspaper's intelligence report or a surviving letter from a merchant with Bahamian connections tucked away in a library or archive in Britain or the United States. Through these documents the islanders' adoption of the language of rights and protest from the imperial crisis emerges, while Bermudian court cases and testimonies during the American Revolution underscore the contentious existence between the Royal Navy and the Patriot-sympathizing and pragmatic Bermudians.

American and British government and military papers reveal the emerging realization of the British Atlantic Islands' strategic significance during the revolutionary war's early years, and the post-revolutionary plans to solidify British authority along the United States' maritime Atlantic border. Franklin and Deane's correspondence about securing Bermuda and the Bahamas as part of an independent United States, George Washington's letter encouraging the Bermudians to provide material support to his Continental forces, and the Continental Congress's deliberations over exempting Bermuda and the Bahamas from their embargo against the British Empire reveal the methods Patriot leaders used to secure their Atlantic flank. Records from the Royal Navy and admiralty officials illustrate the British government's slow recognition of the British Atlantic Islands' strategic significance to the West Indian trade, and the survival of

Britain's Caribbean sugar colonies. Despite this delay, the British government capitalized on their continued control of the islands by fortifying them, making their societies more reliant on connections to the metropole, and turning the islands into points for defending and projecting Britain's authority in the Atlantic.

Personal correspondence, largely limited to the papers of the Tucker family, offer one of the few surviving ways to understand the American Revolution's impact on the British Atlantic Islands' gentry and merchantmen, and how they contended with the social, economic, and political transformations wrought by the war. These papers detail how the Tuckers and their Bermudian neighbors attempted to emulate the Virginian and British gentry through adopting social practices, manufactured goods and material signs of status, and building social status through personal connections and marriages. Colonel Tucker's correspondence between his sons, extended family in Bermuda and the Caribbean, and other prominent Bermudians illustrate the divergent natures of Bermudian support for the American patriots and the British government, and how ambivalent pragmatism offered a third path to guide the British Atlantic islanders through the Revolution's chaos. The papers also illustrate Colonel Tucker's position as someone that bridged the gap between the rebellious mainland colonies, Great Britain, and Bermuda. When the Continental Congress imposed an embargo against trading with the rest of the British Empire in 1775, Colonel Tucker acted as the leader of Bermuda's delegation to the Continental Congress, where he attempted to build support for the colony from Bermuda's relatives and friends on the mainland to preserve the Bermudian-American trade relationship. In addition to heading the delegation to the Continental Congress, Colonel Tucker served as the Bermudian assembly's agent in London during 1779, and

he advocated on the island's behalf, but during his stay in London his sympathies shifted to supporting the British government against the rebellious colonies. This shift mirrors a broader trend that occurred in Bermuda and the Bahamas from 1779 to 1783, when increasing encounters with British forces and the growing need for food and supplies led the islanders to align themselves with Great Britain.

Finally, correspondence and records from trading firms based in the Bahamas demonstrate the archipelago's ability to affect the United States and American settlers in the mainland frontier during the early nineteenth century. The Papers of Panton, Leslie & Company prove instrumental windows into how the company's British and Bahamian commercial agents continued to foster Native American and black support for Great Britain between 1783 and 1819. These records also illustrate how the Bahamas acted as a base to extend British influence and authority back into its former territories with subversive actors exploiting contentious and loosely controlled territories.

"The Border-seas of a New British Empire" presents a chronological examination of the British Atlantic Islands and the concurrent transitions driven by "on the ground" circumstances that the islands underwent during the Age of the American Revolution. From 1763 through the 1810s, Bermudians and Bahamians moved from being sympathetic, or at least projected a pragmatic position, for the American patriots, and towards supporting the British government as the Revolution diminished food supplies and Loyalist privateers brought wartime wealth to the hardscrabble islands. Increased British military presence, an influx of Loyalists, and Continental forces' apparent inability to annex the islands, especially in the Bermuda's case, diminished Patriot support and supplanted it with ardent Loyalists and islanders economically dependent on

Britain. The American Revolution's rupturing of the British Empire in the western Atlantic precipitated British and American patriot officials' reevaluation of the British Atlantic Islands' significance for the United States and British Empire's security from 1776 through the War of 1812. By progressing through the British Atlantic Islands' position within the American Revolution and the British Atlantic chronologically, the transition of external and imperial perceptions of Bermuda's and the Bahamas' importance comes into focus.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 1 situates Bermuda, the Bahamas, and the Turks and Caicos Islands within the British Atlantic world's growing divisions over colonial rights and British imperial policy between 1763 and 1775. The British Atlantic Islands existed as a third group within the British Atlantic that widely sympathized with mainland Americans protesting Parliament's internal taxation schemes and coercive efforts. Following the Seven Years' War, the Atlantic islanders' reliance on the British North American mainland for food, supplies, and other British commercial goods drew them closer to the thirteen colonies' influence than to the British metropole. Bermudians and Bahamians adopted the principles about imperial taxation and direct representation as the mainland British Americans. These sympathies and positions set Bermudians and Bahamians apart from Britain's Caribbean island colonists, who acquiesced to Parliament's authority because of their dependency on British army and naval forces for internal security and external defense. Threats to halt the commercial intercourse ensuring the British Atlantic

Islands' security and survival spurred Bermudians and Bahamians to strengthen their ties with the Patriots on the mainland.

Bermudians' and Bahamians' entreaties to the Continental Congress and Continental military set in motion the British Atlantic Islands' entry into the American Revolution as island communities sympathetic to the Patriots' fight against Great Britain. Focusing on the period between 1775 and 1778, Chapter 2 charts the expansion of the American Revolution beyond the North American continent's shores to encompass Bermuda and the Bahamas, and how the British Atlantic Islands' entry altered American patriot and British officials' security strategy in the Atlantic world. The thirteen colonies' non-importation and non-exportation agreements of 1774 and 1775 threatened the British Atlantic islanders' commercial lifelines, and motivated Bermudian politicians and Bahamian merchant-mariners to engage the Continental Congress with offers of wartime support in exchange for the commercial status quo's continuance. The Bermudian gunpowder theft and American naval invasion of New Providence Island needed cannons, munitions, and supplies for Continental forces, while compelling British commanders to increase the Royal Navy's force in the western Atlantic. British overreaction to a possible American maritime threat weakened the Royal Navy's presence at the British Isles and Gibraltar. Consequently, French warships from the Mediterranean entered the fray in the western Atlantic and Caribbean. Patriot officials and diplomats' realization that pulling in neighboring British North American and Atlantic island colonies would eliminate contentious border regions between an independent United States and the British Empire.

The second half of the American Revolution, the focus of Chapter 3, is characterized by Bermudians' and Bahamians' diminishing support for the Continentals' war effort, the islanders' embracing of the British war effort against the rebellious colonies, and American patriot officials' inability to annex the island colonies to the independent United States. Bermudians increasingly rejected aiding the American rebels as the war's effects took their toll on their society. Bermudian officials sought a closer relationship with the metropole as sporadic food shipments and epidemics threatened the islanders' survival. Bahamian and Bermudian merchant-mariners pursued privateering against Patriot vessels to acquire American provisions and wartime income to support their islands' communities. Bahamian and Loyalist privateering attacks against Patriot shipping caused the Continental Congress and American forces to recognize the Bahamas as a threat. The Bahamian privateering threat necessitated a cooperative military action between American patriot and Spanish forces, which they sought to destroy the Bahamian privateering nest at New Providence and bring the islands under Imperial Spain's authority. Yet, Patriot officials' ambitions to secure the post-revolutionary peace by annexing Bermuda and the Bahamas, removing them as future British positions to threaten the United States, failed to materialize as the British Empire retained control of the islands under the Treaty of Paris (1783).

Chapter 4 examines the forces motivating the British Atlantic Islands' transformation into a border-sea dividing the United States from the loyal British Empire in the Atlantic between 1783 and 1812. In the Revolution's wake, Loyalist refugees from the southern colonies, New York, and East Florida settled in the Bahamas, overwhelming the islands' native Bahamian population, and their hostility towards the United States

challenged the islanders' established social and economic connections to the former thirteen colonies. The influx of Loyalists and War Office funding enabled Lord Dunmore, appointed Governor of the Bahamas in 1787, to overhaul the colony's fortifications, and tried to turn the archipelago into a Loyalist fortress against the United States. In the decades following the America Revolution, the British government recast Bermuda from being the British Atlantic's commercial hub into the Royal Navy's "western Gibraltar." The Royal Navy undertook efforts to revitalize Bermuda's military structures and ability to harbor large warships based mid-way between the empire's Canadian and Caribbean colonies. These fortification and militarization efforts set the stage for Britain to harass, blockade, and strike the United States at home and contest Americans' citizenship in the Atlantic world.

The British Atlantic Islands' continued existence within the British Empire went beyond the British government and Loyalists' fortification of the Atlantic border-sea. The Epilogue illustrates the transition to launching points for British forces and subversive actors to threaten and invade the United States, and the negative ramifications of the United States' loss of Bermuda and the Bahamas during the American Revolution. Bermuda's position between Canada and the Caribbean enabled the Royal Navy to bridge its major American naval bases, serve as a supply depot, and sustain naval patrols and escorts in the western Atlantic. Being situated about half-way along the United States' Atlantic seaboard and near the Chesapeake put the Royal Navy and Bermudian privateers in an optimal position to blockade U.S. ports and prey on American ships during the Quasi-War and the War of 1812. Admiral Alexander Cochrane's strategic development of the Bermuda's naval bases to consolidate forces and launch the attack against

Washington D.C. on August 24th, 1814 brings the significance of the United States' loss of the island to the forefront. To the south, American loyalists' and British trading firms' relocation to the Bahamas provided companies and the British government with a base to aid and agitate Native Americans and enslaved blacks in U.S.-Spanish Florida frontier against American settlers and the United States government during the 1810s. Subversive activities and interference by British military officers and Bahamian merchants employed by Panton, Leslie & Company, specifically Alexander Arbuthnot and Robert Ambrister, created a crisis that precipitated an armed invasion of western Spanish Florida by the U.S. Army under General Andrew Jackson. The military attacks and subversive frontier activities against the United States from the British Atlantic Islands' border-sea region demonstrate the significance of the nascent United States' inability to hold the islands as potential states, and their role in American and British security in the western Atlantic.

CHAPTER I
FROM THE EYE OF THE IMPERIAL CRISIS

Introduction

The imperial crisis in the British Atlantic world illuminates the regional divisions that separated North America, the Atlantic islands, and the Caribbean sugar colonies. The responses of these regions to the political debates, ideological crises, and Parliament's taxation schemes hint at the future positions many of the North American, Caribbean, and Atlantic island colonies would take during the American Revolution. The British sphere increasingly pulled the Caribbean colonies closer towards the metropole's position on exerting its authority over the American colonies, and ultimately using military force to suppress the mainland insurrections and preserve its Atlantic empire. The North American sphere pulled the Atlantic island colonies more towards backing the rebellious Patriots' positions on Parliament's taxation of the colonies, and towards affirming the application of English liberties to colonists across the British Empire. Although the North American colonies influenced the Atlantic islands, however, the islanders increasingly attempted to chart a different course that maintained the commercial and military status quo in a divided British Atlantic world.

The British Atlantic Islands experienced and internalized the imperial crisis from a distant geographic vantage point at the center of the British Atlantic. While British colonists and officials launched into political debates and violent protests on the mainland, in the Leeward Islands, and in Britain, the Atlantic archipelagos remained

largely untouched by popular violence and imperial coercion. Yet, in the eye of the storm, the ideals of the American protests became deeply rooted in the conflict between the Bahamians, Bermudians, and the Bermudian-Turks Islanders over who held the authority to govern and legislate for the Turks and Caicos Islands at the provincial level. The clash between the thirteen mainland colonies and the metropole slowly encroached on the commercial networks of the British Atlantic Islands, endangering merchant ships in mainland ports and at sea, decreasing trade profits, and threatening to cut off vital supplies of provisions to the small island colonies. As the imperial crisis reached a crescendo following the Coercive Acts' enactment in 1774, the British Atlantic Islands faced the threat of a divided British Empire and the need to choose a path that maintained the commercial and military status quo to survive on the edge of a volatile, fractured British Atlantic world.

The Impact of the Seven Years' War

British administrative and military efforts to secure the frontiers of British America from attacks and incursions by hostile Native American groups and European empires resulted in the establishment of a permanent British military presence on the North American continent. In the Caribbean and British Atlantic, solidifying British imperial claims to the “common grounds” of the Turks and Caicos Islands—as well as those farther afield in the Cayman Islands and on the Mosquito Coast—rested on establishing administrative control through neighboring British colonial governments.¹

¹ Michael Craton, *Founded Upon the Seas: A History of the Cayman Islands and Their People* (Kingston, Jamaica and Miami: Ian Randle, 2003), 33-62; Frank Griffith Dawson, “William Pitt’s Settlement at Black

Yet, in the case of the Bahamas and Bermudian-dominated Turks and Caicos Islands, the two archipelagos' differences resulted in tensions over who held the legitimate right to govern at home. Metropolitan and Bahamian efforts to assert control over the Turks and Caicos resulted in ideological opposition from both the Turks Islanders and the Bahamian assembly between 1770 and 1776. In the political debate over the Bahamian government's authority to legislate for and tax the Turks Islanders, the various factions within the colonial government embraced the language and concepts promulgated by the thirteen colonies and the British administration. The political conflict serves as a critical case of the imperial crisis' impact on the British Atlantic Islands in the years leading up to the American Revolution.

At the close of the Seven Years' War, French naval forces made a final push to salvage some hold on access to the Caribbean trade routes, posing a future challenge to expanded British control over the region. On June 1st, 1764, the French fleet raided Turks Island. The ambitious Comte d'Estaing, the newly appointed Governor of the French Leeward Islands in Saint-Domingue, orchestrated the attack possibly hoping to strike a strategic blow that would better position France and counterbalance Britain's commercial and naval dominance in the Caribbean.² Landing on Turks Island, the French drove away

River on the Mosquito Shore: A Challenge to Spain in Central America, 1732-87," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 63, no. 4 (Nov., 1983), 677-706.

² David Marley, *Wars of the Americas: A Chronology of Armed Conflict in the Western Hemisphere, 1492 to the Present, Volume 1* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 445; William Shirley to Lord Halifax, 20 July 1764, CO 23/16/15.

Jean Baptiste Charles Henri Hector, the Comte d'Estaing, served as a French soldier during the War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748), and worked his way up through the officer ranks to become a brigadier-general during the Seven Years' War. During the war, the Comte d'Estaing served in France's military operations against Britain at Pondicherry and Madras in India, and in the East Indies. Following the Treaty of Paris (1763), King Louis XVI appointed d'Estaing the Governor-General of the French Leeward Islands, whose administration centered in Saint-Domingue, in 1764, which he held through 1766. After returning to

the settlers, destroyed their buildings, supplies, and equipment, and carried away a number of islanders to Cap Français as prisoners.³ The French then erected a lighthouse and small fort on Salt Cay, the Caicos, and Inagua islands.⁴ By taking control of Turks Island and Inagua, the French gained the power to defend their Caribbean trade against British attacks, and an opportunity to harass Britain's Caribbean and intercolonial trade through the Windward and Mona passages.⁵ Furthermore, the French stood to potentially seize the Bahama Islands.⁶ The emergence of a French Bahamas would put more than the British Caribbean in jeopardy. France gaining control of the Bahamas would provide both the French navy and French privateers with an important base to attack British shipping traveling between British North America, the West Indian sugar colonies, and Britain.⁷ Furthermore, a French Bahamas could cut off the Caribbean colonies' provisions and supplies from North America, while barring British sugar from reaching domestic, colonial, and continental European markets.⁸

France in 1767, d'Estaing became the naval inspector and governor of France's primary Atlantic naval station at Brest, and received a promotion to Vice Admiral of the Asian and American Seas. See: Jacques Michel, *La vie aventureuse et mouvementée de Charles-Henri comte d'Estaing, 1724-1794* (Paris: J. Michel, 1976); Jean Joseph Robert Calmon-Maison, *L'amiral d'Estaing (1729-1794)* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1910).

³ Marley, *Wars of the Americas*, 445; CO 23/16/15.

⁴ CO 23/16/15.

⁵ CO 23/16/16.

⁶ Ibid. Andrew Symmer echoed Governor William Shirley's assertions in an accompanying letter, see: Report stating His Majesty's right to Turks Island as part of the Bahama Islands, CO 23/16/17-19.

⁷ CO 23/16/16.

⁸ Ibid.

The French attack brought sharp criticism from King George III and his ministers at Whitehall. Issuing instructions to the British ambassador in Paris, British officials issued a “strong Remonstrance” to the French government, which subsequently disavowed Comte d’Estaing’s actions.⁹ After the French government’s renunciation of Comte d’Estaing’s raid, his French forces quickly withdrew from Turks Island by November 1764, and paid “£6,000 in cash” as compensation to the islanders for their lost revenue and damaged property.¹⁰ French forces’ departure from the Turks and Caicos removed the external French threat, but the matter of defending and governing the islands at the internal level remained ambiguous.

In the Bahamas, Governor William Shirley and the British government found themselves confronted with the serious threat posed by the French in Saint-Domingue to Britain’s control of the Caribbean trade traveling past the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands. In the eyes of Governor Shirley, the former Governor of Massachusetts Bay colony depicted in Thomas Hudson’s *Portrait of Governor William Shirley* (see Plate 1 on page 33), the French attack on Turks and Inagua islands presented an opportunity to strengthen the Bahamas against future French hostility.¹¹ For the imperialistic and

⁹ CO 23/16/28r. Whitehall recognized that the loss of the Bahamas endangered Britain’s control of its newly acquired territories of Canada and the Floridas, and deprived Britain of its “power to interrupt the navigation of the Spanish galleons in their passage from Havana, thro’ the Gulph of Florida, to Old Spain” during times of war. See: CO 23/16/16; Lord Halifax to the Board of Trade, 30 October 1764, CO 23/16/24; Lord Halifax to William Shirley, 8 November 1764, CO 23/16/26-30.

¹⁰ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 205; “London, Nov. 1,” *The Boston-Gazette, and Country Journal*, 14 January 1765, 2; *The Boston-Gazette, and Country Journal*, 25 August 1766, 2. Another report from the *Massachusetts Gazette, and Boston News-Letter* states that the monetary compensation went as high as “120,000 dollars.” See: “Charlestown, (South-Carolina) July 8,” *Massachusetts Gazette, and Boston News-Letter*, 28 August 1766, 1.

¹¹ Thomas Hudson, *Portrait of Governor William Shirley*, 1750, oil on canvas, 50 in. x 40 in., NPG.80.11, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., United States of America.

Francophobic governor, the Saint-Domingue-Bahamas situation resembled the Quebec-New England situation he left behind six years previously.¹² In order to counterbalance the French threat, Governor Shirley saw it necessary to establish effective British

¹² Governor William Shirley considered the responsibility of safeguarding Britain's colonists and trade against French encroachment to be of extreme importance. As Governor of Massachusetts Bay during King George's War (1744-1748), the elder Shirley faced the serious possibility of the French capturing the Canadian Maritimes, launching an assault on New England's frontier and vital fisheries. Understanding this would deliver a critical blow to Britain's Atlantic trade network, Shirley undertook the monumental task of defending New England and Nova Scotia in the summer of 1744. The key to "saving Nova Scotia and preserving the New England fisheries" lay with capturing the Fortress of Louisbourg. On July 7th, 1745, Shirley greeted the French capitulation of Louisbourg to the united New England forces on June 28th as laying "a most lasting foundation for the wealth, peace, and prosperity of this country," and "a shining part of the English history to the latest posterity." The gate to conquering Quebec opened before Governor Shirley. With the fall of New France's unassailable stronghold, Shirley's ambitions turned to driving the French from the continent and building a North American empire that would stretch to the Mississippi River, in which Britain could use its new world supremacy to counterbalance the economic and military power of her European rivals. These ambitions would not come to fruition during Shirley's time as Governor of Massachusetts Bay, and the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle returned Louisbourg to French control in 1748. Shirley's dream of expelling the French from the North American continent would not become reality until Britain's destruction of Louisbourg in 1760, and annexation of Quebec in 1763. Shirley's transfer to the Bahamas in 1758 denied him the ability to capitalize on his previous labors; however, it did place him in a critical position to continue his defense of Britain's American empire.

See: John A. Schutz, *William Shirley: King's Governor of Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), 84-122; William Shirley, "William Shirley to Duke of Newcastle, July 7, 1744" in *Correspondence of William Shirley: Governor of Massachusetts and Military Commander in America, 1731-1760*, ed. Charles Henry Lincoln (New York: MacMillan, 1912), 1:131-133; William Shirley, "William Shirley to Lords of Trade, July 25, 1744" in *CWS*, 1:134-137; William Shirley, "William Shirley to Lords of Trade, August 10, 1744" in *CWS*, 1:138-141; William Shirley, "William Shirley to Duke of Newcastle, September 22, 1744" in *CWS*, 1:145-148; George Arthur Wood, *William Shirley: Governor of Massachusetts, 1741-1756: A History, Volume I* (1920; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1969), 181-294, 315-358; William Shirley, "William Shirley to the General Court of Massachusetts, May 31, 1744" in *CWS*, 1:122-124; William Shirley, "William Shirley to Benning Wentworth, November 10, 1744" in *CWS*, 1:151-152; William Shirley, "William Shirley to Duke of Newcastle, January 14, 1745" in *CWS*, 1:161-166; William Shirley, "William Shirley to Jonathan Law, January 29, 1745" in *CWS*, 1:171-172; William Shirley, "William Shirley to William Greene, January 29, 1745" in *CWS*, 1:172-173; William Shirley, "William Shirley to the Lords of the Admiralty, January 29, 1745" in *CWS*, 1:173-177; William Shirley, "William Shirley to William Pepperrell, July 7, 1745" in *CWS*, 1:234-236; William Shirley, "William Shirley to Benning Wentworth, April 8, 1745" in *CWS*, 1:203-204; William Shirley, "Proclamation, June 2, 1746" in *CWS*, 1:323-324; William Shirley and Peter Warren, "William Shirley and Peter Warren to William Greene, July 4, 1746" in *CWS*, 1:329-332; William Shirley, "William Shirley to Duke of Newcastle, July 7, 1746" in *CWS*, 1:332-334; William Shirley, "William Shirley to Duke of Newcastle, July 28, 1746" in *CWS*, 1:334-335. The *Correspondence of William Shirley* is abbreviated *CWS* hereafter.

Accounts of the siege and capitulation of the Fortress of Louisbourg can be found in: William Shirley, "William Shirley to Lords of Trade, July 10, 1745" in *CWS*, 1:239-246; William Shirley, "William Shirley to Duke of Newcastle, October 28, 1745" in *CWS*, 1:273-279.

For an in-depth discussion of the importance of New England's merchants to the British Atlantic trade network, see: Bernard Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955).

authority over all of the islands within the Bahamian archipelago.¹³ Shirley pressed Lord Halifax for funds to strengthen New Providence's defenses by building additional fortifications, improving Forts Nassau and Montagu by increasing their munitions stores, and enlarging the number of troops stationed on the island.¹⁴ Furthermore, Shirley pushed the Grenville administration to approve the construction of a new naval station at Grand Exuma capable of sustaining a "large fleet of ships of war."¹⁵ The French attack in 1764 demonstrated the necessity, Shirley argued, for a new British naval station in the western Atlantic that would: increase the defensive capabilities of the archipelago; effectively command the Windward Passage against French and Spanish molestation; and, curtail the contraband trade traveling through the Bahamas and Turks Island.¹⁶ France's attack and occupation of the Turks and Caicos made the British government's claim to the islands through seasonal salt raking and century-long *de facto* governance through Bermuda's government tenuous. To strengthen Britain's control over and protection of the trade passages between the Atlantic and the Caribbean, the British government needed to reinforce its claim to the Turks and Caicos as being a territorial extension of its neighboring British colony: the Bahamas.

The Bahamas capitalized on its close geographic proximity to the Turks and Caicos Islands to persuade the metropole to classify the islands as a part of the

¹³ William Shirley to Lord Halifax, 29 May 1764, CO 23/16/4-7; William Shirley to Lord Halifax, 3 October 1764, CO 23/7/166-167.

¹⁴ CO 23/16/4-7.

¹⁵ CO 23/7/166-167.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Bahamas.¹⁷ Governor Shirley argued to the British administration that the Turks and Caicos shared continuity with the archipelago geographically, and consequently the Bahamian government was better positioned to defend the islands than Bermuda.¹⁸ With the latest French assault on the islands, coupled with British efforts to consolidate the colonies' imperial administration, the Board of Trade came into agreement with the Bahamian position.¹⁹ Citing Joannes de Laet's *History of the New World or Description*

¹⁷ The Bermudian inhabitants of Turks Island maintained a longstanding mistrust of the Bahamian government, which derived from Bahamian officials' numerous efforts to foist taxes upon them and their salt trade. Bahamian officials' actions came from the Bahamas' proximity to the Turks and Caicos Islands, since the Turks and Caicos formed the Bahamian archipelago's southeastern edge. Bermudian salt rakers "occupied and cultivated the Salt Ponds of the Turks Islands as the Original Discoverers" since the 1670s. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Turks Island salt trade had developed into a crucial element of Bermuda's commercial empire, which the colonial assembly estimated as being worth £20,000 per annum. Yet, the Bahamian government's greed threatened the islands. Beginning with Governor Nicholas Trott in 1694, the Bahamas levied taxes on Bermudian rakers and seized the ships of those who refused to pay. Trott employed the tax as a method of increasing the Bahamas' revenue, while lining his pockets at the Bermudian salt rakers' expense. Subsequent governors, such as Elias Haskett (1700-1702) and Richard Fitzwilliams (1733-1738), continued to press and extort the Bermudians. In late 1738, Governor Fitzwilliams resorted to particularly strong methods by imposing taxes on salvaged goods, turtle hunting, and salt raking, and made plans to outfit a Bahamian version of the *Guarda Costa* to collect them. See: The Memorial of the Governor, the Council and General Assembly of the Islands of Bermuda, 12 July 1776, CO 37/21/80v; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 191, 197, 202, 204; *Ancient Journals of the House of Assembly of Bermuda: From 1691 to 1785* (Hamilton, Bermuda: Gregory V. Lee, 1890), 1:780; "Additional instructions to Nicholas Webb. 29 November 1696" in *Calendar of State Papers: Colonial Series*, eds. William Noel Sainsbury et al., vol. 15, *American and the West Indies, 15 May 1696 – 31 October 1697* (London: H.M.S.O., 1904), 228; "Representation of certain masters of vessels that the Governor of New Providence..." in *CSP:CS*, eds. William Noel Sainsbury et al., vol. 14, *America and the West Indies, January 1693 – May 1696* (London: H.M.S.O., 1903), 230; "Narrative of Philip Middleton, of the ship Charles Henry, to the Lords Justice of Ireland, given on 4 August 1696" in *CSP:CS*, eds. William Noel Sainsbury et al., vol. 15, *American and the West Indies, 15 May 1696 – 31 October 1697*, 260-261; "The Petition of Thomas Bulkley to the King. Kensington. 4 February 1697" in *CSP:CS*, eds. William Noel Sainsbury et al., vol. 15, *American and the West Indies, 15 May 1696 – 31 October 1697*, 349; "Anonymous Petition from New Providence to Ellis Lightwood. New Providence. 6 October 1701" in *CSP:CS*, eds. William Noel Sainsbury et al., vol. 19, *America and the West Indies, 1701* (London: H.M.S.O., 1910), 567; "Governor Bennett to the Council of Trade and Plantations. Bermuda. 31 October 1701" in *CSP:CS*, eds. William Noel Sainsbury et al., vol. 19, *America and the West Indies, 1701*, 596-597; "Governor Alured Popple to Commissioners for Trade and Plantations. Bermuda. 10 May 1739" in *CSP:CS*, eds. William Noel Sainsbury et al., vol. 45, *American and the West Indies, 1739* (London: H.M.S.O., 1994), 95-97; "Objections by Ralph Noden to Act of Bahamas laying excessive duties on vessels arriving and departing from there, and especially on the raking of salt. 15 August 1739" in *CSP:CS*, eds. William Noel Sainsbury et al., vol. 45, *American and the West Indies, 1739*, 165.

¹⁸ CO 23/16/15-21.

¹⁹ The Board of Trade to King George III, 15 August 1764, CO 23/16/10-14.

of the West Indies, as well as the *Geographical Dictionary of Martiniere*, Whitehall emphasized that the Bahamas constituted “all the Islands between the Island of Bahama...and the Island of Inagua on the South.”²⁰ This description included the Turks and Caicos Islands that lay to the north of Inagua.²¹ Furthermore, King Charles II’s original patents granted to the Lords Proprietors corresponded with de Laet and Martinière’s descriptions of the Bahamas.²² The metropole’s clarification did not end tensions between Bermuda and the Bahamas, however. Instead, the Turks and Caicos annexation escalated Bermudian and Bahamian efforts to maintain control of the islands preceding and following the American Revolution.

²⁰ CO 23/16/11-12. Available contemporary sources cited by the Board of Trade: Joannes de Laet, *L’Histoire du Nouveau-Monde ou Description des Indes Occidentales* (1640; reprint, Quebec: P. G. Delisle, 1882); Antoine Augustin Bruzen de la Martinière, *Le Grand Dictionnaire Géographique, Historique et Critique* (1726-1739; reprint, Paris: Chez Les Libraires Associes, 1768).

²¹ CO 23/16/12.

²² *Ibid.*



Plate 1: Thomas Hudson, *Portrait of Governor William Shirley*, 1750, oil on canvas, 50 in. x 40 in., NPG.80.11, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., United States of America.

The Stamp Act Crisis

The Stamp Act Crisis (1765-1766) acted as the genesis point for the divisions between the British North American, Caribbean, and Atlantic island colonies. The divisions foreshadow where these regions aligned themselves at the outbreak of the American Revolution. The North American colonies' violent, ideological backlash against the Stamp Act initiated a dramatic ideological debate within the British Atlantic world over the matters of British colonial rights, the political dimensions of the British Empire, and who held the authority to rule at home. Colonists in the British Caribbean, while in ideological agreement with the North American colonists were divided in their response to the Stamp Act, with some islanders acquiescing and others engaging in violent protests. The British Atlantic Islands experienced some of the least violent activity. The islanders largely chose to ignore the Stamp Act to preserve their vital trade with the mainland, and they abstained from entering directly into the transatlantic debate between the American patriots and the British administration. Due to the British Atlantic Islands' lack of strong ties to the metropole through British commercial, military, and political influence, the islanders experienced the impact of the ideological arguments about the roles of taxation, representation, and English liberty at a more pervasive level than the British Caribbean islands during and after the Stamp Act Crisis.

The thirteen North American colonies' ideological and violent protests overshadowed the British Atlantic islanders' political and intellectual engagement with the British government regarding the problems of imperial taxation, colonial representation, and the roles of the monarchy and Parliament in imperial policy. The implementation of the Stamp Act in 1765 brought forth the mainland colonists' ire that

Parliament sought to impose an internal tax on British goods in the colonies, instead of the accepted external tax levied against foreign imports.²³ When Parliament passed the Stamp Act without American colonies' direct consent, the American colonists understood this action as an assault on their rights and liberties as British subjects. The North American debates in newspapers and pamphlets, colonial assemblies, and the Stamp Act Congress of 1765 made the crisis "not merely an act in a much larger drama."²⁴ Instead, the Stamp Act Crisis became "the drama itself" by instigating and drawing in the British government and public, as well as other British American colonial governments and societies, into an empire-wide debate over colonial rights and imperial taxation within the empire.²⁵ The use of non-importation protests, public demonstrations, riots, and the destruction of property focused the attention of Parliament on the matter of how to deal with the growing North American problem.²⁶ The North American colonies bound themselves together through common identities, fears, and methods of resistance to create

²³ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins, Enlarged Edition*, 209-221; "Examination of Benjamin Franklin" in *Colonies to Nation, 1763-1789*, ed. Jack P. Greene, 72, 75; John Dickinson, "'Those who are taxed without their consent...are slaves': John Dickinson, 'Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania...'" (1767-1768)" in *Colonies to Nation, 1763-1789*, ed. Jack P. Greene, 122-125, 128-130; R. C. Simmons, "Trade Legislation and its Enforcement, 1748-1776" in *A Companion to the American Revolution*, eds. Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole, Blackwell Companions to American History (Malden, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 168-169.

²⁴ O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 81; Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, *The Fall of the First British Empire: Origins of the American War of Independence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 215.

²⁵ O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 81; Tucker and Hendrickson, *The Fall of the First British Empire*, 215.

²⁶ Tucker and Hendrickson, *The Fall of the First British Empire*, 308-312, 319-354; Bernard Donoghue, *British Politics and the American Revolution: The Path to War, 1773-75* (New York and London: MacMillan, 1964), 201-265.

a united front to defend their English liberties against a corrupting imperial influence.²⁷ Yet, in doing so, the thirteen colonies set themselves on a path that isolated them from the metropole, and they diverged from the British Caribbean and Atlantic island colonies in their actions and reactions to Britain's imperial policies.

British Caribbean colonists participated in a wide range of actions and reactions to the British government's new colonial revenue policies. The Caribbean colonists shared similar constitutional objections as their mainland brethren concerning the Stamp Act, which stemmed from their shared foundations in a transplanted Anglo-Saxon tradition and English common law brought by early generations of settlers to the newly established British colonies.²⁸ Prominent Caribbean colonists, such as Samuel Martin of Antigua and the Solicitor General of Barbados Henry Duke, cited their inherited English liberties in their criticism of the Stamp Act.²⁹ To them the Stamp Act constituted "an Invasion...of the constitutional Rights of English Subjects."³⁰ Caribbean colonists, such as Sir John

²⁷ Robert G. Parkinson, *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 6-7; Kevin Phillips, *1775: A Good Year for Revolution* (New York: Viking, 2012).

²⁸ William E. Nelson, *The Common Law in Colonial America, Volume I: The Chesapeake and New England, 1607-1660* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); William E. Nelson, *The Common Law in Colonial America, Volume II: The Middle Colonies and the Carolinas, 1660-1730* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); William E. Nelson, *The Common Law in Colonial America, Volume III: The Chesapeake and New England, 1660-1750* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 86; William E. Nelson, *The Common Law in Colonial America, Volume IV: Law and the Constitution on the Eve of Independence, 1735-1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); William E. Nelson, *E Pluribus Unum: How the Common Law Helped Unify and Liberate Colonial America, 1607-1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

²⁹ Samuel Martin, Sr. to Samuel Martin, Jr., 30 May 1766, 5 August 1766, Add. MS 41347, BL; Speech of Henry Duke, "Minutes of the General Assembly Commencing the 16th Day of July 1771 and Ending the 2nd Day of July 1772," 8 October 1771, CO 31/36/139v-142v.

³⁰ Sir John Gay Alleyne, *A Letter to the North American, on Occasion of His Address to the Committee of Correspondence in Barbados* (Bridgetown, Barbados: George Esmand and Company, 1766), 16, 25; "A North-American," *An Address to the Committee of Correspondence in Barbados* (Philadelphia: William

Gay Alleyne and George Walker, believed that elected representatives in their colonial legislatures held the authority to levy taxes on domestic goods, property, and services, and approved of the “Doctrine of Internal Taxation like our Brethren on the Continent.”³¹ Although the Caribbean colonists joined with those on the mainland in their opposition, the reactions on the ground varied dramatically.

Colonists living in the smaller, close-knit Leeward Islands did not endure the Stamp Act quietly. Rather, they engaged in riots after the North American colonies promised retaliatory economic boycotts, which threatened to bring famine and violent uprisings to the slave-majority islands.³² Riots broke out on St. Kitts and Nevis on October 31st and November 5th, 1765, the day before the Stamp Act went into effect, and again on November 5th—the anniversaries of the Gunpowder Plot and the Glorious Revolution—in a more elaborate and virulent demonstration of hostility towards the Act.³³ The Leeward Islands’ riots, like those on the North American mainland, incorporated “ceremonial processions, effigy burning, forced recantations by stamp officials, and the destruction of stamps,” as well as a degree of violence through burning

Bradford, 1766); Samuel Martin, Sr. to Samuel Martin, Jr., 30 May 1766, 5 August 1766, Add. MS 41347, BL; CO 31/36/139v-142v.

³¹ George Walker to the Committee of Correspondence of Barbados, “A Meeting of His Excellency and Council, on Tuesday the 21st Day of January 1766,” 21 January 1766, CO 31/33.

³² O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 81; O’Shaughnessy, “The Stamp Act Crisis in the British Caribbean,” 203-226; Spindel, “The Stamp Act Crisis in the British West Indies,” 203-221.

³³ O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 89-91; “Extract of a Letter from Philadelphia, Dated Nov. 26,” *The Boston-Gazette, and Country Journal*, 9 December 1765, 1; “Philadelphia, November 28,” *The Massachusetts Gazette*, 12 December 1765, 2; *Halifax Gazette or the Weekly Advertiser*, 19-26 December 1765; “Extract of a Letter from St. Kitts,” *Supplement to the Boston Evening-Post*, 30 December 1765, 2.

private homes and a Royal Navy longboat.³⁴ Colonists on Monserrat resisted the Stamp Act by simply ignoring the law, while the Antiguans engaged in a more complex opposition that successfully prevented Britain from receiving their stamp revenue. Antiguan stamp collectors, for example, sporadically enforced the law with the *Antigua Gazette* printed on stamped paper through December 1765, but merchant ships routinely entered and cleared the port “as usual” without stamped papers.³⁵ Distribution of stamps did resume in February 1766, but the Antiguan government did not return part of the revenue generated to Britain and produced an outstanding balance of £2,275 in unaccounted stamped papers.³⁶

By contrast, despite the Stamp Act placing the greatest burden on the Caribbean sugar colonies, colonists in Jamaica and Barbados complied with the law. Barbados attempted to enforce the Stamp Act’s rules concerning commercial vessels arriving from the North American mainland rigorously. Reports from the Barbadian governor, Charles Pinfold, indicate that the colony “obeyed [the Act] with...Readiness,” with the island “not show[ing] the least sign of rejoicing” upon the Stamp Act’s repeal.³⁷ Jamaica put up only minor opposition to the Stamp Act. The Jamaican assembly instructed its London

³⁴ O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 89; William Tuckett to George Thomas, 5 December 1765, CO 152/47/118.

³⁵ O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 91-92; Spindel, “The Stamp Act Crisis in the British West Indies,” 219; “Extract of a letter from St. Christopher’s, dated December 23,” *Virginia Gazette*, 7 March 1766; “Extract of a letter from Antigua, January 23,” *Virginia Gazette*, 4 April 1766.

³⁶ O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 92; “Report of J. Lloyd on the Stamp Act,” 18 October 1772, AO 3/1086 in Oliver M. Dickerson, *The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution* (1951; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1978), 206n8.

³⁷ O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 95; Charles Pinfold to the Board of Trade, 21 February 1766, CO 28/32/197; Charles Pinfold to Secretary of State, 26 August 1765, CO 28/50/99; Charles Pinfold to Secretary of State, 21 February 1766, CO 28/50/105.

agents and allies to “employ your utmost Endeavours and Abilities...as to obviate and prevent this alarming measure,” and the Jamaican stamp distributors encountered “repeated Threats of Violence Torrents of Personal abuse and many other disagreeable Circumstances.”³⁸ Even with this resistance, Jamaica generated more stamp revenue than the combined total of British North America, and the Jamaican admiralty courts carried out prosecutions of at least eight North American ships traveling with unstamped clearance papers.³⁹ Following the Stamp Act’s repeal, both islands received commendations for their adherence to the Stamp Act and the lack of disturbances.⁴⁰

Britain’s military importance to the Caribbean island communities shaped their support for the metropole. During the Stamp Act and Townshend Duties crises, the North American colonists increasingly came to view the presence of garrisoned British troops as a conspiracy to overthrow and deprive them of their liberties, and whose presence a corrupt imperial government forced upon them.⁴¹ Yet, in the Caribbean colonies, the

³⁸ O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 95; John Howell to the Secretary of State, 31 May 1766, CO 137/62/208.

³⁹ Dickerson, *The Navigation Acts*, 192-193; O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 95-96. Returns from Lloyd’s report shows that total cash receipts of £3,292 9s 11d, of which two-thirds came from Jamaica alone, as well as £500 from Barbados.

⁴⁰ O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 95-96; “At a Meeting of the Honourable and Worshipful, the Gentlemen Representatives of the People of this Island on Wednesday the third of December 176[6] at the Town Hall...,” 3 December 1766, CO 31/32; “At a Meeting of the General Assembly of the Town Hall on Tuesday the 20th of January 1767,” 20 January 1767, CO 31/32; Henry Seymour Conway to William Lyttelton, 10 April 1766, CO 137/62/164-166.

⁴¹ Eliga H. Gould, “Fears of War, Fantasies of Peace: British Politics and the Coming of the American Revolution” in *Empire and Nation: The American Revolution in the Atlantic World*, eds. Eliga H. Gould and Peter S. Onuf (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 25-33; John Shy, *Toward Lexington: The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the American Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 99, 141, 163-181, 184-185, 232, 248-250, 250-258, 264, 301-302, 385-391; John Dickinson, *An Essay on the Constitutional Power of Great-Britain over the Colonies in America; with the Resolves of the Committee for the Province of Pennsylvania, and their Instructions to their Representatives in Assembly* (Philadelphia: William and Thomas Bradford, 1774), 63-64n; Governor of Massachusetts [Sir Francis Bernard], *Letters to the Right Honourable the Earl of Hillsborough, from*

white inhabitants saw British troops as forces of protection, primarily from slave rebellions and French and Spanish invasions, rather than the instruments of political, social, and economic oppression. The white planters supported the British troops' presence, and they petitioned the home government for increased peacetime garrisons to ensure white control over the majority black-slave population.⁴²

While the British Army constituted the islands' primary internal defense forces, the Royal Navy served as both the "the only efficient protection" from foreign attacks and invasions, and as a supporting force in subduing the islands' slave revolts.⁴³ British naval superiority supported merchant shipping lanes, ensuring the safe arrival of vital foodstuffs and supplies to sustain the slave labor forces, and enabling sugar planters to sail their profitable produce to British and European markets. The navy also served as auxiliary support for the army and local militias in suppressing slave revolts by deploying contingents of Royal Marines in amphibious assaults, employing superior firepower against onshore targets, and acting as a force of intimidation to slave populations in

Governor Bernard, General Gage and the Honourable His Majesty's Council for the Province of Massachusetts-Bay: with an appendix containing divers proceedings referred to in the said letters (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1769), 34, 49; *Extract of a Letter from the House of Representatives of the Massachusetts-Bay, to their agent Dennys de Berdt, Esp.: with some remarks* (London: J. and W. Oliver, 1770), 13; Josiah Quincy, *Observations on the Act of Parliament commonly called the Boston Port-Bill: with thoughts on civil society and standing armies* (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1774), 54-55.

The first of the Quartering Acts of the 1760s and 1770s consisted of the American Mutiny Act of 1765. The Grenville administration designed this Act, in conjunction with the Stamp Act, to support at least 10,000 British army troops permanently stationed along the frontier and ceded French and Spanish territories in Canada and Florida. Many American colonists saw the need for a standing army as being a "needless expense," because the American colonists had a long history of defending their communities with local and colonial militias. American colonists saw the presence of a standing army as a threat to English liberties, and as the crises of the late 1760s and early 1770s progressed the British Army became a symbol of imperial oppression with the implementation of the Coercive Acts in Massachusetts.

⁴² O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 34, 49-50.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 49.

Jamaica and the Leeward Islands.⁴⁴ The white planter populations relied on the Royal Navy to serve as a means of “overawing and intimidating” the enslaved population, and British warships acted to quash several uprisings and conspiracies on Monserrat, Jamaica, and at the Mosquito Coast in the 1760s and 1770s.⁴⁵

While American patriots attempted to pressure the sugar islands’ legislatures and planter elites to join their tax protests in a show of colonial solidarity against the British government, American merchants’ penchant for sugar smuggling weakened their influence in the sugar islands. Sugar and molasses smuggling from the French and Dutch Caribbean islands to the mainland colonies undercut British sugar planters’ profits, hurt their home-market monopoly, and weakened their ability to compete with cheaper French sugar in both British American and European markets.⁴⁶ Efforts to rein in American sugar

⁴⁴ Ibid., 53, 147, 152-154.

⁴⁵ O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 53, 147, 152-154; Robert Stewart to Admiral Thomas Pye, 25 November 1770, ADM 1/309; Mavis C. Campbell, *The Maroons of Jamaica, 1655-1796: A History of Resistance, Collaboration and Betrayal* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1990), 76-77; Admiral Thomas Pye to Philip Stephens, 1 April 1768, ADM 1/308; Admiral Thomas Pye to Philip Stephens, 16 May 1768, ADM 1/308.

The Royal Navy deployed against several slave rebellions in the British Caribbean during the imperial crisis: once for a slave conspiracy at Montserrat in 1768; once against a slave revolt on the Mosquito Coast in 1774; and, twice to Jamaica to suppress a maroon uprising in 1774 and a slave revolt in 1776.

⁴⁶ Rev. Robert Robertson, *A Supplement to the Detection of the State and Situation of the Present Sugar Planters of Barbados and the Leeward Islands* (London: J. Wilford, 1733), 5, 16; Malachy Postlethwayt, *Great-Britain’s Commercial Interest Explained and Improved: In a Series of Dissertations on the Most Important Branches of her Trade and Landed Interest*, 2 vols. (London: W. Owen, 1757), 1:494; “Examination of Thomas Collet by William Beckford, May 6, 1766,” *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America, 1754-1783*, eds. R. C. Simmons and P. D. G. Thomas, vol. 2, 1765-1768 (Millwood, NY: Kraus International Publications, 1982), 384; John Lord Sheffield, *Observations on the Commerce of the American States* (London: J. Debrett, 1784), 161-164; Resolutions of the Assembly of Antigua, 24 January 1764, CO 152/30/36.

Scholarly examinations of the agricultural and economic differences between British and French sugar production in the Caribbean island colonies can be found in the following works: O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 61; Richard B. Sheridan, “The Molasses Act and the Market Strategy of the British Sugar Planters,” *Journal of Economic History* 17, no. 1 (Mar., 1957), 67; Richard Pares, *Merchants and Planters*, *Economic History Review* 4 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1960); Richard Pares, *Yankees and Creoles: The Trade between North America and the West Indies before the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1956); Gilman M. Ostrander, “The Colonial

smuggling by the British government through the passage of the Sugar Act angered merchants in the northern colonies who blamed the sugar colonies' lobby for the Act's passage.⁴⁷ The North American colonies did not invite for the Caribbean and Atlantic colonies' assemblies to send delegations to the Stamp Act Congress in 1765. Rather, they exacted economic boycotts against the islands that complied with the Act.⁴⁸ Using this active approach, the American patriots hoped, would maximize Caribbean opposition to the Stamp Act, and ultimately force the metropole to repeal the Act.⁴⁹ Stamp Act protestors in the thirteen mainland colonies demanded that measures be taken to deny the islands "the comfortable Enjoyment of every delicious Dainty from us," and that the "poor, mean spirited, Cowardly, Dastardly Creoles" be deprived of "Fresh or Salt

Molasses Trade," *Agricultural History* 30, no. 2 (Apr., 1956), 77-84; Richard Pares, *A West-India Fortune* (New York and London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1950).

⁴⁷ "The Farmer," *Pennsylvania Journal*, 23 August 1764; "To the Printer of the Providence Gazette, &c.," *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, 27 October 1764, 1; "Petition of Council and House of Representatives, to the Honorable House of Commons, November 3, 1764" in *Speeches of the Governors of Massachusetts, from 1765 to 1775; and the Answers of the House of Representatives, to the same; with their Resolutions and Addresses for that Period. And other Public Papers, relating to the Dispute between this Country and Great Britain, which led to the Independence of the United States*, ed. Alden Bradford (Boston: Russell and Gardner, 1818), 21-23; "Statement of Trade and Fisheries of Massachusetts," *Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society* 18 (1920), 271-272.

Further scholarly discussion on the rift between the British North American and Caribbean sugar colonies over the Sugar Act can be found in the following works: Agnes M. Whitson, "The Outlook of the Continental American Colonies on the British West Indies, 1760-1775," *Political Science Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (Mar., 1930), 69, 76; O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 66-67, 98-100; John C. Miller, *Origins of the American Revolution: With a New Introduction, and a Bibliography* (Stanford, CA and London: Stanford University Press, 1959), 180; Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953), 27; Christopher P. Magra, *The Fisherman's Cause: Commerce and Maritime Dimensions of the American Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 119.

⁴⁸ Whitson, "The Outlook of the Continental American Colonies on the British West Indies, 1760-1775," 76-77.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 76-77; O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 98-100.

Provisions from any Son of LIBERTY on the Continent.”⁵⁰ The colonists levied no similar outcries against the Bermudians and Bahamians, however. The North American colonists did have some success in their petitions and boycotts, because the Caribbean legislatures urged their West Indian lobby in London to push for the Stamp Act’s repeal.⁵¹

While the reactions of British colonists in North America and the Caribbean were split between reactionary protests and dutiful acceptance, those in the Atlantic islands experienced the Stamp Act Crisis—and the succeeding crises—in fundamentally different ways. First, the Atlantic islands lacked the widespread animosity that characterized the Stamp Act protests in North American port cities. Second, akin to the British Caribbean, localized opposition towards British tax collectors and colonial administrators did not coalesce into distinct, organized, oppositional groups. Third, Bermuda and the Bahamas did not experience Parliament’s efforts to assert its authority at the provincial level. Bermudians and Bahamians skirted British attempts to ensure the enforcement of trade regulations and taxes on imported goods in the American colonies, but the political and ideological debates between the mainland colonies and Parliament

⁵⁰ “Portsmouth, (New-Hampshire) Jan. 6,” *The New-York Gazette*, 27 January 1766, 2; “Extract of a Letter from New-London, March 13, 1766,” *The Newport Mercury*, 24-31 March 1766, 3; *Maryland Gazette*, 30 January 1766.

⁵¹ Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, “The Formation of a Commercial Lobby: The West India Interest, British Colonial Policy and the American Revolution,” *Historical Journal* 40, no. 1 (Mar., 1997), 80-82; O’Shaughnessy, “The Stamp Act Crisis in the British Caribbean,” 207-208.

With the exception of an alliance with the North American colonists in opposition to the Stamp Act, the West Indies’ lobbyists “did not mobilize in support of the North American cause;” rather, they became “divided and inactive” with regards to the Coercive Acts, and only intervened in 1775 on behalf of the North American colonies to warn Parliament of the economic consequences of war, and they did not raise any of the “constitutional merits of the imperial rift.” See: O’Shaughnessy, “The Formation of a Commercial Lobby,” 80-82.

nonetheless made a profound impact on the issues of representation, taxation, and political sovereignty in the Atlantic islands.

Official British and Bahamian correspondence during the Stamp Act crisis illustrate a peaceful colony, undisturbed by riots and violence. Governor Shirley, whom the British government charged with ensuring the stamps distribution in the Bahamas, asserted in a message to the colonial assembly that the government “remained in a perfectly undisturbed State” during the Stamp Act Crisis.⁵² Official government accounts compiled from Governor William Shirley’s communiqués and British administrative records give two plausible explanations that fit the governor’s account: 1. the stamps never arrived at Nassau; or, 2. they did arrive, but remained on the ship unloaded and undistributed.⁵³ Bahamians did not stage protests to the Stamp Act and direct taxation with the same degree of frequency and violence as those made by colonists in the American port cities and the Leeward Islands.

Nonetheless, colonial reports of a Bahamian anti-Stamp protest did appear. New England newspapers offered accounts of the Stamp Act duties and protests in the Bahamas that contradicted Shirley’s account. These reports arrived via an unnamed individual, most likely a sailor or merchant, who arrived in New Haven on an unnamed

⁵² Spindel, “The Stamp Act Crisis in the British West Indies,” 220, 220-221n69; Grey Cooper to John Brettell, 17 October 1765, T 27/29; Burns, *History of the British West Indies*, 517n1.

⁵³ “Certificate, signed by Governor William Shirley, Bahama Islands, New Providence, that no stamps or stamp officer had arrived in that province,” 31 January 1766, Robert Treat Paine Papers, 1659-1916, Ms. N-641, MHS; Spindel, “The Stamp Act Crisis in the British West Indies,” 220-221n69; “List of Stamp Distributors,” AO 3/1086.

According to Clinton Weslager, stamps sailed to the Bahamas in 1765 as cargo on three ships: the *Planters Adventure*, captained by Miles Lowley, on 1 August; the *Carolina Packet*, captained by William White, on 26 August; and, the *Portland*, captained by George Higgins, on 19 August. See: Clinton A. Weslager, *The Stamp Act Congress: With an Exact Copy of the Complete Journal*, A University of Delaware Bicentennial Book (Newark and London: University of Delaware Press, 1976), 264.

merchant ship around October 11th, 1765. The anonymous mariner contended that “a Number of People” at New Providence demanded the stamp distributor, presumably the customs collector James Bradford, resign from his post.⁵⁴ When he refused “they forced him into a coffin, nailed it shut, lowered it into the ground and covered it with 2 shovelfulls of dirt before he cried out and said he’d resign.”⁵⁵

While Bahamian officials’ and North American newspapers’ conflicting reports of the islanders’ interactions with the stamp tax exist, British stamp shipments and revenue reports illustrate Bahamians’ lack of engagement with the duty. The number of stamps allocated to the Bahamas amounted to the second smallest shipment in British America.⁵⁶ British customs clerks, who tabulated the collected revenue, combined the islands’ reported earnings with those from Georgia, and East and West Florida.⁵⁷ The four colonies’ combination of tax revenues consequently makes it impossible to discern how much revenue from the stamp tax the Bahamas generated, if any at all. Furthermore, out of the entire British American allocation of stamps, the Bahamas proved to be the only colony to return its shipment in its entirety.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ “New-Haven, October 11,” *The Newport Mercury*, 21 October 1765, 3; “New-Haven, October 11,” *The Boston Post-Boy & Advertiser*, 21 October 1765, 1; “New-York, Octo. 14,” *The Boston Evening-Post*, 21 October 1765, 3; “New-Haven, Octo. 11,” *New-Hampshire Gazette, and Historical Chronicle*, 25 October 1765, 3; Spindel, “The Stamp Act Crisis in the British West Indies,” 220, 220-221n69.

⁵⁵ “New-Haven, October 11,” *The Newport Mercury*, 21 October 1765, 3; “New-Haven, October 11,” *The Boston Post-Boy & Advertiser*, 21 October 1765, 1; “New-York, Octo. 14,” *The Boston Evening-Post*, 21 October 1765, 3; “New-Haven, Octo. 11,” *New-Hampshire Gazette, and Historical Chronicle*, 25 October 1765, 3; Spindel, “The Stamp Act Crisis in the British West Indies,” 220, 220-221n69.

⁵⁶ Spindel, “The Stamp Act Crisis in the British West Indies,” 220.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 220n69.

In Bermuda, the Stamp Act had little influence on the colony. Due to Bermuda's lack of locally published newspapers and its handful of lawyers, the Stamp Act mainly affected merchant captains who "had to pay the stamp duty on their vessels' entry and clearance papers."⁵⁹ In early November 1765, Bermudian merchants and mariners whose businesses required the stamps voluntarily called for them, choosing to acquiesce to imperial authority.⁶⁰ While the islanders did not participate in violent anti-stamp protests, Bermudians did begin to resist the purchase and use of stamped papers as news of anti-stamp violence reached the island later between November 1765 and January 1766. Merchants and mariners who were initially willing to use stamped papers changed their minds out of fear that "their vessels might be burnt or destroyed" by the mainland colonists, and they petitioned Governor George James Bruere to permit them to clear port without stamped papers.⁶¹ Governor Bruere, a former British Army officer and the subject of John Russell's *Portrait of a Gentleman, traditionally identified as George Bruere, Governor of Bermuda* (see Plate 2 on page 48), could neither provide assurances to Bermudian merchants and mariners that their ships would be unmolested by "Refractory People," nor that the prospect of harm to mariners and their vessels amounted to a sufficient reason for disregarding the law.⁶² Admitting to the petitioning islanders that "it was out of [his] power to dispense with, mitigate or alter any resolutions of the British Parliament," Bruere advised them that "they would find their advantage by

⁵⁹ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 384.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 384.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 384; George James Bruere to the Board of Trade, 1 May 1766, CO 37/19/346.

⁶² John Russell, *Portrait of a Gentleman, traditionally identified as George Bruere, Governor of Bermuda*, c. 1780, oil on canvas, 36½ in. x 28 in., Bermuda National Trust, St. George's, Bermuda; CO 37/19/346.

keeping trade open and their vessels employed till we should hear from England.”⁶³ For Bermudian merchants and mariners, they avoided presenting stamped papers when entering and clearing mainland ports in order to avoid attracting the mainland colonists’ ire, while producing a set of stamped clearance papers for British port officials in the Caribbean.

Governor Bruere, however, did not advocate for the Stamp Act, nor did he strongly support its enforcement in the colony. In a letter to Secretary of State Henry Seymour Conway, one of the chief proponents for repealing the Stamp Act, Bruere proclaimed himself to be “very moderate” on the matter, and desired not “to curb, or do anything to the detriment of trade” since few vessels entered Bermuda to take on or offload cargoes.⁶⁴ Bruere’s instructions to some Bermudian petitioners imply that merchants and mariners should take actions necessary to protect their ships and cargoes when entering mainland ports, while avoiding openly communicating this lest the British administration interpret his directive as acquiescing to American mobs and rabble-rousers.⁶⁵ Bruere called upon the Bermudian council to petition the British government for the repeal of the Stamp Act, and instructed them to communicate to King George III that, “with hearts full of duty and affection,” the stamp tax placed “too great a burden” on the island’s commercial economy.⁶⁶

⁶³ Ibid. Reports of the Bermudians’ petition appears in: *The New-Hampshire Gazette, and Historical Chronicle*, 7 February 1766, 2.

⁶⁴ George James Bruere to the Secretary of State, 19 October 1765, CO 37/31/63v.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 27; “London, Nov. 12,” *The Boston Evening-Post*, 10 February 1766, 1.



Plate 2: John Russell, *Portrait of a Gentleman, traditionally identified as George Bruere, Governor of Bermuda*, c. 1780, oil on canvas, 36½ in. x 28 in., Bermuda National Trust, St. George's, Bermuda.

Several other Bermudians did take actions to impede the stamps' continued issuance. Reports of Bermudian measures to stifle the use of stamped papers trickled into mainland newspapers in early December, noting that Bermudians, upon "hearing what was done on the Continent...took Measures to prevent any more being issued."⁶⁷ One reported case of Bermudian anti-stamp action occurred when an unknown thief stole some stamped papers and legal documents "from [a] messenger and destroyed [them] in the country."⁶⁸ This incident caused Bermudian juries to refuse the continued use of stamped papers for court proceedings, in all probability out of concern that additional thefts and attacks would disrupt ongoing court cases and legal business. Consequently, their decision caused the island's legal system to come to a halt in December 1765.⁶⁹ This reaction stands in contrast with New England's civil and criminal courts, which continued to function normally without the stamped papers.⁷⁰ In the months leading up to the Stamp Act's enforcement, the assembly devoted "very little attendance" to public business.⁷¹ The assembly's inaction stemmed from their "being disgusted at the Stamp

⁶⁷ "Extract of a Letter from Charles-Town, in South Carolina, December 2, 1765," *New-York Mercury*, 13 January 1766, 1.

⁶⁸ CO 37/19/346.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* Anti-Stamp Act violence in British North America's port cities, coupled with the theft of the stamped papers in Bermuda, led local magistrates to conclude that the prevailing uneasiness amounted to a sufficient reason to suspend the enforcement of Bermuda's liquor licensing laws. The courts implemented this precaution because the Stamp Act's regulations required the licenses, being legal documents, to be printed on stamped paper, and would have exposed Bermudians possessing the stamped licenses to theft or assault at the hands of anti-Stamp partisans.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Act,” and the legislators’ desire for clear, determinate orders regarding the Act’s application to the island’s trade.⁷²

Within the Bermudian government, the assembly’s opposition to the Stamp Act and British authority’s weak position on the island dissuaded violent public protests. Following the Stamp Act’s implementation and the North American riots, the assembly refused to meet until after the Act’s repeal, and remained out of session from November 1765 until March 1766, which consequently allowed them to avoid taking a formal position on the law.⁷³ The assembly’s recess, however, illustrates their employment of non-violent protest to oppose the law and quietly register their displeasure without drawing undesirable attention from the metropole. The Bermudian assembly’s adjourning in protest brought the opposition to the highest levels of the colonial government. With the colonial legislature and judiciary employing various forms of opposition to the Stamp Act, the use of large-scale, violent protests by the islanders proved unnecessary.⁷⁴

Although sections of Bermudian and Bahamian society put up a minor resistance, many islanders expressed no constitutional reservations and willingly paid the tax when available. Bermudians raised no serious constitutional issues in public or condemned the

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.; “18 November 1765, At the Government House” in “Minutes of His Majesty’s Council (1765-1766),” *Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History* 8 (1996), 178; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 384; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 27-28. The *Bermuda Journal of Archaeology and Maritime History* will be abbreviated as *BJAMH* from here onwards.

⁷⁴ While Governor Bruere expressed a degree of ambivalence towards the Bermudian merchants and mariners’ adherence to the Stamp Act, especially when faced with the threat of assault and destruction of their property at the hands of the mainland colonists, he lacked the ability to compel the Bermudian legislature, courts, and public to obey the law. Bruere’s ability to ensure the Act’s enforcement was hindered in two principal ways: 1. Bermudian merchants and mariners’ exploitation of the island’s numerous unauthorized landing areas enabled them to subvert customs enforcement; and, 2. Bermuda’s lack of stationed British troops deprived the governor of a non-Bermudian force capable of ensuring the islanders complied with the law. See: Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 384; CO 37/19/346; CO 37/31/63v.

assembly's refusal to meet. Although Bruere openly speculated about what the Bermudian assembly members' constituents thought, he begrudgingly approved of the legislators' "whimsical Humour" by granting the House multiple recesses until early May 1766.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, the Bermudians appeared to be in concurrence with the British government's exercising of authority over the colonies.⁷⁶ Akin to the New England colonies prior to Britain's tightening of the Navigation Acts' enforcement, the British Atlantic Islands' social and economic basis in maritime commerce enabled the islanders to develop a deep-rooted practice of smuggling and acquiescence that mitigated the British government's attempts to regulate and tax their livelihoods during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁷⁷ Furthermore, in the instance of the Stamp Act's repeal, unlike in the mainland colonies, no public celebrations marked the event in either Bermuda or the Bahamas. Instead, the event passed with little more than congratulatory letters from the colonial governments to the Crown, and public announcements from Governor Bruere read aloud in Bermudian churches.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 384; "1 April 1766, At the Government House" in "Minutes of His Majesty's Council (1765-1766)," *BJAMH* 8 (1996), 182-183.

⁷⁶ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 384.

⁷⁷ Samuel Gambier to the Commissioners of the Customs, CO 23/8/124-126; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 114; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 68, 160, 167, 168-169, 174, 178-179, 180, 384; Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 136-137, 144-145, 149-151.

For discussion on New Englanders and British North Americans' smuggling activities during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see: Wim Klooster, "Inter-Imperial Smuggling in the Americas, 1600-1800" in *Soundings in Atlantic History*, eds. Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 142, 144-145, 159-162, 167-174; Benjamin L. Carp, "Did Dutch Smugglers Provoke the Boston Tea Party?," *Early American Studies* 10, no. 2 (Spring, 2012), 335-359; Hoh-Cheung and Lorna H. Mui, "Smuggling and the British Tea Trade before 1784," *American Historical Review* 74, no. 1 (Oct., 1968), 44-73; Dorothy S. Towle, "Smuggling Canary Wine in 1740," *New England Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (Mar., 1933), 144-154.

⁷⁸ George James Bruere, "Die Mercurii, October 8th, 1766. Ante Meridiem," *Ancient Journals of the House of Assembly of Bermuda*, 2:1173; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 27.

While many Bermudians and Bahamians shared the liberal Whig ideology of the mainland colonists, their particular situations within the empire resulted in delayed expressions of that ideology during the mid-1760s. Royal Navy patrols and surveillance targeted smuggling operations along North America's shores, but patrolling along remote Bermuda and the treacherous Bahamian channels proved difficult and ineffective.⁷⁹ Bermudian and Bahamian smugglers expressed little concern with the British government's enforcement of the Seizure Act, customs duties and restrictions, and prosecution of offenders in the vice-admiralty courts, since they merely continued employing discreet landing sites on Bermuda and New Providence islands to escape customs officials and naval patrols.⁸⁰ While fortified with aging forts and barracks, Bermuda and the Bahamas lacked permanent garrisons of British troops.⁸¹ The archipelagos' lack of major cash crops and exportable commodities that generated revenue for the British government caused the metropole to devote attention neither to maintaining their forts, nor to regularly stationing army regiments in the colonial capitals. As a result, the Quartering Acts of 1765 and 1774 did not directly affect the islands in a

⁷⁹ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 384; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 161; Dickerson, *The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution*, 169-170.

⁸⁰ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 384. Bermudians used smaller, lighter vessels that called at smaller, underserved ports in North America, which encountered less competition for docks, and irregular customs and naval patrols. Bermudian, Bahamian, and other merchants and crews operating in North America and the Caribbean used Turks Island as a rendezvous site to exchange cargoes moving back and forth between the French and Dutch Caribbean islands and the North America mainland.

⁸¹ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 162; Thomas Shirley to the Board of Trade, 9 December 1768, 23/8/3-5; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 384; Henry Campbell Wilkinson, *Bermuda in the Old Empire: A History of the Island from the Dissolution of the Somers Island Company until the End of the American Revolutionary War, 1684-1784* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 375-437. In the case of the Bahamas, the garrison at New Providence consisted of a dangerously depleted independent company of twenty-three men in 1768.

similar manner that caused public outrage on the mainland. Parliament's efforts to exercise greater authority and control over its American colonies produced legislation and imperial activity designed to control trade and rising civil unrest, while increasing revenue to repay war debts. The British Atlantic Islands managed to evade imperial actions by capitalizing on their geography and metropolitan neglect to continue their smuggling operations, rather than engaging in violent political protests, ideological partisanship, and reasserting their rights as British subjects like their mainland brethren.

American threats to end provision exports to Bermuda and the Bahamas, meanwhile, did little to embolden the islands' slave populations to revolt against the white inhabitants. Disruptions to the continued flow of food, sugar, and income to and from the Caribbean islands, by contrast, posed grave threats to their internal stability and threatened slave insurrections.⁸² Bermuda and the Bahamas also relied on the mainland colonies for provisions, which left them equally susceptible to famine as the smaller British Caribbean colonies.⁸³ Yet, due to the smaller proportions of enslaved blacks to free persons and the decentralized nature of both colonies, the risk and severity of slave uprisings proved to be lower than that in the Caribbean sugar colonies.⁸⁴ Both white and

⁸² North American colonists' threats to initiate boycotts of British goods and prohibit vessels with stamped clearance papers from entering or leaving port endangered the Leeward Islands, who depended on provisions imported from New England, New York, and Pennsylvania for the islands' slaves.

⁸³ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 425, 427; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 5; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 132-133; To the Kings Most Excellent Majesty, 17 April 1773, CO 23/9/53-55.

⁸⁴ Virginia Bernhard, *Slaves and Slaveholders in Bermuda, 1616-1782* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 98-99, 238; Governor Shirley's Answers to 19 Queries relating to His Majesty's Bahama Islands, 28 November 1773, CO 23/22/86v; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 180.

A 1774 census of Bermuda's white and black inhabitants reveals that Bermuda's population consisted of 6,130 whites and 5,025 blacks. In the Bahamas, a similar census put the islands' total white and black populations at 1,992 people and 2,201 people respectively. In Bermuda and the Bahamas, the black

black populations in the British Atlantic Islands faced famine crises together, which compelled the white and black populations to pursue continued provisions shipments as shared goals for survival. While slave uprisings remained a threat to the white inhabitants' safety and the colonies' social orders, the islands lacked the near total reliance on the British Army for maintaining internal security and white dominance. Nor did Bermuda and the Bahamas have a wealthy and influential social class capable of persuading the metropole to maintain a contingent of troops at either colony.

Bermuda and the Bahamas existed within a British Atlantic world removed from much of the British administrative and parliamentary meddling that enflamed Whig and Patriot partisans on the mainland. The islands' lack of cash crops also deprived the colonists of the wealth, military security, and political influence in the metropole that the British sugar islands possessed. These realities enabled the British Atlantic Islands to

community accounting for approximately 45 percent and 52.5 percent of the colonies' populations respectively. Bermuda did not have a black-majority population until the nineteenth century, and the Bahamas' black population remained about equal to the white population until the Loyalists' settlement following the American Revolution. The influx of Loyalists and their slaves from the Chesapeake and Lower South caused the Bahamas to become a black majority colony. In the British Caribbean, the proportion of the black slave populations ranged from 73 percent in Barbados (one of the lowest) to as over 95 percent in the Leeward Islands.

Between 1700 and 1775 only one serious instance of a slave uprising exists in the Bahamas, when an African slave named Quarino ran away to New Providence's bushlands and killed a soldier during his capture in early July 1734. Quarino confessed to the existence of a plot by New Providence's slaves to rise up and kill the white inhabitants. While the Bahamian government arrested the named co-conspirators, they only executed Quarino. The government deported the other conspirators because they only had a "general knowledge of the plot." In the decentralized and difficult to police archipelago, Bahamian slaves possessed the ability to resist or rebel against their enslavement by running away or escaping to the more remote neighboring islands. The Bahamian government took measures to curtail runaways by imposing strict nighttime curfews in their 1767 slave codes. The Bahamian government restricted the importation of slaves from colonies deemed to be problematic due to any recent slave plots or uprisings, which came about after Bermudians uncovered a plot to launch a large slave insurrection on their island in 1764. See: Bernhard, *Slaves and Slaveholders in Bermuda*, 238; "General List of the Numbers of Inhabitants, Number of Vessels, Number of Sailors...1774 by Order of His Excellency George James Bruere Esquire Governor &c.," in "Reports on Bermuda by Two 18th Century Governors," *Bermuda Historical Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (1968), 60-61; CO 23/22/86v; O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 8-9; David Watts, *The West Indies: Patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Changes since 1492* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 311, 313, 316; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 139, 151.

enact a blend of actions and reactions to the Stamp Act's implementation in 1765. The ideological, political, economic, and social loyalties of the islands rose to the surface as the tensions increased between Britain and her thirteen North American colonies during the late 1760s and early 1770s. As the political and ideological confrontations dragged on into the early 1770s, the emergent conflict drew the British Atlantic Islands onto the side of the American patriots. Yet, the movement of the islanders did not begin until after the repeal of the Stamp Act.

The entry of the British Atlantic Islands into the imperial crisis was over an internal conflict in the Bahamian colonial government concerning the administration of the Turks and Caicos Islands. The British Atlantic islanders' use of violent opposition to the Stamp Act and direct taxation by Parliament proved to be limited in comparison with the mainland colonies and the Leeward Islands. The islands' responses to the Stamp Act and Townshend Duties crises, however, emerged through the political and intellectual application of the transatlantic debates to an internal conflict over the Turks and Caicos Islands. The Bahamian government divided along ideological lines reminiscent of the divide between the American patriots and liberal Whigs on the mainland, and the Grenville administration in Great Britain during the Stamp Act Crisis. This local crisis is one of the clearest examples of colonists from outside the thirteen colonies applying the Stamp Act Crisis' ideological debates and principal arguments to resolve internal colonial problems. It also illuminates the British Atlantic Islands' evolving position on the metropole-thirteen colonies division leading up to the American Revolution, as well as their desire to maintain the imperial status quo to preserve themselves.

Political Ideology and the Turks and Caicos

While the Turks and Caicos Islands' annexation to the Bahamas solidified Britain's claim to the islands, the decision brought an ideological hurricane over the question of taxation and virtual representation to the archipelago. Since Bermudians occupied the Turks and Caicos, serious questions remained regarding the Bahamas' legislative authority over the islanders. Bermuda governed the islands indirectly through its seasonal salt rakers, who settled at Turks Island to evaporate seawater in shallow ponds and gather the residual salt. The colony's ability to directly control and claim the Turks and Caicos, however, lacked recognition from the metropole, which never previously established who held the authority to govern the islands at the colonial level. The colonial legislature, governor, and Lord Hillsborough's arguments and ideological positions mirrored those of the mainland American colonies and the metropole during the 1760s and 1770s.

Unlike the tiny settlements on Exuma and Cat Island, the Turks Islanders dominated the island in far greater numbers than colonial officials could ignore. A Bahamian government census in 1773 revealed that Exuma had 6 white inhabitants and 24 blacks, Cat Island had 3 whites and 40 blacks, and at least 40 whites and 110 blacks settled on Turks Island.⁸⁵ Turks Island's population may have been much higher at the time, with estimates putting it at approximately 800 inhabitants by 1775.⁸⁶ This would make Turks the second largest Bahamian island by population; surpassing the 746 person

⁸⁵ CO 23/22/86v.

⁸⁶ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 207, 209-210.

population of Eleuthera, but less than the combined 2,824 people on New Providence Island.⁸⁷

Turks Island diverged from the virtually represented portions of the Bahamas in more than just population size and their colonial identity, but in terms of their local concerns and legal system. While elected representatives in the Bahamas' Lower House came from designated constituencies on New Providence, Eleuthera, Harbour Island and Spanish Wells, the settlements across the colony's other islands lacked the authority to elect their own representatives to the assembly.⁸⁸ The Bahamas' smaller island settlements, consequently, existed within a state of virtual representation within their colonial government analogous to the British American colonies' relationship with Parliament. Exuma and Cat islands lacked direct representation in the assembly because they consisted of loosely defined settlements with too few inhabitants to warrant electing their own representatives under the Bahamas' proprietary patent and assembly's archaic division of elected constituencies.⁸⁹ Since these settlers consisted of Bahamians, their issues and concerns probably concurred with those across New Providence, Harbour Island and Spanish Wells, and Eleuthera. The majority of Turks Island residents, however, identified themselves as Bermudians. The Turks Islanders also governed themselves through "local customs" and Bermudian colonial law, which produced an

⁸⁷ CO 23/22/86v.

⁸⁸ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 162-163.

⁸⁹ *The Charter of the Bahama Islands* (London: n.p., 1670); "Lords Proprietors of the Bahama Islands to Gov. Hugh Wentworth, and the Councillors and Assistants" in *CSP:CS*, eds. William Noel Sainsbury et al., vol. 7, *America and the West Indies, 1669 – 1674* (London: H.M.S.O., 1889), 509-510; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 75, 94, 134-135.

independent Turks Island common law system.⁹⁰ The principal inhabitants explicitly asserted this differentiation in common law in their petition to Lord Hillsborough.⁹¹ The islanders argued that they should not be subject to Bahamian laws since their local interests and those of “the Bahamas proper were incompatible,” and they did not “expect to receive justice or understanding from distant Nassau.”⁹²

Taking the ethical and ideological highroad, the Bahamian Lower House of Assembly steadfastly refused to pass legislation applicable specifically to the islands without their direct representation. On October 10th, 1770, Governor Thomas Shirley, William’s only surviving son who succeeded him as governor in November 1767 and depicted in Sir George Chalmers’ portrait entitled *Gen. Sir Thomas Shirley* (see Plate 3 on page 60), presented the assembly with three resolutions directly addressing the Turks Islanders.⁹³ The House curtly responded by tabling them; expressly stating that while the islands formed a part of the Bahamas, they remained subject to the laws currently in

⁹⁰ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 199.

⁹¹ Copy of a Letter from the Principal Inhabitants of Turks Island to the Earl of Hillsborough, 2 April 1770, CO 23/8/153-154.

⁹² CO 23/8/153-154; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 163.

The Turks Islanders considered Nassau distant in two principle respects. The first way was in terms of geographic distance and travel time. Due to the shifting wind and ocean currents traveling through the Bahamas, the Turks Islanders reported that it would take approximately six weeks to journey from Turks Island to New Providence, while sailing to Bermuda took only one to two weeks. The second aspect centered on the islanders’ perceptions of Nassauvian merchants and political elites. The islanders believed the Nassauvians to be unconcerned with their economic and physical welfare, and a threat that would implement legislation and court rulings beneficial to the Bahamians over the Turks Islanders. See: CO 23/8/153-154.

⁹³ Evelyn Philip Shirley, *Stemmate Shirleiana; or the Annals of the Shirley Family, Lords of Nether Etindon in the County of Warwick and of Shirley in the County of Derby* (Westminster, UK: Nichols and Sons, 1873), 322, 322n2; Sir George Chalmers, *Gen. Sir Thomas Shirley*, oil on canvas, Boston Athenaeum, Boston, Massachusetts, United States of America; Extract from the Journals of the Lower House of Assembly, 10 October 1770, CO 23/8/116-117.

force, and consequently the House should not pass any new legislation pertaining to Turks Island's internal laws since they possessed no representative.⁹⁴ Without representation, the House could not truly ascertain the Turks Islanders' present circumstances and interests, and they could inadvertently cause "great oppression to them by passing laws not properly adapted to their necessities."⁹⁵ Furthermore, the House asserted that elected representation exemplified a right and honor they deserved; as they concluded the islanders' population to be adequate for representation within any assembly in British America.⁹⁶

The assembly's rejection of virtual representation in favor of direct representation stemmed from the legislators' awareness of the islands' unique position within both the Bahamian archipelago and British America. The British administration's reclassification of the Turks and Caicos Islands from Bermudian to Bahamian made them a rare instance in which a sizeable population of free and civilized British subjects suddenly became inhabitants of another colony they did not identify with or acknowledge. While wartime territorial concessions made this situation not an unusual one within seventeenth- and eighteenth-century America, the populations of these affected regions were alien to traditional English common law and representative government, such as the British annexation of both Quebec and the French settlements on the Ceded Islands through

⁹⁴ Message from the Bahamas House of Assembly to Thomas Shirley, 10 October 1770, *Votes of the House of the Assembly, 1769-1770*, 44-45.

⁹⁵ Extract of the Journals of the Lower House of Assembly, 10 October 1770, CO 23/8/116-117.

⁹⁶ The Lower House of Assembly to Thomas Shirley, 8 October 1770, CO 23/8/112.



Plate 3: Sir George Chalmers, *Gen. Sir Thomas Shirley*, oil on canvas, Boston Athenaeum, Boston, Massachusetts, United States of America.

the Treaty of Paris in 1763.⁹⁷ Nor did the Turks Islanders constitute a sparsely settled frontier population that lacked the number of appropriate electors capable of nominating and selecting a delegate to represent their interests within a colonial government, which happened to be the case with the small settlements on Exuma and Cat islands.⁹⁸ In addition, Bermuda's longstanding administration of the islands as an extension of the colony left the Bahamian government unaware of established economic, commercial, and legal procedures the Turks Islanders engaged in their daily lives.⁹⁹ The Lower House understood that the Bahamian government's enactment of laws and regulations on the newly acquired settlements threatened the islanders with undeserved hardships, which the House could avoid by admitting a directly elected representative from Turks Island.¹⁰⁰ The House's decision not to treat the Turks Islanders as virtually represented within the assembly illustrates that the Bahamian assembly members considered the Turks Islanders to be political and socioeconomic outsiders, but ones worthy of official representation within the colony.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 30-31, 36-38, 124-125, 134; *A Narrative of the Proceedings upon the Complaint against Governor Melville* (London: T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, 1770), 89; Governor Melville to Lord Hillsborough, 31 October 1770, CO 101/15/30-33; "Strictures on the Conduct of two successive Administrations with Respects to the civil and religious Establishments in Canada and the Grenadines," *Middlesex Journal*, 25-27 May 1769; Extract of a letter, dated Grenada, Dec. 23, 1771, *Westminster Journal*, 4 April 1772; "Pliny, Junior," *Letters to the Earl of Hillsborough, Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Marquis of Rockingham, and the Archbishops and Bishops; On the late Subversion of the Political System of the Glorious Revolution...in the Government of His Majesty's Islands of Grenada and the Grenadines, which are Part of the Empire of Great Britain* (London: J. Wilkie, 1770), iii-vii, 28, 30, 41.

⁹⁸ CO 23/22/86v; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 207, 209-210.

⁹⁹ CO 23/8/116.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ CO 23/8/112.

The Lower House interpreted legislating for the Turks Islanders without their direct representation as taking on powers that the Crown had not expressly delegated to them. In taking a position on pure principle, the House asserted that it did not intend to assume privileges that they did not believe the Crown granted to them when it first established the colony's legislature.¹⁰² The House observed that its numbers remained restricted to elected representatives from only three islands; yet, since Turks Island was "never before certainly known to belong to the Bahamas," the House believed the island's recent addition to the colony warranted its explicit inclusion in the assembly.¹⁰³ In order to avoid the usurpation of authority and oppression of the Turks Islanders, the Lower House publically invited the Turks Islanders to petition the king for the privilege of electing representatives to the Bahamian assembly.¹⁰⁴

The Lower House's arguments against legislating for and taxing the Turks Islanders mirrors arguments the American colonists made over Parliament's attempts to impose internal revenue taxes upon the colonies. The American position over representation and consent stemmed from the medieval English conceptualization of an elected representative who acted as a form of attorney for his local electors, and whose concerns totally centered upon the interests of his constituency.¹⁰⁵ In 1765, Samuel Adams conveyed to a Massachusetts agent that a representative should be well

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ CO 23/8/116. The selected quotations appear in resolutions four and five.

¹⁰⁵ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins, Enlarged Edition*, 163-167.

acquainted with the circumstances of the people that he represents.¹⁰⁶ In Benjamin Franklin's testimony before the House of Commons, he articulated that the American colonists did not dispute the external taxes imposed by Parliament to regulate foreign commerce, rather they resisted internal taxes imposed on intra-imperial trade.¹⁰⁷ The American resistance did not acknowledge Parliament's right to levy internal taxation on the colonies, because of the absence of directly elected colonial representatives in the House of Commons who could provide consent to internal revenue taxes.¹⁰⁸

The British administration scoffed at the reasoning behind the Lower House's objections. Lord Hillsborough dismissed them as being ill founded, and he emphasized that since the British government declared the Turks and Caicos Islands a part of the Bahamas' territorial jurisdiction, the legislature's authority extended to them automatically. In opposition to the fallacy presented by the assembly's doctrine of direct representation, Hillsborough contended "the whole body of the People belonging to the British Empire [were] represented by the Commons of Great Britain, so [were] the Inhabitants of the Bahamas in general represented in the Assembly."¹⁰⁹ He implored Governor Shirley and the assembly to "consider what would be said if it should be urged that the Acts of Parliament of England did not take place in the Towns of Birmingham

¹⁰⁶ Clinton Rossiter, *The Political Thought of the American Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), 22.

¹⁰⁷ "Examination of Benjamin Franklin in the House of Commons (Feb. 13, 1766)" in *Colonies to Nation*, ed. Jack P. Greene, 74.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 74-75, 77. Franklin goes on to explain in his testimony that, based upon the charters, petitions, and declarations of rights, the American colonists deserved all the privileges of Englishmen, especially the right to taxation with their common consent through elected representatives. As such, colonial assemblies held the prerogative to levy and collect internal taxes within their respective colonial jurisdictions. See: *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁰⁹ Lord Hillsborough to Thomas Shirley, 14 April 1770, CO 23/19/38-39.

and Sheffield because they do not elect Representatives.”¹¹⁰ The laws of these unrepresented zones could run counter to those of the represented areas, and their actions could prove detrimental to the nation’s welfare. The illicit trading occurring on Turks Island epitomized such a circumstance. In order to curtail the illicit trade in foreign goods that hurt Britain’s domestic trade, the Turks Islanders needed to recognize the Bahamas’ legislative authority for the colonial government to enforce colonial and imperial laws effectively.¹¹¹

Shirley sided with the British administration in its defense of Turks Island’s virtual representation within the colonial legislature. Shirley was not surprised that the Lower House stood resolute on the matter. In Shirley’s candid opinion, the “privileges” assumed by the House did not appear to be based on a sufficient reason, particularly by an assembly in a situation similar to the Bahamas.¹¹² “You cannot, Gentlemen,” the governor declared, “surely be ignorant by what Authority you yourselves are allowed...and these are privileges that have been granted to you by His Majesty.”¹¹³ Since the king declared the Turks and Caicos Islands to be a part of the Bahamas, this meant the islands now fell under the legislature’s authority.¹¹⁴ Annoyed with the House’s assertions that they would make no laws pertaining to Turks Island, Shirley implored the assembly to acknowledge its duty to legislate for the islanders in any general or particular

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Thomas Shirley to the Lower House of Assembly, 3 October 1770, CO 23/8/110.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ CO 23/8/111.

manner that circumstances required.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, the governor observed that by refusing to legislate for a particular island the legislature appeared to be granting itself a new privilege not bequeathed by the Crown. The assembly's privilege not to legislate for a specific area in their legislative jurisdiction signified "a privilege, which [they] never had from [their] first establishment any right to," which conflicted with their duty to legislate for the entire colony.¹¹⁶

The Lower House's hardline stance over direct representation brought into question the government's legislative and judicial authority. Based on the political system advocated by the House, the legislature's laws could not extend or be in effect beyond New Providence, Eleuthera and Harbour islands.¹¹⁷ By taking the moral high ground, they inadvertently limited their own scope. Lord Hillsborough's fears of anarchical zones, where the laws of the colonial legislature and the empire did not apply to specific local jurisdictions, would materialize. The Turks Islanders would merely return to recognizing Bermudian and their local laws, while the sparse populations of Exuma, Abaco, and Cat Island now possessed the ability to refuse obedience to Nassau's laws.¹¹⁸ Transgressions committed on the unrepresented islands could not be effectively prosecuted, since "what Jury will bring in the Culprits...guilty of a breach of Laws, that were not legally and constitutionally imposed upon them."¹¹⁹ If this came into existence,

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Thomas Shirley to the Lower House of Assembly, 9 October 1770, CO 23/8/114.

¹¹⁷ CO 23/8/111.

¹¹⁸ CO 23/8/114.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

the Government of the Bahama Islands consisted of nothing more than the Government of New Providence, Eleuthera, and Harbour Island.

The annexation of the Turks and Caicos by the Bahamas and lack of representation in the assembly did not go uncontested by the Turks Islanders. In numerous petitions to the assembly, Shirley, and the British government, the islanders emphasized several significant issues jeopardized by their new colonial and political status. First, the regulation and taxation of the salt trade threatened their physical and economic survival. Second, the imposition of internal taxes by the Bahamian government without their expressed consent went against their natural rights as British subjects. Third, the islanders could not effectively recover debts and attend court proceedings, since the Bahamas' only court existed on New Providence, and travelling to the Bahamian capital reportedly required an arduous six-week voyage from Turks Island around the Bahamas' shifting currents and winds.¹²⁰ Finally, the Bahamian government's oppressive restrictions on shipping, implemented under the guise of inhibiting illicit commerce, depressed the islands' trade income. These problems stemmed from Bahamian attempts to harness the economic wealth generated by the salt trade to bring desperately needed revenue to their own destitute colony.

Governor Thomas Shirley's attempts to implement a series of new salt pond regulations on Turks Island brought a fear that an economic oligarchy from New Providence would soon control the salt ponds. In several letters to Shirley, the inhabitants of Turks Island bluntly stated their sentiments regarding the newly imposed regulations. The Bahamian government did not create these new regulations in a "manner calculated

¹²⁰ CO 23/8/153-154.

for the ease [and] prosperity of the real Inhabitants,” the islanders insisted, but rather they “appear to us to be...for the advantage of a few Gentlemen in Providence.”¹²¹ The regulations they opposed excluded non-Bahamians by banning persons arriving on vessels originating outside the Bahamas from raking and trading salt.¹²² Bermudians and Turks Islanders could circumvent this restriction by obtaining a permit from the governor, and paying a security bond of £1,000.¹²³ Furthermore, the lack of limitation on the number of slaves would enable wealthier inhabitants from New Providence to cultivate additional ponds, and take complete possession of the salt ponds within a few years.¹²⁴ The islanders faced economic exclusion from their livelihoods. If this did transpire, in a few years the Turks Islanders’ saltpans would be destroyed and the islands descend into insignificance as the islanders departed to find more lucrative work elsewhere.¹²⁵

The new taxes on salt imposed by Governor Shirley threatened to destroy the island’s valuable trade, particularly with other European colonies. Prior to the government’s regulations, the royally-appointed agent Andrew Symmer collected 1*d* per bushel of salt with “half for His Majesty’s use and the other half for his own.”¹²⁶ Yet,

¹²¹ Copy of a Letter from the Inhabitants of Turks Islands to Thomas Shirley, 16 March 1770, CO 23/8/145r.

¹²² Regulations for His Majesty’s Salt Ponds at Turks Islands, with remarks by Andrew Symmer his Majesty’s Agent, 4 April 1770, CO 23/8/176-183. This appears as Regulation #22.

¹²³ CO 23/8/182. This also appears in Regulation #22.

¹²⁴ CO 23/8/145.

¹²⁵ Copy of a Letter from the Inhabitants of Turks Islands to Thomas Shirley, 19 March 1770, CO 23/8/147v.

¹²⁶ Thomas Shirley to Lord Hillsborough, 10 October 1771, CO 23/21/3.

Governor Shirley and the legislature threatened to impose a salt tax of “one Farthing per Bushel,” a tonnage duty of 2s 3d per ton, and an additional duty of 6s per 100 bushels of salt.¹²⁷ The islanders perceived this threat as the final blow to Turks Island, because it threatened to raise the prices of salt exported from the islands and would make the salt trade less profitable for the islanders, as well as more expensive for British and other European colonists who relied on the salt for preserving meats for intercolonial and imperial trade.¹²⁸ Bermudian salt rakers operating on the island petitioned the Bermudian government, explaining the hardships brought upon them by the Bahamas’ taxes and regulations, and requested that the Bermudian government submit their letter to the king. The Turks Islanders lost access to their Dutch Caribbean market because of the tonnage duty imposed on merchant vessels, regardless of the fact that they produced the “cheapest [salt] in the West Indies” at three pence per bushel.¹²⁹ If the Bahamas did not promptly remove the duty, it would “inevitably ruin that valuable Branch of Commerce hitherto carried out at these islands.”¹³⁰ In the Bahamian government’s attempts to extract revenue to fill their empty coffers, the government risked strangulating the Turks Islanders economically.

In addition to enduring taxation without representation, the Turks Islanders “agreed” to the Bahamian government’s new salt pond regulations in a manner that

¹²⁷ CO 23/21/3; Andrew Symmer to Lord Hillsborough, 20 November 1771, CO 23/21/9v.

¹²⁸ CO 23/21/3; Andrew Symmer to Lord Hillsborough, 20 November 1771, CO 23/21/9v.

¹²⁹ Williams, “The Politics of Salt,” 78.

¹³⁰ Williams, “The Politics of Salt,” 78. Quote taken from William’s citation of: *Votes of the Bermuda Assembly, 1772*, 1510.

deprived them of their rights and liberties.¹³¹ Aside from the Turks Islanders not providing their consent to the regulations via a representative, Governor Shirley and his council required the islanders to sign the regulations if they wished to continue operating their saltpans.¹³² With Governor Shirley and the Bahamian governor's council requiring the inhabitants to sign the new regulations or lose their income, the salt rakers faced a dilemma: acquiesce to the Bahamian regulations and tacitly acknowledge their subjugation, or refuse to sign and risk the survival of themselves and their families. Placing their fate in providence, the inhabitants asserted in their petition that the king had not granted Shirley the authority to force the Turks Islanders into signing the regulations, particularly when they faced exclusion from their livelihoods.¹³³

The Bahamian government took additional measures to control the Turks Islanders by restricting the movement of cargoes traveling through Turks Island under the justification of enforcing anti-smuggling laws. Britain's Atlantic supremacy, crushing national debt, and suspicion of the colonists' loyalty fueled the metropole's push to curtail colonial smuggling and enforce importation laws in order to maximize the empire's tax revenue.¹³⁴ In 1769 and 1770, merchant vessels faced greater pressure to

¹³¹ CO 23/8/147r.

¹³² CO 23/8/182. The requirement that the inhabitants sign the regulations to rake salt appears as regulation #23 at the end of the document. In a countermove to the Bahamas' regulations, the islanders drafted a parallel set of their own salt pond regulations, which at least ninety salt rakers signed. See: Regulations for the Good Government of the Salt Ponds at Turks Islands and those that resort there to make Salt, CO 23/8/102v.

¹³³ Copy of a Letter from the Inhabitants of Turks Islands to Thomas Shirley, 19 March 1770, CO 23/8/151.

¹³⁴ Bernhard Knollenberg, *Origin of the American Revolution: 1759-1766* (1960; reprint, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2002), 139-145, 157-173; Ian R. Christie and Benjamin W. Labaree, *Empire and Independence, 1760-1776: A British-American Dialogue on the Coming of the American Revolution* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), 24-45.

adhere to the Navigation Acts, specifically the Sugar Act, through imperial oversight at colonial customs houses.¹³⁵ In the Bahamas, this restricted Bahamians and Turks Islanders to trading from the islands' only customs house located at the port of New Providence.¹³⁶ Yet, because of the islands' location, the islanders could export salt to the North American and Caribbean colonies easily, which enabled the islanders to participate in smuggling Dutch, French, and Spanish sugar and manufactured goods.¹³⁷ Turks Island's unofficial status as an entrepôt for illegal trade proved financially detrimental to both the Bahamian and British governments. Goods passing through Turks Island avoided customs duties and facilitated the mainland's importation of foreign sugar and rum under the guise of British sugar or salt.¹³⁸

Governor Shirley's reports to the Board of Trade in October 1770 illustrate his administration's actions against the Turks Islanders' trade. The implementation of Bahamian salt pond regulations, and attempts to enforce British imperial trade policy through Bahamian administrative officials, tried to constrain Turks Island's imports exclusively to provisions and exports to salt.¹³⁹ The salt pond regulations, however, proved futile as the islanders disregarded them.¹⁴⁰ The Bahamian rationale behind this

¹³⁵ "The Second Navigation Act" in *Extracts from the Navigation Acts, 1645-1696*, eds. Albert Bushnell Hart and Edward Channing, American History Leaflets: Colonial and Constitutional 19 (New York: A. Lovell & Company, 1895), 17-21; Letter from John Brown, 29 April 1769, CO 23/8/23.

¹³⁶ "The Second Navigation Act" in *Extracts from the Navigation Acts, 1645-1696*, 17-21; CO 23/8/23.

¹³⁷ CO 23/8/23-24.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*; Customs House at New Providence to Thomas Shirley, 8 October 1770, CO 23/8/120-121; State of the Trade carried on at Turks Islands, CO 23/8/122; Samuel Gambier to Thomas Shirley, CO 23/8/124-125.

¹³⁹ CO 23/8/120-121; CO 23/8/122; CO 23/8/124-125.

¹⁴⁰ CO 23/8/120-121; CO 23/8/122; CO 23/8/124-125.

measure endeavored to sustain salt raking operations and facilitate the salt trade with the mainland and Caribbean colonies. Importing provisions from British North America alleviated the starving condition caused by Turks' dearth of locally grown produce and total reliance on imported foodstuffs.¹⁴¹ Bahamian customs officials deemed the direct exportation of salt to British America to be very difficult, since their salt would be under "greater Restrictions than foreign Salt."¹⁴² Despite stringent enforcement measures, however, the islanders continued to import and smuggle contraband foreign sugars and French manufactured goods.¹⁴³

Governor Shirley and his administration increased political and legal pressure on the islanders to secure their adherence to Nassau's authority, but this backfired in the face of Turks Islanders' opposition. Samuel Gambier, the acting Searcher for the Port of New Providence, a customs inspector charged with examining ships and cargos for contraband, took coercive measures to secure the islanders' submission to the Bahamian government's regulations. Gambier threatened to give public orders forbidding vessels from both taking on salt from and supplying provisions to any islander who did not sign the regulations.¹⁴⁴ Governor Shirley personally visited Turks Island in early 1770 to

¹⁴¹ CO 23/8/120-121.

¹⁴² CO 23/8/122.

¹⁴³ CO 23/8/124-125. Letters to the Board of Trade detail how foreign ships would move their cargoes to British-American ships destined for the mainland without landing their cargoes, and how the Turks Islanders traded rice, "Naval Stores, dying Woods, and Goods dutiable on Exportation" without clearing customs or paying applicable taxes. Upon an inspection of Turks Islands, Customs Officer Samuel Gambier observed that the inhabitants primarily wore French-manufactured clothing, which hinted at "how prejudicial Turks Islands may prove to the Manufactory of [the] Mother Country and to the Revenue." See: CO 23/8/122; CO 23/8/124-125; Andrew Symmer to Lord Hillsborough, 5 January 1770, CO 23/19/32-33.

¹⁴⁴ The Deposition of Messrs. Samuel Conyer, Senior; John Nichols, Junior; John Bascome; Samuel Tatem; Paul Frith; William Blackburne; William Frith, Junior; Gilbertus Nichols; Alexander M. Donald; Henry

ensure compliance with the regulations and appoint local officials to govern the island. Yet, Shirley denied the inhabitants an audience to voice their grievances.¹⁴⁵ Consequently, Shirley's appointed Turks Island government quickly collapsed following his departure when all except one Justice of the Peace, and all of "the Commissioners appointed by his Regulations," resigned in protest.¹⁴⁶ By December 1772 not a single magistrate remained, leaving the islands in near anarchy without laws or an effective means of enforcing them.¹⁴⁷ Officials' solidarity with the other Turks Islanders forced Governor Shirley to dispatch a detachment of British troops to the islands in December in an attempt to restore colonial and imperial authority.¹⁴⁸

The location of the Court of Common Pleas and the Vice-Admiralty Court on New Providence greatly inconvenienced the distant Turks Islanders. Prior to the Bahamian annexation, the seasonal salt rakers elected a five-member commission who adopted the roles of overseers and magistrates during the salt raking season, and permitted the islanders easier access to local courts and an informal common law system.¹⁴⁹ Turks Island's lack of a Court of Common Pleas challenged those who sought to reclaim debts, or receive restitution for stolen or damaged property. In order to recover

Snelling; John Nichols, Senior; and John Wooton, at present Residents and Salt Rakers at Turks Islands taken before Benjamin Veny, Esq., One of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the Bahama Islands, CO 23/8/155.

¹⁴⁵ Copy of a Letter from the Principal Inhabitants of Turks Islands to Lord Hillsborough, 2 April 1770, CO 23/8/153r.

¹⁴⁶ Andrew Symmer to Lord Hillsborough, 4 April 1770, CO 23/8/174.

¹⁴⁷ Andrew Symmer to Thomas Shirley, 17 May 1772, CO 23/21/52; Andrew Symmer to Lord Hillsborough, 12 December 1770, CO 23/22/3.

¹⁴⁸ CO 23/22/3.

¹⁴⁹ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 199.

a debt, an islander would have to travel on a difficult six-week voyage from Turks Island to New Providence to participate in one of four sessions held each year.¹⁵⁰ The Turks Islanders considered it incomprehensible to require them to make such a journey just to contest a lawsuit under £100.¹⁵¹

The Turks Islanders' complaints paralleled those frequently made by settlers in the mainland North American colonies' rural western counties, frontier settlements, and maritime communities. In Lunenburg County, Virginia, county court meetings took place at most once a month, however, the justices often missed their scheduled court dates making rural Virginian colonists' ability to access the court system more uncertain and burdensome financially.¹⁵² Similar complications with the Vice-Admiralty Court made it difficult for the islanders, merchants, captains and their crews. Traveling to New Providence to testify took these men away from salt raking and trading, diminishing their seasonal incomes, and made it difficult to feed their families. The suspicious islanders alleged sailing to New Providence put vessels at a "Risk of being Seized by hungry Officers" under the pretext of transporting illicit contraband.¹⁵³ A suspicion shared by

¹⁵⁰ CO 23/8/153v; CO 23/8/143. In contrast, a Bahamian living on the sparsely populated and unrepresented islands (e.g. Abaco, Cat, and Exuma) may have needed to travel for only a couple days to reach the courts on New Providence and Eleuthera.

¹⁵¹ CO 23/8/153v.

¹⁵² Richard R. Beeman, *The Evolution of the Southern Backcountry: A Case Study of Lunenburg County, Virginia, 1746-1832* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 43-49, 237n1.

¹⁵³ Turks Islanders to the Board of Trade, 10 March 1770, CO 23/19/41-42.

their fellow merchants and mariners in New England with regards to the Vice-Admiralty Court at Halifax, Nova Scotia.¹⁵⁴

Furthermore, having the courts located in New Providence brought the impartiality of the jury into question. Owing to the duality of identities following the annexation, Bahamian judges and juries would try the largely Bermuda-identifying Turks Islanders. In a letter to Governor Shirley, the islanders contested that “the Interest[s] of the two places [were] so opposite that Laws made for the Advantages of one of the Settlements must operate to the Disadvantage of the other.”¹⁵⁵ These were serious fears; a partisan government favoring Bahamians to the islanders’ detriment, unjustly condemning individuals or seizing trade goods, undermined the legitimacy of the colony’s judicial system, and violated the islanders’ perceived rights as British subjects.

The Turks Islanders’ lack of representation and inability to voice their grievances over Bahamian attempts to impose taxes and regulations caused tensions to boil over. In 1773, during the salt raking season’s early months, the Shirley administration

¹⁵⁴ Merrill Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation: A History of the American Revolution, 1763-1776* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1968), 228; George Adrian Washburne, *Imperial Control of the Administration of Justice in the Thirteen American Colonies, 1684-1776* (Clark, NJ: The Lawbook Exchange, 1923), 176-177; John Phillip Reid, *Constitutional History of the American Revolution: The Authority of Rights* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 179.

The Sugar Act of 1764 reformed the vice-admiralty court system for British North America by concentrating imperial authority in a single court at Halifax. The Halifax court’s remoteness from major North American ports and shipping lanes made traveling to it for trials and testimony arduous and expensive, which contributed to North American colonists’ fears that the court would be used to unjustly deprive them of their lawful property. The supremacy of the court over maritime affairs also deprived local common law courts and juries of their ability to adjudicate cases in the other North American colonies. Parliament abolished the court in 1768 and devolved its authority to three vice-admiralty courts in Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston. See: Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation*, 228; Washburne, *Imperial Control of the Administration of Justice*, 176-177; Reid, *Constitutional History of the American Revolution*, 179.

¹⁵⁵ Turks Islanders to Thomas Shirley, 28 November 1769, CO 23/8/142-143.

implemented a list of new poll and salt-raking taxes on the Turks Islanders.¹⁵⁶ These new taxes applied separate rates to whites, free mulattos, and black slaves who worked the salt ponds, and additional rates for exporting salt and maintaining a militia force on the island.¹⁵⁷ In response to the Bahamians' intrusive efforts, a group of Turks Islanders physically assaulted John Graham, a Bahamian deputy tax collector responsible for Turks Island, when he attempted to collect the new taxes and enforce the Bahamian salt pond regulations.¹⁵⁸ In this instance, Turks Islanders turned away from their petitions against Bahamian taxation and regulations, and resorted to violent opposition to deny Bahamian efforts to impose new taxes and regulations upon them. The attack on Graham embodied an explosion of the Turks Islanders' pent-up frustrations and grievances against the Bahamian government that had been building since the Bahamas' annexation of the islands in 1764, and the islanders' inability to voice their issues and concerns within the colonial government effectively.

While Parliament denied the mainland North American colonists a seat in the House of Commons to provide assent to internal taxes, the Bahamian administration also denied a place for the Turks Islanders to properly air their grievances over the regulations and taxes imposed upon them. The lack of an elected representative in the Bahamian

¹⁵⁶ The Deposition of Benjamin Lightbourn, 5 August 1773, CO 37/21/86r. The specific date of when the taxes came into effect at Turks Island is not precisely known. Instead, an approximate date can be derived from the sworn testimony of Benjamin Lightbourn, which put the taxes' enforcement happening sometime between the beginning of the salt raking season in March and June 24th, 1773 when he left the island.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. The new taxes, as related by Lightbourn, amounted to five shillings for each white man and eight shillings per free mulatto man, and taxes on vessels ranging between five pieces-of-eight and sixteen pieces-of-eight.

¹⁵⁸ Andrew Symmer to Thomas Shirley, 17 May 1772, CO 23/21/65; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 210. The attack occurred at Rocky Point, Turks Island in the early months of the salt raking season when the Bahamian tax official typically collected the poll tax for operating the salt pans.

House of Assembly deprived them of an effective means to explain the hardships caused by the government's taxes and regulations, and a voice of dissent against further interference that jeopardized the Turks Islanders' trade and livelihoods.¹⁵⁹ The lack of an operating local court system, coupled with the requirements that only New Providence's courts hear civil disputes and criminal cases, deprived the islanders of trials by juries of their peers, which exposed the islanders to biased Bahamian judges and juries who favored Bahamian plaintiffs and defendants.¹⁶⁰ As the mainland colonists discovered themselves increasingly viewed as subjects of subjects in the British Empire, the Turks Islanders found themselves becoming subjects of colonists.

Outside of the Bahamian legislature and Turks Island salt ponds, Parliament and the British administration's efforts to restore order to the restless mainland drove the colonies and metropole further apart. The political differences between the thirteen colonies and the metropole also proved detrimental to the commercial and financial welfare of the British Atlantic Islands. The mainland colonists' counteroffensive with intercolonial boycotts and non-importation agreements targeting British manufactured and imported goods posed a danger to Bermuda and the Bahamas. The financial and commercial pressures from both centers of the British Atlantic put Bermudians and Bahamians in a position where they would have to decide where their allegiances lay.

¹⁵⁹ CO 23/8/23-24; CO 23/8/120-121; CO 23/8/122; CO 23/8/124-125.

¹⁶⁰ CO 23/8/142-143; CO 23/19/41-42; CO 23/8/153v.

Political Divisions in the Early 1770s

While political and ideological debates gripped British colonial governments, the Stamp Act, Townshend Duties, and Coercive Acts crises exacted a heavy economic toll on the British Atlantic island communities. As the thirteen mainland colonies united in economic and political resistance to the British government, the British Atlantic Islands found themselves trapped in the crossfire of British taxation and the thirteen mainland colonies' commercial boycotts. The decreasing flow of Atlantic commerce depleted colonial tax revenues and created financial crises in the colonial governments—particularly in the Bahamas. The growing division between Britain and the thirteen mainland colonies presented a serious threat to the economic and political stability of the British Atlantic world, which increasingly forced Bermuda and the Bahamas into choosing a path. The British Atlantic Islands' journey through the crises of the 1760s and 1770s led neither to rebellion nor to loyalty to the Crown, but to self-interest and the attempt to bridge the British Atlantic schism.

Bermudian mariners, merchants, and kinsmen who traveled to the mainland colonies acted as vital observers, interpreters, and carriers of news about the widening rift between Britain and the thirteen colonies. Merchants and mariners' transmission of news comprised an essential element in Bermuda's maritime economy. Merchants and mariners' news of natural disasters, famine, war and conflict, protests and violence, trade regulations, and markets affected how Bermudians moved ships and goods around the Atlantic to maximize their profits, and avoid "economically depressed or dangerous

ports.”¹⁶¹ Since Bermuda possessed no local newspapers or printing press, publications from the mainland served as the primary sources of information.¹⁶² The principal mainland port cities offered a wide array of newspapers for mariners and Bermudian emigrants to collect news and intelligence, and then deliver it to their families and neighbors on the island.¹⁶³ St. George, the son of Colonel Henry Tucker, who resided in Williamsburg, sent his family the latest local newspapers and commentary about the political affairs of the American colonies and the conflict with the British government.¹⁶⁴ These lines of communication kept families and Bermudian society apprised of intercolonial affairs, and they enabled the shaping of public opinion about the mainland colonists’ protests, arguments, and actions against the metropole.

In the early 1770s, Bermudians observing the unfolding events between radical New England colonists and British authorities held mixed sympathies for the rebellious mainland colonists. The Sons of Liberty’s dumping of tea into Boston harbor in 1772 won few friends in mercantile Bermuda. Parliament’s retaliatory Coercive Acts of 1774,

¹⁶¹ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 136.

¹⁶² Isaiah Thomas, a Patriot printer from Boston and Worcester, Massachusetts, is credited with coming “near being the first printer” on Bermuda. He strongly considered moving his printing operations from Massachusetts to Bermuda; but, due to the polarized nature of printing presses and newspapers in British North America, Thomas grew concerned with avoiding “the embarrassments consequent on the publication of any sentiments he might express” by moving his printing operations to Bermuda. Ultimately, Thomas’ scheme did not materialize, and he continued publishing the *Massachusetts Spy* through 1781 after which he reformed it under the title *Thomas’s Massachusetts Spy, or the Worcester Gazette*. See: Douglas C. McMurtrie, *A Project for Printing in Bermuda, 1772* (Chicago: n.p., 1928), 3-6, MHS.

¹⁶³ Boston: *Boston Chronicle, Boston Evening-Post, Boston Gazette, Boston News-Letter, Boston Post-Boy*, and the *Massachusetts Spy*. New York: *New-York Chronicle, New-York Gazette, New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury, New-York Gazette, or Weekly Post-Boy, New-York Journal*, and the *New-York Mercury*. Philadelphia: *Pennsylvania Chronicle*. Charleston: *South-Carolina Gazette and Country Journal*, and the *South Carolina Gazette*.

¹⁶⁴ Henry Tucker, Jr. to St. George Tucker, 1 August 1774, TCP.

specifically the Boston Port Act, benefitted Bermudian merchants and mariners as the closing of Boston's port to commercial traffic removed much of their Massachusetts-based competition from the Atlantic sea-lanes.¹⁶⁵ Yet, some islanders viewed the events from a perspective that travelled beyond their pocketbooks to the matters of political and legal rights within the British Empire. Bermudians, like Henry Tucker of Somerset, a merchant and the island's leading intellectual, found themselves drawn to the mainland colonists' espousal of radical Whig ideology, which reinforced the belief that English rights and liberties extended to Britain's American colonists.¹⁶⁶ Reflecting in a letter to St. George on the New England colonists' violent protests, Henry of Somerset commented that while he remained "as warmly attached to liberty as any man," he could not "say that [he] like[d] their proceedings" in their attacks on British officials and ships.¹⁶⁷ For Henry of Somerset, he concluded from the Leeward Islands' reports on the Boston Tea Party that the steps the Bostonian patriots took proved "by no Means necessary," and that the Bostonians "exposed themselves to Hazard without Reason."¹⁶⁸ The Patriots' destruction of the East India Company's property "furnished the Enemies to the Liberties of America with Arguments against them."¹⁶⁹ The Bermudians viewed the New England patriots' violent riots against parliamentary taxation, the burning of the Royal Navy ship *Gaspee* in Narragansett Bay, and the destruction of East India tea in Boston as being a perverse "duplicity founded on a Spirit of Puritanism" born of their

¹⁶⁵ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 385.

¹⁶⁶ Henry Tucker of Somerset to St. George Tucker, 21 March 1774, TCP.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

ancestors' characteristics and general conduct.¹⁷⁰ The Bostonians' ancestral puritan spirit, Henry of Somerset concluded, predisposed them and their fellow New England colonists to be "calculated to aggravate," rather than be inclined to "conciliate measures."¹⁷¹

The Bermudians interpreted the approaches taken by other mainland colonies to the Stamp Act and Townshend Duties crises in different lights. The Virginian colonists exhibited the "greatest Consistency" during the dispute between Britain and the colonies, and if the New Englanders had carried themselves with similar deportment they would not have been "obliged to depart from their Non-Importation Agreement" during the Stamp Act Crisis.¹⁷² Some Bermudians viewed the Virginia House of Burgesses' resolves as "spirited, sensible and expressive" of the colonists' liberty, which Britons should prize above all else.¹⁷³ Bermudian politicians also found the Virginian resolves to be reasonable, and copied the House of Burgesses' rhetoric in a 1771 bill that rejected

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. From the letter alone, it is not entirely clear what Henry of Somerset implies when he mentions the "Spirit of Puritanism," nor its historical or sociocultural context, since he does not elaborate on what he meant to St. George. What Henry of Somerset is most likely calling attention to is the aggressive nature of seventeenth-century New England Puritans' efforts to "rid life, or some phases of it, of the evils that have enwrapped it," which encompassed human sinfulness to the religious beliefs and doctrines of non-Puritan Christians to the laws of the British parliament and crown. The Puritans' tendency to take aggressive or hostile actions and opinions towards matters they saw as morally wrong may have predisposed their descendants to embracing violence to oppose parliamentary taxation and colonial regulations. See: Frederick Morgan Padelford, "Spenser and the Spirit of Puritanism," *Modern Philology* 14, no. 1 (May, 1916), 31.

¹⁷² Henry Tucker of Somerset to St. George Tucker, 21 March 1774, TCP.

¹⁷³ Ibid.; "The Resolutions as Printed by the Newport Mercury, June 24, 1765" in *Prologue to Revolution: Sources and Documents on the Stamp Act Crisis, 1764-1766*, ed. Edmund S. Morgan, Documentary Problems in Early American History (New York: W. W. Norton, 1959), 49.

Parliamentary supremacy.¹⁷⁴ The Bermudian assembly acknowledged the threat posed by Parliament and the British administration to their constitutional right to levy and raise taxes, and assert its sovereignty over the colony's domestic laws and financial affairs.¹⁷⁵

Even though the New England colonists' actions did not encourage many Patriot-sympathetic Bermudians, the British administration and Parliament's conduct—as well as the Virginia House of Burgesses' approach—pushed the islanders further into the Patriot-sympathizing camp. The primary enemies threatening the British American colonists' liberties, Bermudian observers concluded, happened to be the British administration and Parliament.¹⁷⁶ Henry of Somerset saw the policies of the Grenville, Rockingham, Grafton, and North ministries as conspiring against the American colonies and subjecting them to taxes imposed by Parliament.¹⁷⁷ The British ministry and military's actions, even outside of the emerging conflict with the mainland colonies, gave political actions “the most shocking appearance of Cruelty and Inhumanity.”¹⁷⁸ Other Bermudians expressed their distaste for the British ministry in more fiery language. Dr. George Forbes blasted the North ministry's punitive and retaliatory Coercive Acts as being “ministerial chains,” characterizing them as actions so shocking that they drove “millions of their fellow

¹⁷⁴ *Ancient Journals of the House of Assembly of Bermuda*, 2:900-902; “The Resolutions as Printed in *The Journal of the House of Burgesses*, 1765” in *Prologue to Revolution*, ed. Edmund S. Morgan, 47-48; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 385, 619n16.

¹⁷⁵ *Ancient Journals of the House of Assembly of Bermuda*, 2:900-902.

¹⁷⁶ Henry Tucker of Somerset to St. George Tucker, 21 March 1774, TCP.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Henry Tucker of Somerset to St. George Tucker, 28 September 1772, TCP. Henry of Somerset viewed the British administration's decision to send several regiments of troops (at least one from St. Augustine and one from Boston) to remove the Black Caribs from their settlements on St. Vincent as an act of cruelty. Henry believed that British officials and planter elites designed the offensive against the Black Caribs to acquire the prime lands they inhabited to further the development of the island's sugar plantations.

subjects to despair” and “compell[ed] them to draw their swords to sheath them in the Bowels of their mother country.”¹⁷⁹ Believing that the Americans should band together and “act as one man” to secure their liberties and property, Forbes hoped the British government would finally be inspired to “pursue conciliating Measures.”¹⁸⁰

Bermudians subverted the threat posed by both the Townshend Duties and the Tea Act by utilizing similar tactics that they employed to subvert the Stamp Act while trading with the protesting mainland. Records detailing port traffic going in and out of Bermuda in 1772 registered only six vessels that travelled directly between the island and Britain out of 336 total vessels recorded entering and clearing the port.¹⁸¹ Yet, Bermuda’s commercial activity occurred at a rate at least twice that of what records indicate.¹⁸² Using Bermuda’s numerous beaches, creeks, islands, and personal docks, Bermudian merchant vessels circumvented the enforcement of the Townshend Duties by the customs office confined to St. George’s.¹⁸³ The duties on “glass, red lead, white lead, painters’ colours, tea, and all sorts of paper...did not amount to more than £23 in two years past, or since the Act commenced,” and they only succeeded in giving merchants “an infinite deal of trouble.”¹⁸⁴ The Bermudians’ contribution amounted to a mere one-thousandth of a percent of the total £17,912 raised by the duties across the British Empire between

¹⁷⁹ Dr. George Forbes to Henry Tucker, Sr., 31 July 1774, TCP.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ “Imports and Exports (America), 1768 to 1773,” CUST 16/1.

¹⁸² Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 133; “William Browne to Lord Sydney, 1 November 1784,” *Bermuda Historical Quarterly* 2 (1945), 112.

¹⁸³ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 383; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 24-26.

¹⁸⁴ George James Bruere to Lord Hillsborough, 10 May 1769, CO 37/33/72.

September 1767 and January 1770.¹⁸⁵ While the Townshend Duties generated a pittance for the British government, the Tea Act produced “no revenue at all.”¹⁸⁶ This is indicative of Bermudians’ pervasive tea smuggling, as approximately three-quarters to four-fifths of Bermudian households across the socio-economic spectrum regularly consumed tea, and tea remained available in the colony’s taverns.¹⁸⁷

In the Bahamas, while the governor and colonial assembly occupied themselves with the matter of governing the Turks and Caicos, the dearth of exports and decreasing numbers of inbound merchant vessels wreaked havoc on their treasury’s coffers. In December 1768, only a year after the Townshend Duties came into force, Governor Thomas Shirley commented to Lord Hillsborough in a dire report of the islands’ situation that “little to no trade” was entering the islands.¹⁸⁸ As a result, Shirley explained, the Bahamian colonists found themselves “not able to pay the necessary Taxes imposed on them by the Government” for defraying the meager costs of its continued operation.¹⁸⁹ On Christmas 1768, the colonial treasury contained a paltry £144 7s 7½d.¹⁹⁰ A year later

¹⁸⁵ Peter D. G. Thomas, *The Townshend Duties Crisis: The Second Phase of the American Revolution, 1767-1773* (New York and Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1987), 151; Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763-1776* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1957), 131n2.

¹⁸⁶ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 383-384.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 309, 383-384, 588-589n93; Rodris Roth, “Tea-Drinking in Eighteenth-Century America: Its Etiquette and Equipage” in *Material Life in America, 1600-1860*, ed. Robert Blair St. George (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), 439-462.

Jarvis’ examination of Bermudian inventories from 1690 to 1774 reveals that during the quarter century preceding the American Revolution, 147 out of 189 households possessed “tea equipage” consisting of teapots, pewter and silver tea sets, tea servers and tables, and teacups made of British stoneware or Chinese porcelain. See: Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 308-309.

¹⁸⁸ Thomas Shirley to Lord Hillsborough, 9 December 1768, CO 23/18/5.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ “The State of His Majesty’s Revenue in the Bahama Islands between 25 December 1768 and 25 December 1769,” CO 23/8/43.

total revenue generated by imports and exports amounted to a dismal £354 6s 4d and £746 2s 3d respectively, which fell £885 6s 5½d short of the £2,205 15s ½d in annual salaries and expenses.¹⁹¹ Shirley believed the colony's poor economic state contributed to an ongoing exodus of families and property to the mainland and neighboring islands, and the colony risked becoming abandoned as a consequence.¹⁹²

In order to ensure the Bahamas' survival, Governor Shirley and the remaining Bahamians attempted to legally circumvent British taxation on domestic and international commerce, and open the Bahamas to increased commerce between the North American and Caribbean colonies. In order to raise the islands' trade revenue, Shirley petitioned the British administration in 1767 to designate New Providence and Turks Island as free ports.¹⁹³ Opening up the islands as a British entrepôt constituted the "only step," Shirley argued, which could be taken to "for effectively preserving these Islands" and lifting the inhabitants out of poverty.¹⁹⁴ If granted, the British government's classification of New Providence and Turks Island as free ports stood to improve more than merely personal incomes and governmental revenues. The increase in trade revenues offered the British

This sum is a considerable drop from that reported by Governor William Shirley in late October 1766. In October 1766, the Bahamas maintained an annual value of approximately £530, about four times the revenue collected in 1768. These revenue accounts illustrate the dramatic decline the Bahamian economy experienced following the end of the Seven Years' War, when the colony collected a reported £1,400 per annum in October 1763. See: William Shirley to the Board of Trade, 27 October 1766, CO 23/7/228; CO 23/8/43.

¹⁹¹ CO 23/8/43. During this one-year period, the government raised £220 from the poll tax, as well as carrying over the £144 7s 7½d from the previous year. Total revenue generated from the 1768-1769 period amounted to £1,464 16s 2½d.

¹⁹² CO 23/18/5.

¹⁹³ CO 23/8/3-5.

¹⁹⁴ CO 23/8/3-4.

government the possibility of refurbishing New Providence's two crumbling, undersupplied and understaffed fortifications of Fort Nassau and Fort Montagu.¹⁹⁵ The metropole's establishment of free ports in the Bahamas would also provide a cloak of legitimacy for the islanders' illicit trading practices that colonial and metropolitan officials so far proved incapable of curtailing.

The Bahamian government's efforts amounted to naught, however, and the colony's decreasing commercial traffic worsened the islands' financial situation. By 1773, the Bahamian government became so strapped for funds that the Governor's Council and Lower House applied for a financial grant from the Crown to cover a shortfall in the colonial government's budget.¹⁹⁶ The assemblymen pointed to decreasing supplies and revenues generated from the islands' once lucrative timber trade, and explained that Governor Shirley refused to "give his assent to any Act" of Parliament that laid "any Duties on British manufactures."¹⁹⁷ Shirley and the legislature eschewed implementing British duties in order to prop up the archipelago's hardscrabble economy, because the few domestic imports of British manufactured goods and mainland provisions constituted their "whole Imports."¹⁹⁸ The colony's petition for financial assistance fell through later in 1773, as Lord Dartmouth replied gloomily to Shirley, because funds declined to "so low a state" that they could barely met "the present charges

¹⁹⁵ Thomas Gage to Thomas Shirley, 28 October 1769, CO 23/19/19; Thomas Shirley to Thomas Gage, 28 November 1769, CO 23/19/21-23; "State of Capt. Blackett's company of his Majesty's 14th Reg. on their arrival at New Providence, 4th July 1773," 4 July 1773, CO 23/22/96-97; Extract from the Assembly Journals, 15 April 1772, CO 23/21/43.

¹⁹⁶ CO 23/9/53-55.

¹⁹⁷ CO 23/9/54.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

upon it.”¹⁹⁹ In the end, the Bahamian government received no additional news concerning their request, and the colonial assembly limited its activity between June 1774 and December 1775, during which time the Continental Congress launched a comprehensive economic protest against the entire British Empire.

The Turn towards the Continental Congress

Determined to defend their liberty and property, the mainland American colonists pushed back against the British government’s treatment of Boston, and they tried to exert their united influence through a comprehensive boycott of the British Empire. The convening of the First Continental Congress on September 5th, 1774, brought together twelve of the thirteen colonies in a single, largely united, opposition to Britain’s imperial actions in North America, and the Congress formulated a “grand scheme” to terminate all trade to Britain and her aligned colonies and territories.²⁰⁰ Using a three-prong economic boycott consisting of non-importation, non-consumption, and non-exportation, the Continental Congress attempted to deprive the mother country of £3,082,000 in mainland exports to, and £1,615,000 in imports from, the British Isles.²⁰¹ The Congress’ efforts to

¹⁹⁹ Lord Dartmouth to Thomas Shirley, 4 August 1773, CO 23/22/34.

²⁰⁰ Continental Congress, “Friday, October 14, 1774” in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 1, 1774 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 73; Continental Congress, “Friday, October 14, 1774” in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 1, 1774, 75-81; Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*, 325; “No. 73: The Association, October 20, 1774” in *Select Charters and Other Documents Illustrative of American History, 1606-1775*, ed. William MacDonald (New York and London: MacMillan, 1904), 362-367.

Georgia did not send a delegation to the first session of the Continental Congress. The *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* are abbreviated as *JCC* from here onwards, except for the first citation of a previously uncited volume.

²⁰¹ John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789: With Supplementary Bibliography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 81.

end colonial exports of raw materials and provisions targeted British merchants in London and Bristol, the textile and shipbuilding industries, and the consumer public. These constituted the primary groups the Congress hoped would exert their influence on the Crown and Parliament to reverse the North administration's colonial policy. The Congress also sought to force the British Caribbean colonies to join the thirteen colonies by threatening to deprive them of provisions and supplies, which they depended on to support their sugar monoculture economies and large slave populations.²⁰²

The Continental Congress' implementation of non-importation and non-exportation agreements attempted to push the lever of British public and official opinions, but resulted in alarming effects on the British Atlantic Islands. Bermudians sympathetic to the Patriots' cause saw the mainland colonists' organization and implementation of non-importation agreements as being a superior protest method in contrast to violent protests. They believed the use of non-importation agreements and boycotts against taxable manufactured products "would have been more sensible," than violent protests and destruction of property.²⁰³ They noted as well that for years the American colonies had "well subsisted" without fine manufactured cloths from the mother country.²⁰⁴ Yet, the Congress' inclusion of a non-exportation element caught Bermudians unaware and jeopardized both their Atlantic trade networks and their lives.

²⁰² O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 143-144; O'Shaughnessy, "The Formation of a Commercial Lobby," 80-82; Richard B. Sheridan, "The Crisis of Slave Subsistence in the British West Indies during and after the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (Oct., 1976), 615, 616-620. The Congress only experienced brief success in its efforts to influence the British sugar colonies through the non-importation and non-exportation agreements.

²⁰³ Henry Tucker of Somerset to St. George Tucker, 21 March 1774, TCP.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

The Bahamas, already suffering an economic depression and a government teetering on bankruptcy, faced an end to the bulk of its commerce and from acquiring vital provisions to sustain its impoverished population.

In the face of imminent peril to their worlds, Bahamians and Bermudians independently chose to engage with the Continental Congress to secure safety and prosperity for themselves and their families. Congress' embargo triggered an impending famine, which prompted Colonel Henry Tucker to call an emergency "extra-legal gathering" of Bermudian representatives to address the crisis in May 1775 in Paget, Bermuda.²⁰⁵ The meeting concluded with the selection of Colonel Tucker to head a delegation of Bermudian representatives to travel to Philadelphia, which would negotiate with the Congress to restore the Bermudian-American trade.²⁰⁶ On November 29th, 1775, Downham Newton, a New Providence merchant, petitioned the Congress for relief from the mainland colonies' trade boycott because of "the distress of the inhabitants" of the island.²⁰⁷ Newton implored the Congress for "1,000 barrels of flour" for which he would provide "any reasonable security to bring back such a quantity of muskets as can be procured" from the funds raised by selling the flour to the Bahamians.²⁰⁸ The Congress approved Newton's request, adding a supply of pork to the barrels of flour, and stipulated

²⁰⁵ "Meeting of the Delegates of the Several Parishes...to Consider of the Measure to be Pursued to Supply the Inhabitants of These Islands with Provisions," 15 May 1775; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 386-387.

²⁰⁶ "Meeting of the Delegates of the Several Parishes...to Consider of the Measure to be Pursued to Supply the Inhabitants of These Islands with Provisions," 15 May 1775; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 387.

²⁰⁷ Continental Congress, "Wednesday, November 29, 1775" in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 31, 1775* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1905), 389-390.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 389-390.

that Newton should deliver the supply of muskets, bayonets, or gunpowder to the commander of the Continental militia in North Carolina.²⁰⁹ By pursuing a renewal of trade with the mainland, the islanders willingly offered their support for the American patriots' rebellion against Britain in exchange for provisions to sustain their communities. The decisions of Colonel Tucker, the Bermudian representatives, and Downham Newton to lobby Congress to restore trade with the British Atlantic Islands frames the islanders' approach to the American Revolution as an endeavor for survival.

Bermudians' responses to the Townshend Duties highlight their subversion of British taxation and enforcement measures through smuggling and landing goods away from customs houses' prying eyes. Although their efforts minimized the economic burden of the duties and Tea Act on Bermudian society, the mainland American boycotts' wider economic toll led to serious dangers for the British Atlantic Islands. American non-importation and non-exportation agreements threatened to cut off the hardscrabble Bahamians and maritime-centric Bermudians from their main sources of commercial income and foodstuffs. In order to survive the rift between the mainland colonies and Britain, the British Atlantic islanders needed to actively reach out and maintain their commercial ties with the rebellious colonies. Yet, as hostilities broke out, British civil and military authorities challenged the islanders' ability to maintain those commercial ties, and self-interest necessitated the islanders' decisions to play to both the American patriots and British government to ensure their survival through the war.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 389-390.

Conclusion

The Stamp Act Crisis began the division of the British Atlantic world along the lines of support for and opposition to Parliament's efforts to tax the American colonies on domestic goods. The division split the British North American, Caribbean, and Atlantic island colonies into roughly three major camps. The first camp consists of the colonists and colonial legislatures on the mainland who opposed British taxation and enforcement efforts with Whig political principles. The second camp comprises the Caribbean colonies that acquiesced to Parliament's authority, because they depended on support from the British military for protection. Finally, the Atlantic islands form the third camp, which largely sympathized with the mainland Americans' perspectives despite avoiding much of the direct impact of Parliament's internal taxes and coercive efforts. The Atlantic islands' position outside the imperial crisis on the mainland did not shield them from the impact of the mainland colonies' ideological principles and retaliatory commercial policies. The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands' co-opted the mainland colonists' principles regarding taxation and direct representation to serve their own political objectives regarding Bahamian authority over the Turks and Caicos Islands. Yet, this deep influence accompanied a serious economic threat caused by the mainland's non-importation and non-consumption protests, which reduced trade vital to the remote Bermudians' and Bahamians' financial and physical survival.

The American patriots' boycott agreements forced Bermudians and Bahamians to enter the fray between the thirteen colonies and Britain. While Bermudians saw non-importation agreements and boycotts of British goods as more effective forms of protest than violent riots, the incorporation of non-exportation agreements by the Continental

Congress posed a dire threat to Bermudians' and Bahamians' physical well-being. The loss of exported provisions from the mainland colonies threatened the British Atlantic islanders with food shortages and famines. To avoid famine, Bermudians and Bahamians actively pursued securing continued trade with the Continental Congress and the American patriots by offering their colonies' stockpiles of gunpowder and weapons. Their decisions, however, did not signal a clean break with King George III and the British Empire; rather, Bermudians and Bahamians traveled a third path in their efforts to navigate through the American Revolution's treacherous waters by actively supporting both the American patriots and the British government. In the opening years of the American Revolution, Bermudian and Bahamian activities to support the American cause threw the two archipelagos into their own revolutionary struggle for control over the direction they would travel during the war.

CHAPTER II

SECURING MUNITIONS, SECURING PROVISIONS

Introduction

Bermudians' and Bahamians' efforts to aid the American patriots' armed protests against Britain, advanced by the Tucker family and Downham Newton, brought Patriot merchant ships and the Continental Navy to the islands' shores in August 1775 and March 1776. Patriot-sympathizing Bermudians stole their colony's gunpowder stores and shipped them to the rebellious mainland. Bahamians offered little resistance to the Patriots' raid on New Providence's forts and then acted as gracious hosts during the rebel forces' two-week occupation of the island. Bermudians' and Bahamians' ventures into supporting the American rebellion against British rule resulted from their determination to protect their island communities' commerce and supply lines with the thirteen colonies.

Indeed, the American Revolution threw the politically and ideologically divided British Atlantic world into upheaval. Major political figures and factions from the American patriots, Bermudians, and Bahamians were forced to rethink both local and international security problems. Patriot politicians and diplomats began to conceive of a North American continent, if not a western hemisphere, devoid of Britain's presence and influence.¹ St. George Tucker, Benjamin Franklin, and Silas Deane advocated for

¹ Benjamin Franklin, "Sketch of Propositions for a Peace 1776," in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 22, *March 23, 1775 through October 27, 1776* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 630-631; Continental Congress, "Sunday, December 29, 1776" in *Journals of the*

Bermuda's annexation through either peace negotiations or invasion by Continental forces, which they hoped would secure the island's independence from Britain.² Bermudians and Bahamians also engaged in privateering raids against ships on both sides of the conflict to obtain income and supplies for themselves and their communities.³ Finally, British Atlantic islanders and American patriots' relationships with each other fluctuated over the course of the conflict as military and geopolitical realities altered the islanders' paths for ensuring their survival and security.

The British Atlantic islanders forged *quid pro quo* agreements with Benjamin Franklin, the Continental Congress, and the Philadelphia and Charleston Committees of Safety to secure their communities from the immediate problems of famine in exchange for aid in alleviating the Patriots' munition shortages. Faced with the prospect of food

Continental Congress, 1774-1789, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 6, *October 9, 1776 – December 31, 1776* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906), 1054-1058; "The Committee of Secret Correspondence to the American Commissioners," in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 23, *October 27, 1776 through April 30, 1777* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 96-100; Continental Congress, "Treaty of Alliance, Eventual and Defensive" in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 11, *May 2, 1778 – September 1, 1778* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1908), 448-453.

For works on British colonists' similar approach regarding the French Empire in North America, see: Emerson W. Baker and John G. Reid, *The New England Knight: Sir William Phips, 1651-1695* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 86-109; John Fiske, *New France and New England*, Historical Works of John Fiske 6 (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1902), 233-359; Schutz, *William Shirley*, 79, 89-91, 91-101, 102-103, 104, 107-108, 110-111, 184-185, 193; Fred Anderson, *The War that Made America: A Short History of the French and Indian War* (New York: Viking, 2005), 141-145, 173, 207-210; Viola Florence Barnes, *The Dominion of New England: A Study in British Colonial Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1923), 32, 38, 215, 216, 228, 258.

² Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 436; 640n116; St. George Tucker to George Washington, 23 October 1781, Simon Gratz Collection, case 1, box 24, HSP; Articles to be proposed to the inhabitants, n.d., TCP; Secret articles to be proposed to the inhabitants, n.d., TCP; James Mitchell Varnum, "James M. Varnum to George Washington, 2 October 1781" in *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789*, ed. Paul H. Smith, vol. 18, *September 1, 1781 – July 31, 1782* (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1991), 107-109.

³ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 169; Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 157-158; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 376, 393, 395, 414, 421, 426-429, 433-435, 438, 442-446; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 82-97; Jean de Chantal Kennedy, *Frith of Bermuda, Gentleman Privateer: A Biography of Hezekiah Frith, 1763-1848* (Hamilton, Bermuda: Bermuda Bookstores, 1964), William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan.

scarcity and hyper-inflated supply prices, Bermudians and Bahamians conspired with American patriots to maintain supply lines with the mainland by conveying their colonies' munitions stores to the Continental military. Bahamians and Bermudians who sought to secure money and foodstuffs faced resistance from combative royal governors in Montfort Browne and George James Bruere.⁴ The islanders fought with Bruere and Browne to exert control over their colonies, ensure social stability and security, and avert famine and economic depression from wrecking their communities.⁵

During the Revolution, British colonial officials like Bruere struggled with the islands' problems of survival and loyalty on personal and professional fronts. For Bruere, the confluence of the Bermudian-American patriot conspiracy and his son's death fighting in the Battle of Bunker Hill antagonized him as a royal governor, former Army officer, and committed opponent of the American patriots and their Bermudian supporters who "have early embraced the rebel side."⁶ Bruere's steadfast loyalism, however, left him with few friends and allies in the colonial legislature, and put him at odds with his

⁴ A Narrative of the Transactions & on the Invasion of the Island of New Providence by the Rebels in 1776, 15 June 1779, CO 23/9/112-113; Copy of A Narrative of the Transactions & on the Invasion of the Island of New Providence by the Rebels in 1776, 15 June 1779, CO 23/24/113-116; George James Bruere to Lord Dartmouth, 17 August 1775, CO 37/36/70-71; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 389; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 47-52; Wilkinson, *Bermuda in the Old Empire*, 381-384.

⁵ CO 23/9/112-113; CO 23/24/113-116; CO 37/36/70-71; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 389; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 47-52; Wilkinson, *Bermuda in the Old Empire*, 381-384; George James Bruere to Thomas Gage, 28 September 1775, Volume 135, American Series, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan.

⁶ George James Bruere to Lord Dartmouth, 13 September 1775, CO 37/36/78-79; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 391.

By September 2nd, 1775, Bruere received word through a widely circulated newspaper account that John, his third son of nine children and a lieutenant in the British Army's Fourteenth Regiment, had been killed fighting the entrenched Patriot militias at the Battle of Bunker Hill. See: George James Bruere to Lord Dartmouth, 2 September 1775, CO 37/36/77; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 391, 621n23; "New-York, July 13," *The Pennsylvania Ledger; or the Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania & New-Jersey Weekly Advertiser*, 15 July 1775, 3; "New-York, July 13," *Story & Humphreys's Pennsylvania Mercury, and Universal Advertiser*, 21 July 1775, 2; "Cambridge, July 13," *The Newport Mercury*, 24 July 1775, 1.

marital relatives Colonel Tucker and the Tucker family.⁷ Similarly, Montfort Browne, a former Army officer and Irish immigrant who served as British West Florida's lieutenant governor and acting governor from 1764 to 1769, had a combative personality, and tended to view frontier colonists with suspicion as they challenged his honor and authority during his governorship.⁸ Consequently, Browne developed an allegiance to British military authorities in his disputes with civilian officials in both elected and appointed colonial leadership positions, while demanding loyalty from settlers and local officials.⁹ Browne's bias towards British military leaders at the expense of the people he governed led to disputes that only intensified during the American Revolution.

Prominent Bermudians and Bahamians were divided in their allegiances and survival tactics, either paying deference to or openly flaunting British authority in their efforts to maintain the commercial and imperial status quo. Colonel Tucker tried to bridge the rift between British officials, Loyalists, and Patriot-supporting Bermudians by balancing imperial loyalty and his local status to ensure Bermuda's survival in a time of

⁷ CO 37/36/76-77; J. W. Kaye, *The Life and Correspondence of Henry St. George Tucker* (London: Richard Bentley, 1854), 1-2; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 33.

⁸ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 166; Robin F. A. Fabel, "An Eighteenth Colony: Dreams for Mississippi on the Eve of the Revolution," *Journal of Southern History* 59, no. 4 (Nov., 1993), 648-650.

On arriving at Pensacola in January 1766, Browne sided with British military officers against Governor George Johnstone in a dispute, which soured the relationship between the two men before breaking down completely by January 13th, 1767 when Johnstone departed the colony for Britain. Johnstone left behind a well-organized opposition faction that endeavored to undermine Browne. Browne also encountered challenges to his land holdings, such as his claims to Dauphin Island, where he intended to establish a plantation worked by indentured Irish immigrants, that was contested by West Floridian colonist Robert Farmar. In 1768, Browne's management of West Florida's expenses also drew scrutiny from colonial administrators in Whitehall, who noticed irregularities in Browne's bookkeeping, and coupled with a growing chorus of complaints by West Floridians resulted in Browne being formally ousted from his governorship by Elias Durnford in December 1768. Furthermore, as he prepared to depart West Florida for Britain, Browne was involved in a duel with a Pensacola trader in 1769, which non-fatally wounded the man and caused Browne to evade criminal charges. Browne finally returned to Britain in February 1770.

⁹ Fabel, "An Eighteenth Colony," 648-650.

imperial crisis. The Colonel's middle path put him in the precarious position of maintaining the peace within the colonial legislature and his extended family. In 1775 and 1776, Patriot-sympathizing Bermudians maintained their ardent opposition to the Stamp Act and Townshend Duties. Their opposition was fueled by radical Whig ideology: impassioned claims of rights and rejection of taxation without representation. Henry Tucker of Somerset—not to be confused with Colonel Henry Tucker and his son Henry Tucker, Jr.—led Bermuda's intellectual, pro-American patriot faction that opposed Bruere. The Colonel's sons, St. George and Thomas Tudor, played active supporting roles on the mainland in the revolutionary Virginia militia and the Continental Congress.¹⁰ By contrast, other figures—such as merchants Richard Jennings and Downham Newton, and the Bahamian council and assembly—appear to have supported Patriot efforts to ensure their continued commercial ties with Patriot merchants and businesses on the mainland. The practical and pragmatic individuals and groups, most notably the Bahamian assembly and council, shifted their loyalties and played both the Patriots and British government to their personal and financial advantages.

By the end of 1778, growing tensions between the British Atlantic islanders, American patriots and loyalists, and British officials over control of the islands threatened the archipelagos with internal conspiracies, coups, and alienation.¹¹ Mainland

¹⁰ Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 16-17, 38-40, 42-43, 46, 52, 59, 60, 109-110, 113-123; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 387-389, 414-415.

¹¹ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 385-392, 393-396, 408-430; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 42-61, 62-81, 82-97; Wilkinson, *Bermuda in the Old Empire*, 381-384; Isaac J. Greenwood, *Bermuda during the American Revolution* (Boston: David Clapp and Son, 1896), 3-6; Addison E. Verrill, *Relations between Bermuda and the American Colonies during the Revolutionary War*, Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences 13 (New Haven, CT: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Press, 1907), 564-568; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 166-169; Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 152-161.

Loyalist and Patriot factions attempted to cast the islands as border-sea frontiers controlled by either Britain or the United States. During the early years of the Revolution, however, the British Atlantic Islands' local officials and inhabitants, largely irrespective of political leanings, endeavored to preserve their islands' roles as bridges between the American mainland and Britain's Atlantic empire. Bermudians' and Bahamians' efforts to maintain their uses as commercial bridges centered on bringing food, supplies, manufactured goods, and income to the cash crop destitute and resource poor islands. Yet, the economic and commercial bridges also transported secondary benefits that bound Bermuda and the Bahamas to both the North American mainland and the British Empire as a whole. By maintaining the economic bridges, the islanders ensured their cultural connections to the mainland and Britain through luxury and status goods from Britain and continental Europe, new social trends and fashions, and printed news and knowledge about the world beyond their shores. British officials and American loyalists, however, set the direction of the British Atlantic Islands' post-revolutionary development and the survival of the islanders' Atlantic world bridges.

Bermudians and Bahamians found themselves pulled into the American Revolution by the Continental Congress and Continental Army's efforts to obtain munitions and supplies. American patriots were forced to construct an early foreign policy that proactively engaged with neighboring colonies and imperial powers. American officials, receptive to the British Atlantic islanders' needs, sought to leverage the thirteen colonies' preexisting commercial relationships with the islands by tying

foodstuffs and trade with shipments of smuggled munitions.¹² Congress presented petitioning Bermudians and Bahamians with a coveted incentive: the exemption of each archipelago from its non-importation and non-exportation agreements against the entire British Empire.¹³ By using mainland foodstuffs as a proverbial carrot to entice the island colonists into supplying arms for the Patriots' rebellion, Congress attempted to gain the islanders' allegiance and overtly bring them into the war as allied states in a union fighting for independence from the British Empire. In pulling the British Atlantic Islands into an expanded United States, the Congress and its diplomats attempted to push their borders out into the Atlantic, and to deprive the Royal Navy of authority in the neighboring island colonies in a post-revolutionary Atlantic world.

While Congress offered an economic overture to the islands, it also took steps in case hostile actions became necessary. Patriot mariners, coupled with the newly established Continental Navy, used force to obtain desired munitions supplies. The

¹² Continental Congress, "Wednesday, November 29, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 389-390; Henry Tucker, Sr., "Henry Tucker to Benjamin Franklin, 12 August 1775" in *PBF*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 22, *March 23, 1775 through October 27, 1776*, 163-167; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 47; George Washington, "George Washington to Nicholas Cooke, 4 August 1775" in *The Papers of George Washington: Revolutionary War Series*, eds. W. W. Abbot et al., vol. 1, *June – September 1775* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1985), 221; George Washington, "Address to the Inhabitants of Bermuda, 6 September 1775" in *PGW:RWS*, eds. W. W. Abbot et al., vol. 1, *June – September 1775*, 419-420.

¹³ Continental Congress, "Tuesday, August 1, 1775" in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1905), 239; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, November 22, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 362-364; Continental Congress, "Monday, October 2, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 268; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, July 24, 1776" in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 5, *June 5, 1776 – October 8, 1776* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906), 606; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, June 5, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 5, *June 5, 1776 – October 8, 1776*, 417; Lucille E. Horgan, *Forged in War: The Continental Congress and the Origin of Military Supply and Acquisition Policy*, Contributions in Military Studies 219 (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 2002), 2-11.

Continental Navy's Commodore Esek Hopkins and Patriot merchant captains interpreted their instructions to justify pursuing Bermudian and Bahamian gunpowder supplies to aid Continental and provincial forces.¹⁴ The rebellious thirteen colonies exerted their influence upon the neighboring archipelagos through trade embargos and naval raids. By wielding the use of force in conjunction with restoring trade, Congress attempted to ensure its continued access to munition supplies.¹⁵ Yet, when Continental forces projected this power, they also created an uncertain future for the British Atlantic Islands, exposing Britain's vulnerability to a new border-sea and pushing the mainland's revolutionary conflict out into the western Atlantic.¹⁶

Patriot delegates and diplomats visualized the British Atlantic Islands as part of an emergent, independent United States. Bermuda's and the Bahamas' sizeable, largely unguarded, stockpiles of munitions, coupled with the inhabitants' offers to supply

¹⁴ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 385-392; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 47-51; Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 154; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 166-167; Paul Albury, *The Story of the Bahamas* (London and Basingstoke, UK: MacMillan, 1975), 93-100; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, November 29, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 389-390.

¹⁵ George Washington, "Address to the Inhabitants of Bermuda, 6 September 1775" in *PGW:RWS*, eds. W. W. Abbot et al., vol. 1, *June – September 1775*, 419-420; Continental Congress, "Saturday, July 15, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 184-185; Continental Congress, "Monday, September 18, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 253-254; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, November 22, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 362-363; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, November 29, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 389-390; Continental Congress, "Thursday, June 6, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 5, *June 5, 1776 – October 8, 1776*, 423; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, July 24, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 5, *June 5, 1776 – October 8, 1776*, 606; Continental Congress, "Tuesday, October 14, 1777" in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 9, *October 3, 1777 – December 31, 1777* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1907), 802; Horgan, *Forged in War*, 2-11.

¹⁶ John J. McCusker, "The American Invasion of Nassau in the Bahamas," *The American Neptune* 25, no. 3 (July, 1965), 189-191.

Continental forces with arms, led Congress to permit Bermudian and Bahamian vessels to enter Patriot-held ports.¹⁷ Bermuda and the Bahamas comprised important privateering and smuggling centers during the eighteenth century.¹⁸ By extending the United States' boundaries to encompass the islands, Patriot officials aimed to prevent both archipelagos from turning against American shipping during and after the war.¹⁹ The British Atlantic Islands represented significant maritime border zones in close proximity to the mainland, and embodied a threat to the United States in the form of launching points for attacks by the Royal Navy and British privateers.²⁰ By gaining Bermudians and Bahamians' support for their rebellion, Patriot officials endeavored to pull the British Atlantic Islands directly

¹⁷ George Washington, "Address to the Inhabitants of Bermuda, 6 September 1775" in *PGW:RWS*, eds. W. W. Abbot et al., vol. 1, *June – September 1775*, 419-420; Henry Tucker, Sr., "Henry Tucker to Benjamin Franklin, 12 August 1775" in *PBF*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 22, *March 23, 1775 through October 27, 1776*, 163-167; "Extract of a Letter from Bermuda, dated Sept. 29th 1775," TCP; Continental Congress, "Tuesday, July, 11 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 173-174; Continental Congress, "Monday, July 18, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 184, 187; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 45-46; Continental Congress, "Saturday, July 16, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 184-185.

¹⁸ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 376, 393, 395, 408, 414, 421, 426-429, 430-433, 433-435, 438, 442-446; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 21, 25-26, 80-81, 82-97, 123-124, 128-129, 130; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 159, 168; Silas Deane, "Deane to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, 18 August 1776," in *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States*, ed. Frances Wharton, 6 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1889), 2:125.

¹⁹ Deane, "Deane to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, 18 August 1776," in *RDCUS*, ed. Frances Wharton, 2:125; Benjamin Franklin, "Sketch of Propositions for a Peace 1776," in *PBF*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 22, *March 21, 1775 through October 27, 1776*, 630-631.

²⁰ Continental Congress, "Friday, June 2, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 77; Continental Congress, "Saturday, July 8, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 166; "Williamsburg, March 28," *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 8 April 1777, 192; "London, Feb. 8," *The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury*, 28 April 1777, 1; "London, December 1," *The Connecticut Journal*, 9 April 1777, 3; "Extract of a Letter from a General Officer in the Army of the United-States of America, Dated Morris Town, January 28," *The Norwich Packet and the Connecticut, Massachusetts, New-Hampshire, and Rhode-Island Weekly Advertiser*, 17-24 February 1777, 3; "Extract of a Letter from Providence, N.E. Dated August 13," *The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury*, 19 August 1776, 2; "Extract of a Letter from Tunbridge, Aug. 10," *The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury*, 25 November 1776, 2; "New-Port, April 2," *The Royal Pennsylvania Gazette*, 24 April 1778, 2.

into the war against Britain, and potentially annex them to defend against British incursions into the United States' sovereign territory.

Gunpowder Acquisition

The American Revolution's opening salvos caused the Continental Congress's delegates to reevaluate the thirteen breakaway colonies' position within a deteriorating British Atlantic world. In 1775, Patriot officials recognized that the rebellious colonies existed within a dual world in which they could engage with other colonies, nations, and empires from alternating positions of strength and weakness. The breakaway colonies' dichotomy of power emerged in Congress's endeavors to secure munition supplies for the Continental Army and provincial militias. American diplomats negotiating wartime trade and military alliances approached Britain's rival European powers from a position of military and political weakness. The rebellious colonies' lack of international recognition and questionable military strength required Congress to proffer incentives to secure military and commercial support from France, Spain, and the Dutch Republic. Conversely, Congress and Continental forces engaged with the British Atlantic Islands from positions of strength due to the islands' trade reliance on the mainland. This reliance enabled Congress to set terms and demands for the islanders to maintain their commercial relationship. American patriots' early foreign policy development centered around acquiring gunpowder, ammunition, and weapons, which encouraged Congress's pursuit of alliances with European powers willing to support their rebellion against Great Britain. Congress's pursuit of munitions acquisition and early foreign policies pulled Bermuda and the Bahamas into the war against Britain.

Congress turned to the Atlantic and Caribbean islands as intermediaries for smuggling munitions from continental Europe and elsewhere in the Caribbean to the destitute Continental forces, and for mitigating gunpowder shortages that Patriot production proved unable to alleviate. Congress's gunpowder policies divided between two strategies: domestic consolidation and production to create an independent source of powder, and foreign acquisition to bring in supplies from neighboring British and European colonies.²¹ After skirmishes erupted between militia and Regulars at Lexington and Concord, Congress first attempted to consolidate the available gunpowder acquired from local and provincial magazines, and then turned to encouraging local Patriot production through revived provincial and independent powder mills.²² The foreign acquisition policy emerged roughly sequentially to Congress's domestic procurement measures, and it divided into two main paths of interaction: trade and capture. Congress's turn to importing foreign powder and weapons occurred in earnest over the course of three to twelve months after Patriot militias began moving to secure the colonies' local and provincial powder stockpiles. The trade and capture aspects of Congress's foreign munitions policy emerged roughly simultaneously as Patriot merchants and mariners in

²¹ Horgan, *Forged in War*, 1-13, 71-80, 149-153.

²² *Ibid.*, 19-20, 21-22, 75-76; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, March 19, 1777" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 7, *January 1, 1777 – May 21, 1777*, 185-186; Continental Congress, "Monday, October 16, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 296; Continental Congress, "Tuesday, December 19, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 436-437; Continental Congress, "Tuesday, August 1, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 237-238; Continental Congress, "Friday, July 28, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 212, 219; Continental Congress, "Monday, June 26, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 108; Continental Congress, "Monday, September 18, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 253; Continental Congress, "Saturday, June 10, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 85-86.

the Caribbean began trading for munitions beginning in late 1775, while Bermudian and Patriot conspirators stole Bermuda's gunpowder in August 1775.²³ By focusing on acquiring powder through foreign trade, Congress aimed to supplement existing and seized powder stocks by bringing in wartime supplies from the French, Dutch, and Spanish Caribbean.²⁴ Bermudians and Bahamians made overtures to American patriots to trade weapons and ammunition in 1775 and 1776 for food and supplies from the rebellious mainland.²⁵ The final method, capture through hostile actions, served as the American patriots' means of acquiring large caches of wartime supplies from the British Atlantic Islands during August 1775 and March 1776. In its effort to secure independence, Congress's enactment and pursuit of these gunpowder acquisition policies formed the motive and means through which the American patriots attempted to solidify their external relationships with both sympathetic British Atlantic colonists and opportunistic European powers.

²³ Continental Congress, "Thursday, October 26, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 308; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 387, 389.

²⁴ O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 155-156, 213, 214, 217, 218, 227; Continental Congress, "Thursday, October 26, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 308; Continental Congress, "Saturday, May 18, 1776" in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 4, *January 1, 1776 – June 1, 1776* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906), 366; Continental Congress, "Monday, June 3, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 4, *January 1, 1776 – June 1, 1776*, 414; F. C. Van Oosten, "Some Notes Concerning the Dutch West Indies during the American Revolutionary War," *The American Neptune* 36 (1976), 165; Florence Lewisohn, "St. Eustatius: Depot for Revolution," *Revista/Review Interamericana* 5 (1975-76), 625; Ronald Hurst, *The Golden Rock: An Episode of the American War of Independence, 1775-1783* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1996), 1-2.

²⁵ Continental Congress, "Monday, July 17, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 187; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, July 13, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 246; Continental Congress, "Monday, October 2, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 268; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, November 22, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 362; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, November 29, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 389-390.

Moving available gunpowder to aid Washington's forces required Congress's immediate action. Congress acted as managers delegating and coordinating the movements of gunpowder, saltpeter and sulphur, weapons, and ammunition from collection points, chiefly Philadelphia and New York City, to Continental forces at Boston and eastern New England, while also directing supplies to provincial militias in Virginia, and North and South Carolina.²⁶ On June 3rd, 1775, the delegates convened a five-member committee, whose members included John Jay and Richard Henry Lee, responsible for raising £6,000 to purchase gunpowder for the Continental Army.²⁷ A week later, Congress disseminated a series of instructions concerning where to send

²⁶ Continental Congress, "Saturday, June 10, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 85; Continental Congress, "Monday, June 28, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 108; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, July 19, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 191; Continental Congress, "Thursday, July 27, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 210-211; Continental Congress, "Monday, September 25, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 262; Continental Congress, "Monday, October 9, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 284-286; Continental Congress, "Monday, October 16, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 296; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, December 13, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 426; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, December 13, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 437-438; Continental Congress, "Monday, January 1, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 4, *January 1, 1776 – June 1, 1776*, 13; Continental Congress, "Saturday, January 6, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 4, *January 1, 1776 – June 1, 1776*, 36; Continental Congress, "Monday, January 8, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 4, *January 1, 1776 – June 1, 1776*, 40-41; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, January 10, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 4, *January 1, 1776 – June 1, 1776*, 48; Continental Congress, "Saturday, January 13, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 4, *January 1, 1776 – June 1, 1776*, 53; Continental Congress, "Monday, February 12, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 4, *January 1, 1776 – June 1, 1776*, 128-129; Continental Congress, "Tuesday, February 20, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 4, *January 1, 1776 – June 1, 1776*, 163; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, February 28, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 4, *January 1, 1776 – June 1, 1776*, 175.

²⁷ Continental Congress, "Saturday, June 3, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 79.

available powder and munitions supplies.²⁸ Congress also circulated directives to the committees of safety, continental and provincial forces, and private manufactures and suppliers about consolidation and the movement of captured munitions supplies to secure for a viable armed resistance against the British Army.

Congress developed the thirteen colonies' gunpowder production capabilities to create a stable munitions source able to meet the Continental and provincial forces' demands. The domestic production of sulphur, saltpeter, and gunpowder circumvented the British government's prohibition against shipping gunpowder to the thirteen rebellious colonies.²⁹ Delegates encouraged private saltpeter and gunpowder manufacturing at the provincial level beginning in June 1775, and they established a committee to purchase saltpeter and hire laborers for its production later that November.³⁰ The thirteen colonies' development of gunpowder production and refinement capabilities, the Congress concluded, constituted improvements "so necessary for defence...it is an object that not only requires public patronage, but demands the attention of individuals."³¹ In addition, Congress pushed the assemblies to purchase

²⁸ Continental Congress, "Saturday, June 10, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 85.

²⁹ Continental Congress, "Saturday, July 15, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 184.

³⁰ Continental Congress, "Saturday, June 10, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 85-86; Continental Congress, "Friday, July 28, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 219; Continental Congress, "Friday, November 10, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 346-347; Continental Congress, "Thursday, February 13, 1777" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 7, *January 1, 1777 – May 21, 1777*, 113; Horgan, *Forged in War*, 137-138.

³¹ Continental Congress, "Friday, July 28, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 219.

salt peter, encourage collecting and refining sulphur, erecting powder mills, and procuring “skillful persons to be...employed for making Gun Powder.”³² While Congress attempted to encourage and direct the development of gunpowder, the scarcity of munitions necessitated Congress and local committees of safety to pursue outside sources to supply their militias and the Continental Army.

The French and Dutch Caribbean proved to be important entrepôts for smuggling gunpowder, muskets, and ammunition to the rebellious mainland colonies from France and the Dutch Republic. In October 1775, Congress recommended to the colonial assemblies, conventions, and committees of safety that they begin trading “as much provisions...as they may deem necessary for the importation of arms, ammunition, sulphur, and salt peter” at French and Dutch Caribbean ports.³³ Congress followed this by requesting a provision-laden ship to sail to the “French West Indian islands, in order to procure, if possible, a number of muskets, not exceeding ten thousand” in May and June 1776.³⁴ Between 1775 and 1777, the French government engaged in supplying the American patriots with munitions through “covert assistance” by redirecting arms

The Continental Congress and local committees of safety faced a significant problem acquiring salt peter. Prior to the autumn of 1777, only 478,250 pounds of salt peter arrived in the rebellious colonies through foreign importation. This limited supply restricted domestic powder mills’ abilities to manufacture large quantities of gunpowder regularly that could fill the Continental Army’s and Patriot militias’ needs. See: James A. Huston, *Logistics of Liberty: American Services of Supply in the Revolutionary War and After* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991), 120.

³² Continental Congress, “Friday, July 28, 1775” in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 219.

³³ Continental Congress, “Thursday, October 26, 1775” in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 308.

³⁴ Continental Congress, “Saturday, May 18, 1776” in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 4, *January 1, 1776 – June 1, 1776*, 366; Continental Congress, “Monday, June 3, 1776” in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 4, *January 1, 1776 – June 1, 1776*, 414.

through its Caribbean islands, in addition to offering to construct naval ships for the Continental Navy under the guise of being private vessels.³⁵

Sir Joseph Yorke, the British ambassador at The Hague, in a letter to William Eden, characterized St. Eustatius as a rendezvous point for anything and anybody surreptitiously destined for the rebellious American colonies.³⁶ Dutch St. Eustatius was a popular destination for American patriot merchants and mariners smuggling munitions back to the mainland.³⁷ In May 1776, Isaac Van Dam, a Dutch merchant operating as the Patriots' chief agent at St. Eustatius, shipped over 4,000 pounds of gunpowder from Martinique and Antigua to North Carolina.³⁸ In the summer of 1776, Van Dam and his fellow St. Eustatians moved at least 69,000 pounds of additional gunpowder.³⁹ Patriot

³⁵ Horgan, *Forged in War*, 7; R. John Singh, *French Diplomacy in the Caribbean and the American Revolution* (Hicksville, NY: Exposition Press, 1977), 161-174, 177-179; James Kirby Martin and Mark Edward Lender, *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1982), 115; Charles Oscar Paullin, *The Navy of the American Revolution: Its Administration, Policy and Achievements* (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1906), 264.

³⁶ J. Franklin Jameson, "St. Eustatius in the American Revolution," *American Historical Review* 8, no. 4 (July, 1903), 688; Sir Joseph Yorke to William Eden, 13 May 1776, MS Sparks 72, 11-2, Sir Joseph Yorke Letters and Extracts from His Correspondence in Holland, 1776-1780, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

³⁷ O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 143, 182, 202, 213-216, 220-221; Horgan, *Forged in War*, 7; Barbara W. Tuchman, *The First Salute* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988); Hurst, *The Golden Rock*; Jameson, "St. Eustatius in the American Revolution," 683-708; "No. 160. To His Excellency Gen. Washington" in *Journal and Correspondence of the Maryland Council of Safety*, ed. William Hand Browne, vol. 12, *July 7, 1776 to December 31, 1776* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1893), 236.

³⁸ Jameson, "St. Eustatius in the American Revolution," 688; Sir Joseph Yorke to William Eden, 13 May 1776, MS Sparks 72, 11-2, Sir Joseph Yorke Letters and Extracts from His Correspondence in Holland, 1776-1780, Houghton Library, Harvard University; Sir Joseph Yorke to Lord Suffolk, 2 August 1776, MS Sparks 72, 20, Sir Joseph Yorke Letters and Extracts from His Correspondence in Holland, 1776-1780, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

³⁹ Jameson, "St. Eustatius in the American Revolution," 688; Sir Joseph Yorke to William Eden, 13 May 1776, MS Sparks 72, 11-2, Sir Joseph Yorke Letters and Extracts from His Correspondence in Holland, 1776-1780, Houghton Library, Harvard University; Sir Joseph Yorke to Lord Suffolk, 2 August 1776, MS Sparks 72, 20, Sir Joseph Yorke Letters and Extracts from His Correspondence in Holland, 1776-1780, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

vessels and mariners called at St. Eustatius so frequently they “now wear the Congress Couloours [sic]” brazenly in public, and the “Tories sneak and shrink before the Honest and Brave Americans.”⁴⁰ By engaging with the French and Dutch Caribbean, Congress and Patriot forces established important foreign nexuses for obtaining arms to fulfill their needs.

Congress sanctioned and directed Continental forces to requisition munitions and supplies from the public through foraging, wartime seizures, and confiscation. The Congress’s support for hostile raids and seizures of munitions supplies resulted in serious repercussions for the British Atlantic Islands.⁴¹ Continental forces and independent bands of Patriots conducting raids against neighboring British colonies embodied the aggressive actions of the Continental Congress’s efforts to gain support and supplies in 1775 and 1776. American patriots used confiscation as their primary means of acquiring supplies from the Loyalists and other “‘disaffected’ citizens” within the thirteen colonies, as well as the neighboring colonies of Bermuda, the Bahamas, East and West Florida, and Canada.⁴² Employing confiscation and wartime seizure through combat enabled American patriots to acquire expensive heavy artillery, cannon and mortar ammunition,

⁴⁰ Jameson, “St. Eustatius in the American Revolution,” 691, 691n4. The quoted sentence draws from Jameson’s reprinted version, which he cites as: *Md. Archives*, XII, 456; Force, *Archives*, fifth ser., III, 759.

⁴¹ Jameson, “St. Eustatius in the American Revolution,” 683-708; Horgan, *Forged in War*, 7-11; Rayford W. Logan, “Saint Domingue: Entrepôt for Revolutionaries” in *The American Revolution in the West Indies*, ed. Charles W. Toth, National University Publications Series in American Studies (Port Washington, NY and London: Kennikat Press, 1975), 101-111.

⁴² Horgan, *Forged in War*, 6; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 166-168; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 385-392.

and artillery supplies to put into the field against the British Army.⁴³ American privateers and the Continental Navy ultimately put these tactics into effect as they engaged with Bermudians and Bahamians in 1775 and 1776 as they attempted to increase the Continentals' available military supplies.

With the outbreak of hostilities between local militias and British authorities, Patriot groups and the Continental Congress rushed to secure gunpowder and ammunition from both the North American mainland and the British Atlantic Islands. Patriots, Loyalists, and British forces moved on colonial magazines to undermine the opposing side, and with the intent to either end or prolong the American colonists' insurrection. As the conflict between Patriot militia and British forces intensified, Patriot officials recognized the need to secure regular supplies of arms from foreign as well as domestic sources. American patriots' seizures of local munitions and their development of powder mills only filled a small portion of the Continental Army and revolutionary militias' needs. So, Congress turned to neighboring British and foreign colonies for additional supplies. Congress developed external policies that sought to establish connections with European imperial powers to acquire additional supplies to combat the British military. Congress also exerted pressure on neighboring British colonies to gain weapons and ammunition, which deeply affected Bermuda and the Bahamas. The Continental Congress's divided policy towards the British Atlantic Islands attempted to negotiate an arms-for-provisions trade, while simultaneously equipping its military with the motives

⁴³ Horgan, *Forged in War*, 71; George Washington, "George Washington to John Hancock, April 15, 1776" in *The Papers of George Washington: Revolutionary War Series*, eds. W. W. Abbott et al., vol. 4, *April – June 1776* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 70.

and means to raid the islands, which put Patriot forces on a collision course with Bermuda and the Bahamas.

The Bermuda Gunpowder Plot

The thirteen colonies' termination of trade with Bermuda threatened the islanders' economic and physical survival, prompting the Bermudian colonists to engage directly with and support the Continental Congress. Familiar with the colony's gunpowder stockpile and lack of garrisoned troops, American officials urged Bermudians to join the Patriot cause by supplying munitions to Continental forces. Efforts to reestablish commercial ties between Bermuda and the mainland challenged the colony's position within the British Atlantic world and forced the islanders to navigate through issues of loyalty to the metropole and support for the rebellious colonies. Bermudians' theft and shipment of their colony's gunpowder to Patriot forces thrust Bermuda into the American Revolution on the side of the Patriots. Bermudians' endeavors to stifle the incident's reporting to British authorities on mainland North America and Britain, however, illustrate a complex calculation designed to maintain the island's military and commercial status quo during the Revolution's early years.

Bermudian officials, like Colonel Henry Tucker, recognized the Congress's embargo meant cutting off the islanders' sources of provisions and income, and spelled "the utter ruin of this little country."⁴⁴ The Continental Congress's hardline stance prohibiting commercial engagement with metropole-aligned colonies threatened Bermuda with economic and social disaster. Bermuda's salt trade at Turks Island would

⁴⁴ Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 31 July 1774, TCP.

slow to a trickle as lucrative North American markets closed. The closure of the thirteen colonies' ports stood to deny Bermudian merchants and mariners' access to about 30 percent of their vessels' departure and destination points.⁴⁵ In order to protect their families and businesses, Bermudians acted to secure the continuation of their trade with the rebellious mainland.

Bermudians engaged in a multifaceted effort to secure themselves against the disastrous consequences of Congress's embargo. Colonel Tucker, depicted by British portrait-painter Joseph Blackburn in his *Portrait of Colonel Henry Tucker* (see Plate 4 on page 112), attempted to avert the impending catastrophe and called for an emergency gathering of the island's local officials in May 1775 to deliberate on the islanders' best course of action.⁴⁶ The representatives assembled in Paget at Bermuda's western end, a location they believed would escape the attention of Governor Bruere and other pro-British officials.⁴⁷ The representatives elected to send Colonel Tucker and several other delegates to Congress to reestablish trade and acquire necessary provisions.⁴⁸ While the delegates attempted to resolve the long-term problem of Congress's embargo, Bermudian assembly members quickly took measures to prevent the outflow of the colony's

⁴⁵ CUST 16/1; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 132. The Bermuda port traffic and customs figures for 1772 amount to this percentage overall and indicate approximately 100 vessels entering and departing the thirteen mainland colonies out of a total 336 vessels.

⁴⁶ Joseph Blackburn, *Portrait of Colonel Henry Tucker*, c. 1753, oil on canvas, Bermuda National Trust, St. George's, Bermuda; "Meeting of the Delegates of the Several Parishes...to Consider of the Measure to be Pursued to Supply the Inhabitants of These Islands with Provisions," 15 May 1775; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 386-387.

⁴⁷ "Meeting of the Delegates of the Several Parishes...to Consider of the Measure to be Pursued to Supply the Inhabitants of These Islands with Provisions," 15 May 1775; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 386-387.

⁴⁸ "Meeting of the Delegates of the Several Parishes...to Consider of the Measure to be Pursued to Supply the Inhabitants of These Islands with Provisions," 15 May 1775.



Plate 4: Joseph Blackburn, *Portrait of Colonel Henry Tucker*, c. 1753, oil on canvas, Bermuda National Trust, St. George's, Bermuda.

dwindling food and supplies. To conserve provisions, the assembly adopted a non-exportation resolution designed to prevent food from leaving the island if Tucker's mission failed.⁴⁹ The assembly also fixed meat and grain prices to prevent rampant inflation and price gouging from further devastating poor households.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, the legislation only stoked local concerns over an impending famine. The islanders used this law to justify forcibly boarding and stripping several non-Bermudian ships of food and supplies, as well as preventing vessels anchored in the harbor from "carrying...provisions away again."⁵¹

Bermuda's Patriot sons strategically circulated news of the colony's sizeable, unguarded powder reserves to Patriot political circles and committees of safety prior to the Bermudian delegation's arrival in Philadelphia. St. George and Thomas Tudor Tucker leaked news about the gunpowder supply to their Patriot friends and close associates early in the summer of 1775.⁵² In private conversations in June held before returning to Bermuda, St. George confided to Peyton Randolph, the current president of the Continental Congress, and Thomas Jefferson that "there was a considerable Quantity [sic]

⁴⁹ Bermuda Assembly, "Act as Well to Prohibit for a Certain Time the Exportation of Indian Corn, Guinea Corn, Wheat, Barley, Rice, Beans, Peas, Oats, Rye, and Wheat Flour, Bread, or Biscuit, Yams, and Potatoes, as to Stipulate the Respective Prices of the Same, 25 May 1775," Bermuda Assembly Proceedings, 18 May and 24 June 1775, *Ancient Journals of the House of Assembly of Bermuda*, 3:1639, 1642, 1648.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 3:1639, 1642, 1648.

⁵¹ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 387; Thomas Lyttleton to Lord George Germain, 27 January 1776, CO 37/36/85-92; George James Bruere to the Board of Trade, 18 June 1775, CO 37/21/57. The Bermudian legislation also forced captains calling at Bermuda to sell cargoes of provisions, or sell excess provisions from their ships' stores, at the Act's moderate, fixed prices.

⁵² "St. George Tucker to Richard Rush, October 27, 1813" in "Randolph and Tucker Letters," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 42, no. 3 (July, 1934), 214; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 46.

of powder there [in Bermuda]” over which “there was no Guard.”⁵³ Thomas Tudor, who worked as a doctor in Charleston at the Revolution’s outbreak, quietly disclosed Bermuda’s gunpowder situation to the Charleston Committee of Safety.⁵⁴ The disclosure of Bermuda’s gunpowder and the magazine’s lax security enabled American patriot officials to extend overtures to sympathetic, pro-Patriot islanders in an attempt to better their position against British forces.

Patriot leaders lobbied the Bermudians to support the Continental Army’s fight against Britain by delivering munitions to the rebellious mainland. George Washington, in a letter penned from his Cambridge headquarters, requested aid directly from sympathetic Bermudians.⁵⁵ Washington asserted that “the Virtue & Spirit & Union of the Provinces” left them nothing to fear but the “Want of Ammunition,” which American patriots “have turned our Eyes to you Gentlemen for Relief.”⁵⁶ Washington assured the islanders that he would apply the “whole power and exertion of [his] influence” to persuade the Continental Congress to ensure that “your island may not only be supplied with provisions, but experience every mark of affection and friendship” that the citizens of a free country can confer upon “its brethren and benefactors.”⁵⁷ Benjamin Franklin also argued for Patriot officials to encourage the Bermudians to come to their aid. In a meeting with the Pennsylvania Committee of Safety, Franklin contended that the

⁵³ “St. George Tucker to Richard Rush, October 27, 1813” in “Randolph and Tucker Letters,” 214.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 214; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 46.

⁵⁵ George Washington, “Address to the Inhabitants of Bermuda, 6 September 1775” in *PGW:RWS*, eds. W. W. Abbot et al., vol. 1, *June – September 1775*, 419-420.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 419.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 420.

Bermudians and Continental Congress could enter a “mutually beneficial quid pro quo,” in which the island could gain an exemption from Congress’s embargo and continue trading with the Patriot mainland.⁵⁸

Bermudian and American negotiations revealed to both parties that each side held vital supplies necessary for securing survival in the impending imperial civil war. Arriving in Philadelphia on July 11th, 1775, Colonel Tucker’s Bermudian delegation quickly became aware of the price they needed to pay for continued Atlantic trade between Bermuda and the mainland.⁵⁹ Colonel Tucker, desiring to make a good impression on Congress, praised the “characters of men distinguished at this important period” and asserted that his fellow Bermudians admired “the noble stand made by her patriotic sons for the liberties of America.”⁶⁰ The Bermudian delegation stressed that their island’s reliance on provisions and trade from the mainland made it certain that their communities would suffer widespread famine if Congress did not exempt them from its trade embargo.⁶¹ Laying the foundation for a possible agreement, Congress requested the Bermudians supply them with statistics on Bermuda’s imports for the past several years, which would allow the delegates to grasp the islanders’ situation more fully.⁶² The

⁵⁸ Henry Tucker, Sr., “Henry Tucker to Benjamin Franklin, 12 August 1775” in *PBF*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 22, *March 23, 1775 through October 27, 1776*, 163-167.

⁵⁹ “Extract of a Letter from Bermuda, dated Sept. 29th, 1775,” TCP.

⁶⁰ Continental Congress, “Tuesday, 11 July 1775” in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 173-174; Continental Congress, “Monday, July 18, 1775” in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 184, 187; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 45.

⁶¹ “Extract of a Letter from Bermuda, dated Sept. 29th, 1775,” TCP.

⁶² Continental Congress, “Monday, July 18, 1775” in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 187; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 46.

representatives also informed the Bermudian delegation of their recent decision to waive the embargo for inbound vessels carrying arms and gunpowder.⁶³ Bermudian delegates recognized this need and realized they would have to offer their own large gunpowder cache in return for assurances that the rebellious colonies would continue exporting provisions to their island.

Bermudians, such as Colonel Tucker and his fellow delegates, faced the choice of continued loyalty to the British government or survival through aiding the Patriots' rebellion. Colonel Tucker straddled the fence over allegiances to Britain and the Patriots' cause. While he disagreed with the actions of Parliament and the North administration concerning the North American colonies, he did not consider himself to be in league with the rebellious Patriots.⁶⁴ Such a position was not uncommon in the British Atlantic world during the American Revolution.⁶⁵ Colonel Tucker and his delegation's arrangements with Benjamin Franklin and the Continental Congress demonstrated their willingness to compromise their loyalties to Britain for Bermuda's interests and security.⁶⁶

⁶³ Continental Congress, "Saturday, July 16, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 184-185; Continental Congress, "Monday, July 18, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 187; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 46.

⁶⁴ Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 47.

⁶⁵ Paul A. Gilje, "Loyalty and Liberty: The Ambiguous Patriotism of Jack Tar in the American Revolution," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 67, no. 2 (Spring, 2000), 165-193; Max Savelle, "Nationalism and Other Loyalties in the American Revolution," *American Historical Review* 67, no. 4 (July, 1962), 901-923; Robert M. Ketchum, *Divided Loyalties: How the American Revolution came to New York* (New York: Henry Holt, 2002); Joseph S. Tiedemann, "Queens Country, New York Quakers in the American Revolution: Loyalists or Neutrals?," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 52, no. 3 (Sept., 1983), 215-227; Spencer Bidwell King, Jr., "Georgia and the American Revolution: Three Shades of Opinion," *The Georgia Review* 23, no. 1 (Spring, 1969), 44-50.

⁶⁶ Henry Tucker, Sr., "Henry Tucker to Benjamin Franklin, 12 August 1775" in *PBF*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 22, *March 23, 1775 through October 27, 1776*, 163-167; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 47.

The Continental Army and its Bermudian sympathizers used the Bermudian-American negotiations to undermine the British military. Bermuda's entry into the rebellion offered Patriot forces an important maritime ally that could provide logistical support from outside the mainland.⁶⁷ Bringing Bermuda into the conflict threatened to open the revolutionary theater further. A nakedly pro-Patriot Bermuda would force Britain to divert troops from the mainland to hold the island and send warships out into the Atlantic sea-lanes to curtail Bermudian ships' activities in smuggling arms from the French and Dutch Caribbean to rebel-held ports.⁶⁸

Ideologically and practically committed Bermudians, including Colonel Tucker, joined the Patriots' cause to secure provisions for their fellow islanders. Upon returning to Bermuda, Tucker took charge of a Bermudian conspiracy to steal the colony's powder reserves with the aid of Henry of Somerset and the merchant Richard Jennings. In the plot, both men represented the ideologically- and practically-committed Patriot-sympathizers respectively. With the aid of James Tucker of Paget, a relative of Henry of

⁶⁷ Silas Deane, "Extract of a Letter," 26 April – 1 May 1776, *American Archives, Fourth Series: Containing a Documentary History of the English Colonies in North America from the King's Message to Parliament of March 7, 1774 to the Declaration of Independence by the United States*, ed. Peter Force, 6 vols. (Washington, D.C.: M. St. Clair Clarke and Peter Force, 1836-1846), 5:1084-1085; "Dr. Bancroft's information regarding Silas Deane's mission, 14 August 1776" in *Facsimiles of Manuscripts in European Archives Relating to America, 1773-1783: With Descriptions, Editorial Notes, Collations, References and Translations*, ed. Benjamin Franklin Stevens, 24 vols. (London: Malby and Sons, 1889-1895), no. 890; "Brigadier Joseph Hopkins to the Comte de Vergennes, 14 September 1776" in *Facsimiles of Manuscripts*, ed. Benjamin Franklin Stevens, no. 1360; "Silas Deane on behalf of himself and Benjamin Franklin to the Comte de Vergennes, 18 March 1777" in *Facsimiles of Manuscripts*, ed. Benjamin Franklin Stevens, no. 659; "Plan communicated to Brigadier Joseph Hopkins, 11 September 1776" in *Facsimiles of Manuscripts*, ed. Benjamin Franklin Stevens, no. 1356; Verrill, *Relations between Bermuda and the American Colonies*, 553-570; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 160, 169, 172, 174, 176-179, 184, 383-384, 395, 408, 430-433.

⁶⁸ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 415-423; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 66-68; George James Bruere to Lord George Germain, 20 June 1777, CO 37/36/153; George James Bruere to Lord George Germain, 14 July 1777, CO 37/36/155; George James Bruere to Lord George Germain, 16 September 1777, CO 37/36/159; List of Prizes taken by the HMS *Galatea* and *Nautilus*, March 1777–November 1778, CO 37/37/79-81.

Somerset, the cabal set about acquiring lightweight boats to ferry the powder barrels from St. George to the colony's western end.⁶⁹ The conspirators did encounter some minor resistance from Richard Jennings' brother, Joseph, who remained a loyalist. Joseph Jennings protested the group's plan, and encouraged James Tucker to report the plot; but ultimately neither he nor James warned Governor Bruere, which allowed the raid to proceed as planned.⁷⁰ While some Bermudians offered a token resistance to the clandestine mission, many inhabitants willingly supplied Henry of Somerset with "all the conveyances and assistance he desired."⁷¹ The plot went into motion with the coincidental arrival of two American ships independently trying to bring Bermuda's gunpowder back to the mainland for Continental and provincial forces: the *Lady Catherine* sent from Philadelphia by the Pennsylvania Committee of Safety, and the *Savannah and Charlestown Packet* dispatched by the Charleston Committee of Safety.⁷²

With the American ships arrival off Bermuda's shores, the Patriot-sympathizing Bermudians commenced the colony's entry into the American Revolution. Under the cover of night on August 14th, 1775, Henry of Somerset led a combined force of Bermudians and forty American sailors through the streets of St. George's to the

⁶⁹ Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 48.

⁷⁰ Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 19 April 1786, TCP.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 48.

⁷² Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 389. The ships' departures appear to be coincidental and not coordinated with the Continental Congress, apart from the Philadelphia Committee of Safety which Congress handed the Bermudian delegation's information over to for their consideration, as knowledge of the gunpowder circulated independently in Philadelphia and Charleston from the efforts of the Tucker family, and merchants and mariners familiar with Bermuda. The Philadelphia Committee of Safety dispatched the *Lady Catherine* on information from Colonel Tucker and the Bermudian delegation. The *Savannah and Charlestown Packet* left on instructions from the Charleston Committee of Safety, and they learned about the gunpowder from Thomas Tudor Tucker. A third ship also departed from Newport, Rhode Island, but failed to arrive by the time the Bermudians stole the gunpowder.

magazine above the sleeping capital.⁷³ The band of miscreants broke into the magazine “at great risk of their being blown up” and began the arduous task of quietly moving one hundred barrels of powder past Governor Bruere’s mansion windows to the awaiting sailboats at Tobacco Bay on the opposite end of St. George’s Island.⁷⁴ For the Bermudians involved, their actions constituted a willing labor to secure their homes and ensure their families’ survival. For the Americans, it constituted a daring endeavor to aid the resistance against British ministerial oppression and military occupation.

Governor Bruere’s discovery of the gunpowder theft on the morning of August 15th threatened the inhabitants’ scheme to restore the security and stability of the Bermudian-American trade. To prevent capture and aid the American ships’ escape, Bermudian conspirators organized an island-wide operation to obstruct Bruere’s attempts to notify Lord George Germain, as well as British military commanders on the mainland. Bruere attempted to cut off the escaping *Lady Catherine* by dispatching a “customs house boat” to overtake and prevent it from leaving the island.⁷⁵ The customs boat’s crew, however, intentionally made slow progress to allow Bermudian whaleboats to guide both ships safely past the colony’s treacherous reefs.⁷⁶ Grippled with a growing state of panic and need to find the culprits, Bruere offered rewards of as much as £30 per person, and an additional “thirty dollars, or ten pounds currency...to any Negro” who informed

⁷³ Ibid., 389; George James Bruere to Thomas Gage, 28 September 1775, Volume 135, American Series, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan.

⁷⁴ George James Bruere to Lord Dartmouth, 17 August 1775, CO 37/36/70-71; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 389; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 47-52; Wilkinson, *Bermuda in the Old Empire*, 381-384.

⁷⁵ CO 37/36/70.

⁷⁶ Ibid.; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 389.

against their accomplices.⁷⁷ In Bruere's mind, the forces of British loyalism now lay under siege in the middle of the Atlantic. If Bruere was to ensure Bermuda did not plunge further into the American patriots' revolt, he required reinforcements from General Thomas Gage and the Royal Navy.⁷⁸

Desiring to maintain the status quo, Bermuda's assembly and colonists subverted local British authority to prevent the potential arrival of the Royal Navy, and its opposition to a renewed Bermudian-American trade. After being informed of the "most daring and atrocious robbery" by Bruere on August 17th, the assembly put on a show of condemning the "horrid and daring act," and offered their own generous reward of £100 for information.⁷⁹ The assembly also launched their own investigation, but this served as a smokescreen to obscure the assembly members involved in the conspiracy.⁸⁰ Bermudian mariners also worked to undermine Bruere's efforts to communicate news of the theft to General Gage in Boston. Bruere encountered resistance from local captains and crews who declined to carry his reports on the theft and requests for military

⁷⁷ CO 37/36/70.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Bermuda Assembly Proceedings, 16 August 1775, *Ancient Journals of the House of Assembly of Bermuda*, 3:1652-1664; CO 37/36/70-71; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 389.

⁸⁰ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 389, 620n22. The Bermudian assembly appointed a special commission of assemblymen and councilors to investigate the colony's gunpowder theft. The commission members consisted of: Henry Tucker of Somerset; Henry's brother, James Tucker of Somerset; George Bascome; John Harvey; John Hinson; Daniel Hunt; Copeland Stiles; and, Edward Stiles. All these members were strong supporters of the Patriots' cause. Jarvis notes that Edward Stiles, a merchant with business and property connections to Philadelphia, was an "especially ardent supporter." Stiles likely hosted Colonel Tucker and the members of the Bermuda delegation at his home in Philadelphia, and he used his brig *Sea Nymph* to send cargoes of American provisions back to Bermuda as payment for the colony's gunpowder. See: Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 619-620n20, 620n22; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, November 22, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 364.

assistance.⁸¹ As the delay dragged on, Bruere became suspicious of the assembly members whom he believed “went and prevented his fitting out the vessel.”⁸² After three weeks of obstruction, Bermuda’s chief justice Jonathan Burch lent Bruere the use of a sloop to journey to Boston, but the ship possessed “neither master nor mates” needed to sail it, consequently undercutting this godsend.⁸³ Bermudian mariners continued to hinder the governor’s endeavors by refusing to crew his ship, and Bruere did not manage to dispatch his reports to Boston until September 3rd after he assembled a motley, understaffed crew.⁸⁴

Bermudian colonists and officials obstructed the delivery of Bruere’s reports to General Gage to prevent the British military’s intrusion into the island’s affairs. Bruere’s reports and letters contained explicit requests for military support to buttress his authority at the island, and he implored Gage to dispatch “a Sloop, Schooner, or any Armed Vessel of 14 guns and forty Men” to preserve order.⁸⁵ Bruere’s reports contained discussions regarding Bermudians’ overtures to the Continental Congress, their smuggling activities at Turks Island, and a litany of requests for an increased military presence at the colony.⁸⁶

⁸¹ CO 37/36/70-71; George James Bruere to Lord Dartmouth, 2 September 1775, CO 37/36/76-77; George James Bruere to Lord Dartmouth, 13 September 1775, CO 37/36/78-79; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 389.

⁸² George James Bruere to Thomas Gage, 28 August 1775, Volume 134, American Series, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan.

⁸³ “15 August 1775” and “31 August 1775” in “Minutes of His Majesty’s Council (1772-1775),” *BJAMH* 11 (1999), 184-187; CO 37/36/78-79.

⁸⁴ CO 37/36/78; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 389.

⁸⁵ George James Bruere to Thomas Gage, 28 September 1775, Volume 135, American Series, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan.

⁸⁶ CO 37/36/70-71; CO 37/36/76-77; CO 37/36/78-79.

Bermuda's fleet of fast sloops and its central position in the Atlantic posed a serious threat to British forces, Bruere implied to Gage, because they could be "employed against His Majesty's Troops, or good subjects, next."⁸⁷ Despite Governor Bruere's articulation about Bermuda's strategic maritime importance to Britain's efforts to quash the American rebellion, as well as the need for armed warships and troops to secure the colony, Bermuda's perilous position within the loyal British Empire could not be remedied quickly. While Gage did not have the ability to send the necessary ships and troops, he forwarded Bruere's request to General William Howe for his consideration.⁸⁸ Admiral Lord Richard Howe, however, did not dispatch warships from North America to the island until June 1776, after news of the gunpowder theft circulated widely through the Admiralty's headquarters in London.⁸⁹ While British administrative and military officials previously expressed little concern in fortifying Bermuda with regiments and warships in the late 1760s and early 1770s, the gunpowder theft changed the dynamics of British strategy that centered on containing the rebellion to the New England colonies.⁹⁰

The American Revolution threatened to end Bermudians' century of "de facto freedom" from the level of imperial oversight and control experienced by the British North American and Caribbean colonies.⁹¹ In response to the Bermudian-American

⁸⁷ CO 37/36/77.

⁸⁸ Thomas Gage to George James Bruere, 29 September 1775, Volume 135, American Series, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan.

⁸⁹ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 416-417; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 66-67.

⁹⁰ Thomas Gage to George James Bruere, 29 September 1775, Volume 135, American Series, Thomas Gage Papers, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan.

⁹¹ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 415.

powder theft, the Royal Navy dispatched two small warships to the island: the 16-gun sloop HMS *Nautilus*; and, the 20-gun, sixth-rate post-ship HMS *Galatea*.⁹² The *Nautilus* and *Galatea*'s small sizes and shallow drafts permitted them to pursue American and Bermudian merchant vessels near Bermuda's treacherous reefs. The two warships' arrival threatened Bermuda's Atlantic commercial economy, ship owners and the shipbuilding industry, and the islanders' mainland supply lines for food and provisions.⁹³ Patriot merchant ships, as well as Bermudian ships trading with the rebellious mainland, faced seizure by patrolling British warships and privateers. The warships' arrival jeopardized the Patriot officials' efforts to ensure victuals successfully reached the islanders.⁹⁴ Increased naval patrols and privateering activity threatened Bermudian merchants and mariners supplying the American colonists with salt, sugar, and military supplies from Turks Island and the Caribbean.⁹⁵ The British frigates' interruptions of regular food

⁹² A "post ship" is a term used by the Royal Navy in the second-half of the eighteenth century and first two decades of the nineteenth century to classify a sixth-rate warship that carried fewer guns than a typical frigate (at least 28 guns). Post ships carried between 20 and 26 guns and were designed and rigged in the same style as a standard frigate. See: Rif Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail, 1714-1792: Design, Construction, Careers and Fates* (Barnsley, UK: Seaforth, 2007); Rif Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail, 1793-1817: Design, Construction, Careers and Fates* (Barnsley, UK: Seaforth, 2008).

⁹³ George James Bruere to Lord Dartmouth, 19 April 1777, CO 37/36/149-152; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 415-419.

⁹⁴ CO 37/36/149-152; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 416-419.

⁹⁵ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 399. The Royal Navy and Loyalist privateers waged a campaign against Bermudian and American salt smugglers during the Revolution. The British anti-smuggling campaign constituted part of a broader effort to cut off the American patriots from goods and supplies. As Jarvis notes, this effort saw only partial success. While the British and Americans maintained their shipping returns and customs ledgers poorly, Loyalist and Patriot newspapers attempted to keep up-to-date lists of ships seized by British forces. According to Jarvis, these lists and accounts hint at far greater numbers of ships that managed to escape capture and deliver their cargoes. Bermudian-Virginians, such as St. George Tucker, vigorously continued their merchant activities during the first half of the Revolution. St. George operated at least five vessels transporting salt, indigo, molasses, Carolinian rice, and Virginian tobacco between Williamsburg, Charleston, Bermuda, Curaçao, St. Eustatius, Demerara, Turks Island, St. Kitts in the Leeward Islands, Bordeaux, and London. See: "Extract of a Letter from Providence, N.E. Dated August 13," *The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury*, 19 August 1776, 2; "Williamsburg, September 12,"

supplies resulted in food scarcity and starvation sweeping through the colony in waves between 1776 and 1778.⁹⁶ An increased British military presence at Bermuda added a dangerous uncertainty to the colonists' efforts to maintain the island's commercial lifelines to the rebellious mainland.

Despite the threat posed by a future Royal Navy presence, Bermudians obtained temporary security in Congress's restoration of the provisions trade to their remote Atlantic home. On November 22nd, 1775, Congress approved a large annual allowance of provisions to be transmitted to the inhabitants, which drew from the annual harvests of New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and North and South Carolina.⁹⁷ The allowance aimed to ensure that the Bermudians received adequate compensation for their loyalty to the rebellious colonies, and consisted of: 72,000 bushels of corn; 2,100 barrels

The Connecticut Journal, 9 October 1776, 1; "In Committee of Inspection and Observation for the City and Liberties of Philadelphia, Sept. 17, 1776," *Dunlap's Pennsylvania Packet or, the General Advertiser*, 8 October 1777, 3; *Dunlap's Pennsylvania Packet or, the General Advertiser*, 15 October 1776, 3; *The Pennsylvania Packet or the General Advertiser*, 13 April 1779, 3; "Prizes Sent in since Our Last," *The New-York Gazette; and The Weekly Mercury*, 1 March 1779, 3; *The New-York Gazette; and The Weekly Mercury*, 26 April 1779, 2; "Extract of a Letter from Bermuda, Dated June 25," *The Pennsylvania Packet or the General Advertiser*, 13 September 1781, 2; "New-York, October 10," *The New-York Gazette; and The Weekly Mercury*, 14 October 1782, 2; *London Gazette*, 13 May 1777, 2-3; *London Gazette*, 12 July 1778, 2; *London Gazette*, 6 June 1778, 3-4; *London Gazette*, 24 November 1778, 4; *London Gazette*, 20 April 1779, 3; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 414-415, 623-624n39, 631n69; Henry Tucker, Jr. to St. George Tucker, 18 June 1776, TCP; Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 2 April 1777, TCP; Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 22 June 1777, TCP; Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 5 November 1777, TCP; Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 4 September 1778, TCP; Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 15 October 1778, TCP; Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 24 February 1779, TCP; Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 21 April 1779, TCP; Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 3 June 1779, TCP; Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 27 December 1779, TCP; St. George Tucker to the owners of the Sloop *Dispatch*, 10 December 1779, TCP; David Ross, "David Ross to Thomas Jefferson, 22 March 1781" in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, eds. Julian P. Boyd et al., vol. 5, 25 February 1781 to 20 May 1781 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1952), 209; "At a General Assembly of the Governor and Company of the State of Connecticut holden at Hartford on the Second Thursday of May, Anno Dom 1779," 9 May 1779, CO 37/39/32.

⁹⁶ CO 37/36/149-152; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 416-419.

⁹⁷ Continental Congress, "Wednesday, November 22, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 362-363.

of peas or beans; 2,000 barrels of bread or flour; 300 tierces of rice; and, 1,000 barrels of beef or pork.⁹⁸ On the same day, Congress also approved an initial shipment of food and supplies for the islanders, which they instructed to depart for the island as soon as available.⁹⁹ While Congress did request cargoes of Bermudian salt as future payments for continuing the trade, they made clear to the Bermudians that they did not “exclude them from the priviledge [sic] of receiving American produce...in exchange for arms, ammunition, salt petre, sulphur, and field pieces.”¹⁰⁰ Congress’s granting of an annual allowance was intended to strengthen the Bermudians’ support for the thirteen colonies and the Patriots’ cause, while encouraging them to continue supplying Continental forces with weapons and ammunition.

The Continental Congress’s demand for arms to fight Britain provided the islanders with both the motive and opportunity to support the American revolt. Negotiations between the Continental Congress and Colonel Henry Tucker’s delegation sought to fulfill mutual needs: Bermuda stood to gain a secure source of provisions and supplies from the mainland, and Congress a means of obtaining arms and ammunition supplies from entrepôts elsewhere in the Atlantic world. Bermudians exerted their will to safeguard their way of life through their efforts to suppress the reporting of their gunpowder theft, and by their obstruction of Governor Bruere’s attempts to notify General Thomas Gage and the British administration. Bermudians’ efforts to squash the

⁹⁸ Ibid., 362-363.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 362-363. The cargo consisted of: 4,000 bushels of corn; 300 barrels of flour; 100 barrels of bread; 20 barrels of pork; 8 barrels of beef; 15 barrels of apples; and, 30 boxes of soap.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 362.

news also tried to maintain control over their colony's direction as it entered a divisive imperial civil war, as well as attempted to ensure their community's commercial and physical survival. The Bermudian gunpowder theft was the first of two incidents in the British Atlantic Islands that expanded the scope of the American Revolution from a colonial insurrection on the North American mainland to a multiple-front, Atlantic-wide imperial civil war. The second was the Continental Navy's assault on New Providence.

The Continental Navy's Assault on New Providence

The Continental Navy's attack on the Bahamas in March 1776 catalyzed key developments for Bahamians, American patriots, and British imperial officials in the first years of the American Revolution. First, the Bahamians' support for the Patriot cause moved the Continental Congress to exempt the islanders from their non-importation and non-exportation agreements, which enabled Bahamian ships to call at Patriot-held ports and trade without harassment from Patriot privateers. Second, General Washington and Commodore Esek Hopkins used the Bahamian cannons and mortars to support their defenses of New London, the Connecticut and Providence rivers, Newport, New York, and Philadelphia against advancing British forces. Third, the existence of an operational rebel naval force capable of launching surprise attacks caused officials in London to shift the bulk of the Royal Navy's available warships into the western Atlantic to defend Britain's Caribbean colonies. Finally, the Royal Navy's westward shift enabled the French naval fleet to move unchallenged out of the Mediterranean to support Continental forces in the western Atlantic.

Downham Newton's petitioning of the Continental Congress for provisions coincided with their discovery of a vulnerable munitions stash in the neighboring Bahamas. On Wednesday, November 29th, 1775, the Congress received word of 200 barrels of gunpowder stored in the decrepit forts on New Providence Island.¹⁰¹ Newton, a merchant and mariner who operated out of New Providence and Charleston, South Carolina, was the likely informant as news of a large quantity of gunpowder constituted a valuable bargaining chip.¹⁰² Newton's knowledge of the Bahamian stockpile's existence would have been an important tool in his efforts to reestablish trade between the rebellious colonies and the Bahamas, and to alleviate the colony's impoverished, famine-wrecked condition. Preventing Congress's non-important and non-exportation restrictions from closing the legal trade between the Bahamas and thirteen colonies benefited Newton, as well as his fellow Bahamian and American merchants, because it allowed his ships to dock, offload cargoes, and sell goods at open mainland ports without the

¹⁰¹ Continental Congress, "November 29, 1775" in *The Secret Journals of the Acts and Proceedings of Congress, from the First Meeting thereof to the Dissolution of the Confederation, by the Adoption of the Constitution of the United States*, vol. 1, *Domestick Affairs* (Boston: Thomas B. Wait, 1821), 35-36; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, November 29, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 31, 1775*, 389-390.

The Congress first received Newton's petition on Friday, November 24th, 1775, and after reading the petition referred it to a three-person committee for it to be considered. The committee consisted of Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Allen, and John Jay. After considering Newton's petition over the course of five days, they returned it to the full chamber with their recommendation that Newton be permitted to export pork and flour from the thirteen colonies to the Bahamas, and that he should return by February 15th to the port of New Bern, North Carolina with a cargo of either gunpowder or muskets and bayonets. The *Journals of the Continental Congress* confirm the information about New Providence's gunpowder in the entries for Wednesday, November 29th. See: Continental Congress, "Friday, November 24, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 31, 1775*, 368-369; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, November 29, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 31, 1775*, 389-390.

¹⁰² Albert S. Newton, *A Newton Chronology of the Downham Newton Years, 1992*, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina; Continental Congress, "November 29, 1775" in *The Secret Journals of the Acts and Proceedings of Congress*, vol. 1, *Domestick Affairs*, 35-36; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, November 29, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 389-390.

increased difficulty of disguising the ship and cargo's Bahamian origins. The combination of Newton's offer to supply arms for food and the news of the Bahamian gunpowder moved Congress to permit an exemption for Newton to export arms and ammunition from the Bahamas to the mainland Patriots.¹⁰³ In addition, Congress referred the information to the Naval Committee instructing them to "take measures for securing and bringing away" the munitions, and to have the powder transported to Philadelphia.¹⁰⁴ The news set into motion American efforts to acquire the powder independently.

In Congress's formation of the Continental Navy, it instructed the navy's first commander, Commodore Esek Hopkins, to undertake a defense of the United Colonies. The Naval Committee instructed Hopkins to clear Chesapeake Bay and the Carolinian coast of British warships.¹⁰⁵ The new naval force's deployment to drive away British frigates would alleviate southern congressional delegates' fears that an increased British presence would bolster the royal governors' positions and suppress American patriots in the southern colonies.¹⁰⁶ This was particular true in Virginia, where Governor Lord

¹⁰³ Continental Congress, "Wednesday, November 29, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 389-390.

¹⁰⁴ Continental Congress, "November 29, 1775" in *The Secret Journals of the Acts and Proceedings of Congress*, vol. 1, *Domestick Affairs*, 35-36; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, November 29, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 390.

¹⁰⁵ "Stephen Hopkins, Chris Gadsden, Silas Deane, and Joseph Hewes to Esek Hopkins, 5 January 1776" in *The Letter Book of Esek Hopkins, Commander-in-Chief of the United States Navy, 1775-1777; Transcribed from the original letter book in the library of the Rhode Island Historical Society, with an introduction and notes by Alverda S. Beck, A. M.*, ed. Alverda S. Beck (Providence, RI: E. L. Freeman, 1932), 15-17.

¹⁰⁶ Continental Congress, "October 6, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 482-484; Continental Congress, "Monday, March 25, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 4, *January 1, 1776 – June 1, 1776*, 235; Continental Congress, "October 21, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 499-501; Continental Congress, "Saturday, November 16, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 6, *October 9, 1776 – December 31, 1776*, 956-957.

Dunmore sought refuge offshore on the *Magdalen* and HMS *Fowey* and out of reach from Patriot militias and protestors, and in North and South Carolina where Patriot forces experienced early successes in defeating Loyalist militias.¹⁰⁷ But the committee also included a clause providing Hopkins with a degree of flexibility. Hopkins received additional authorization to undertake alternative actions if he deemed them to be “most useful to the American cause,” and distressed “the enemy by all means in [his] power.”¹⁰⁸ This alternative clause presented Hopkins with the opportunity and authority to sail his fleet to New Providence in order to capture the Bahamas’ gunpowder.

Congress’s instructions to Hopkins exemplify the tensions between acquiring additional arms and munitions supplies to support Continental forces against the British military, and the competing security and strategic concerns for protecting the rebellious thirteen colonies. In addressing the Virginian and Carolinian delegates’ concerns about their colonies’ defense, Congress attempted to demonstrate that its interests were not limited by sectional favoritisms and extended beyond New England, New York City, and Philadelphia. Yet, the discretionary clause provided an opportunity for Commodore Hopkins, a Rhode Islander, to advance the Patriots’ fight by limiting the disastrous results a direct confrontation with the Royal Navy’s frigates would have on the infant naval

¹⁰⁷ James Corbett David, *Dunmore’s New World: The Extraordinary Life of a Royal Governor in Revolutionary America—with Jacobites, Counterfeiters, Land Schemes, Shipwrecks, Scalping, Indian Politics, Runaway Slaves, and Two Illegal Royal Weddings*, Early American Histories (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 94-95; David Lee Russell, *The American Revolution in the Southern Colonies* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2000); David K. Wilson, *The Southern Strategy: Britain’s Conquest of South Carolina and Georgia, 1775-1780* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 33.

¹⁰⁸ “Stephen Hopkins, Chris Gadsden, Silas Deane, and Joseph Hewes to Esek Hopkins, 5 January 1776” in *The Letter Book of Esek Hopkins*, ed. Alverda S. Beck, 16.

force, because it allowed him to justify pursuing military supplies for the Continental Army and provincial militias laying siege to British forces at Boston.¹⁰⁹

The convergence of Bahamian aid requests, news of New Providence's gunpowder cache, and Congress's discretionary clause in Hopkins' instructions set in motion the Continental Navy's assault on the Bahamas. On March 1st, nearly two weeks after setting sail from Philadelphia and clearing the ice-choked Delaware River, Hopkins' fleet appeared off the rocky coast of Hole-in-the-Wall, Abaco.¹¹⁰ The rebellious colonies' approaching fleet did not go unannounced to British and Bahamian officials in Nassau, with warnings delivered by Captain Andrew Law, an officer in His Majesty's Land Service, and Captain George Dorsett in the days preceding the invasion.¹¹¹ Neither warnings aroused much concern in the governor. According to summaries of the events the council and assembly wrote and compiled three years later, on the morning of March 3rd "No Council was summoned, No Militia arrayed, No Forts put in Order, in short no preparations at all made for the defense of the place."¹¹²

Despite forewarnings, the American attack caught the Bahamian government and citizenry off guard. The colonial leadership's inability to devise a coherent strategy

¹⁰⁹ Edward Field, *Esek Hopkins: Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Navy during the American Revolution, 1775 to 1778, Master Mariner, Politician, Brigadier General, Naval Officer and Philanthropist* (Providence, RI: Preston & Rounds, 1898), 154-156.

¹¹⁰ Testimony of Captain George Dorsett, 20 April 1779, CO 23/9/120; Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 154.

¹¹¹ Copy of the Testimony of Captain Thomas Hodgson, 30 December 1779, CO 23/24/135; CO 23/9/112-113; Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 153; CO 23/24/113-116; CO 23/9/120.

¹¹² CO 23/24/113r. Further analysis of the legislature's and council's accounts of the invasion written and compiled in 1778 and 1779, as well as their use of those accounts to counter Governor Browne's efforts to assert control over the colonial government and the islanders to enforce their obedience to British rule, can be found in Chapter III.

undermined New Providence's defense against the munitions-keen Continental forces. Disagreements between Governor Montfort Browne and councilman Samuel Gambier formed over the best course of action regarding the colony's gunpowder stockpile: Browne believing it prudent to secure the gunpowder by removing it to St. Augustine, and Gambier wanting to ascertain the strength and intentions of the Americans before removing the powder from the island.¹¹³ The Bahamian government's delay allowed Hopkins' force to come ashore and begin entrenching itself on New Providence's eastern end. Consequently, Bahamian hesitance and inaction increased the probability of the American forces successfully stealing the Bahamas' gunpowder. Browne, Gambier, and the other council members proposed defensive strategies to hinder an attack, but their collective strategizing proved incapable of mounting an effective defense and counterattack.¹¹⁴

Bahamian residents put up a token resistance to the Continental Navy's invasion force. Hopkins landed a contingent of 200 marines and 50 sailors on the eastern shore, and proceeded to capture Fort Montagu with little opposition other than five errant cannon shots.¹¹⁵ Establishing a foothold on the eastern edge of Nassau, Hopkins and his men distributed a "Manifesto" to the townspeople urging them to surrender peacefully.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ CO 23/24/114r; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 167.

¹¹⁴ CO 23/24/114r.

¹¹⁵ Esek Hopkins, "Esek Hopkins to the Continental Congress" in *The Letter Book of Esek Hopkins*, ed. Alverda S. Beck, 47.

¹¹⁶ Esek Hopkins, "Copy of the Manifesto sent Onshore at New Providence" in *The Letter Book of Esek Hopkins*, ed. Alverda S. Beck, 44; Esek Hopkins, "Esek Hopkins, Commander in Chief, to Mr. Gardner, Keeper of the King's Stores" in *The Letter Book of Esek Hopkins*, ed. Alverda S. Beck, 45.

Hopkins proclaimed that the townspeople “and their Property should be Safe if they did not oppose [him] in taking possession of the Fort and Kings Stores.”¹¹⁷ The hardscrabble Bahamians looked over Fort Nassau’s battlements and across their houses, businesses, ships, and docks to the Continental force occupying Fort Montagu with the dawning realization that forcefully resisting the American invaders stood to destroy their lives and livelihoods. By daybreak on March 4th, Fort Nassau stood silent and deserted, leaving Governor Browne “almost alone.”¹¹⁸

The American raiders made off with what supplies and hostages they deemed beneficial to advancing the fight against the British military, but without most of the Bahamas’ gunpowder cache. With Governor Browne and the council incapable of devising a coherent strategy together to repulse the Continental force, in addition to the militia abandoning their defensive posts, the governor took the initiative and ordered the colony’s stockpile secreted away to undercut the rebels’ mission. Prior to the Americans’ advance on Fort Nassau, Governor Browne had ordered “162 large barrels” of gunpowder removed from the fort and shipped to St. Augustine on Captain William Chambers’ sloop *Mississippi Packet*.¹¹⁹ After seeing that the gunpowder departed the

¹¹⁷ Esek Hopkins, “Esek Hopkins to the Continental Congress” in *The Letter Book of Esek Hopkins*, ed. Alverda S. Beck, 47.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹¹⁹ Montfort Browne, “Governor Montfort Browne to Lord George Germaine” in *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, ed. William James Morgan, vol. 7, *American theatre: Nov. 1, 1776 – Dec. 31, 1776; European theatre: Oct. 6 1776 – Dec. 31, 1776; American theatre: Jan. 1, 1777 – Feb. 28, 1777* (Washington, D.C.: Naval History Division, Department of the Navy, 1976), 48-51; Robert L. Tonsetic, *Special Operations during the American Revolution* (Philadelphia and Oxford, UK: Casemate, 2013), 57; CO 23/24/115-116A; Gardner W. Allen, *A Naval History of the American Revolution* (1913; reprint, New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), 1:99.

Governor Browne’s accounts of his actions to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord George Germain, highlighted his competence and precautionary measures to prevent the American rebels from seizing New Providence’s gunpowder stores. Written in 1777, after he was exchanged for Major General

island, Browne then returned to Government House to wait for the Continentals' takeover of the capital.¹²⁰ While the governor prevented Hopkins and his men from acquiring the bulk of the colony's powder, the fleet's raid did not come away empty handed. Hopkins' force absconded with approximately 103 cannons and mortars, 24 casks of gunpowder, and an assortment of ammunition and supplies taken from Forts Nassau and Montagu.¹²¹ The Patriot forces also escaped with several important prisoners, which included: Governor Montfort Browne; a "Mr. Baggage, Secretary and Half Pay Officer;" and, Thomas Arwin, the "Counsellor and Collector of his Majesty's Quit-Rents in South Carolina...[and] Inspector General of his Majesty's Customs for North America."¹²²

William Alexander, the rebel pretender Lord Stirling, Browne's correspondence with Lord Germain endeavored to portray his role in Hopkins' invasion in the best as possible light to downplay his capture by American forces. By secreting New Providence's gunpowder to British East Florida, Browne's decisions during the American invasion put Britain's military and security interests first, because he deprived the American rebels of gaining additional supplies of British munitions. The governor's action secured munitions supplies for the British Army to suppress the Patriots' rebellion, hindered the Americans' rebellion from spreading outside the mainland, and undermined the Bahamians who Browne believed were Patriot-sympathizers and encouraged the Continental Navy's attack against the colony. The governor's positive depiction of his misfortune, as well as articulating his suspicions of the Bahamian colonists to Lord Germain, framed himself as a victim of Bahamian-American patriot collusion, as well as a capable royal official who worked to advance Britain's efforts to suppress the rebellion. It also worked to get Lord Germain to believe his version of the American invasion, and deterred the threat of him being replaced by a new British governor to oversee the Bahamas during his imprisonment in the rebellious New England colonies. See: Montfort Browne, "Governor Montfort Browne to Lord George Germaine" in *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, ed. William James Morgan, vol. 7, *American theatre: Nov. 1, 1776 – Dec. 31, 1776; European theatre: Oct. 6 1776 – Dec. 31, 1776; American theatre: Jan. 1, 1777 – Feb. 28, 1777*, 48-51; Thomas Atwood to Lord Dartmouth, 22 March 1776, CO 23/23/56-58; Montfort Browne to Lord Dartmouth, 17 March 1776, CO 23/23/59; Lord George Germain to Montfort Browne, 14 January 1777, CO 23/23/116-118; Montfort Browne to Lord George Germain, 10 May 1777, CO 23/23/126.

¹²⁰ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 167.

¹²¹ *Good News for America.: Salem, Tuesday, April 16, 1776*, 1, MHS; Esek Hopkins, "Inventory of Stores &c. taken from Fort Nassau–March 3, 1770" in *The Correspondence of Esek Hopkins: Commander-in-Chief of the United States Navy*, ed. Alverda S. Beck (Providence, RI: Roger Williams Press, 1933), 35; Hopkins, "Esek Hopkins to the Continental Congress" in *The Letter Book of Esek Hopkins*, ed. Alverda S. Beck, 47; Hopkins, "Stores &c taken at Fort Montague" in *The Correspondence of Esek Hopkins*, ed. Alverda S. Beck, 35.

¹²² *Good News for America.: Salem, Tuesday, April 16, 1776*, 1, MHS.

After the Bahamian militia crumbled in the face of Patriot forces, the inhabitants served as gracious and acquiescent hosts to the Americans during the two-week occupation. Following Nassau's surrender and Browne's capture, the townspeople and officials welcomed Hopkins and his men. Recounting the days immediately after Nassau's fall, Browne asserted that many of the island's prominent inhabitants and council members "elegantly entertained" Commodore Hopkins.¹²³ Furthermore, the inhabitants "eagerly catered" to the American sailors in "their traditional way."¹²⁴

The attack on the Bahamas resulted in advantages for American military activities early in the Revolution. The munitions and supplies acquired from Hopkins' raid supported the Continental Army's campaigns in New England and New York. Before Washington left Cambridge to defend New York City, he received word that "Thirty peices [sic] of Heavy Cannon were wanting and essentially necessary for the defence" of

¹²³ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 167; Lydia Allen Parish, "Records of Some Southern Loyalists: Being a Collection of Manuscripts About Some Eighty Families, Most of Whom Immigrated to the Bahamas During and After the American Revolution," 1:179, MS Am 1547, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

¹²⁴ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 167. Browne's claims about Bahamian officials and inhabitants were part of his efforts to shape Lord Germain's and metropole officials' opinions to be more sympathetic towards himself. Instead of holding Browne responsible for the colony's capture by the American rebel force, potentially removing him from his position as Governor of the Bahamas, Browne attempted to shift the metropole's ire onto the inhabitants, assembly, and council officials. By making the Bahamians' actions a problem indicative of possible collusion between the Bahamians and American patriots to seize the gunpowder, Browne attempted to move Whitehall's scrutiny away from himself and his actions to protect his position as governor. Browne's suspicions of the Bahamians may also have deeper roots in his previous experiences with colonists in British West Florida, whose complaints about his administration contributed to his ouster as West Florida's lieutenant governor and acting governor, and casting blame onto the Bahamian colonists was a tactic employed by Browne to prevent the invasion from being used as a rationale to unseat him from his governorship. See: Montfort Browne, "Governor Montfort Browne to Lord George Germaine" in *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, ed. William James Morgan, vol. 7, *American theatre: Nov. 1, 1776 – Dec. 31, 1776; European theatre: Oct. 6 1776 – Dec. 31, 1776; American theatre: Jan. 1, 1777 – Feb. 28, 1777*, 48-51; CO 23/23/56-58; CO 23/23/59; CO 23/23/116-118; CO 23/23/126; Fabel, "An Eighteenth Colony," 648-650.

New York.¹²⁵ When Washington marched his forces southward to defend the city, he called on Hopkins in New London to acquire some of the Bahamian cannons, mortars, and ammunition.¹²⁶ During their meeting, however, Hopkins informed Washington that many of the cannons and mortars had already gone to defending New London's harbor and the Providence River, and he did not know how many he could spare for Washington's use.¹²⁷ The Continental Army also incorporated twenty Bahamian cannons into the defense of Newport, before the Continental Congress requested that they "be brought to the city of Philadelphia, and delivered to the committee of safety of Pennsylvania" to defend the city.¹²⁸

New Providence's invasion also altered the British military's conceptualization of the conflict's boundaries: it now extended out into the Atlantic to incorporate the British Atlantic Islands. Although American forces carried off the Bahamas' cannons, Governor Browne, and what remained of the gunpowder, the attack accomplished more through indirect consequences than it achieved directly.¹²⁹ No longer could the rebellion be limited to just the cantankerous New England colonies, or the thirteen mainland colonies; rather, the conflict demonstrated the potential to be exported from the North American mainland to Britain's Atlantic and Caribbean island colonies. For the British government,

¹²⁵ George Washington, "George Washington to John Hancock, April 15, 1776" in *PGW:RWS*, eds. W. W. Abbot et al., vol. 4, *April – June 1776*, 70.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹²⁸ Continental Congress, "Tuesday, May 7, 1776," in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 4, *January 1, 1776 – June 1, 1776*, 333.

¹²⁹ McCusker, "The American Invasion of Nassau in the Bahamas," 191.

the Continental Navy's assault represented the serious threat surprise attacks posed to the trade-rich British Caribbean's sugar islands and their shipping routes. Cutting off Britain's lucrative Caribbean commerce jeopardized the metropole's ability to finance and suppress the colonial uprising over three thousand miles away, because it reduced taxable revenue that contributed to putting down the rebellion.¹³⁰ The American patriots' surprise attack on New Providence, as observed by Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, a French diplomat stationed in London who reported to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Comte de Vergennes, baffled the North administration so severely that it did not know "which way to turn."¹³¹

The Patriot attack on the Bahamas forced the Royal Navy to increase its strength in the western Atlantic with additional warships from the Straits of Gibraltar.¹³² On January 1st, 1778, Great Britain possessed a naval strength of "274 operative vessels of all types": 53 percent, or 146 vessels, stationed in American waters; 34 percent, or 94 vessels, stationed around Britain; and, the remaining 13 percent (34 ships) located at other points around the world.¹³³ In moving the majority of its naval forces to North

¹³⁰ Ibid., 191.

¹³¹ Caron de Beaumarchais to Comte de Vergennes, 11 May 1776, Archives des Affaires Etrangères, Angleterre, Paris, vol. 516, fol. 121, as published in: *Facsimiles of Manuscripts in European Archives Relating to America, 1776-1783*, ed. Benjamin Franklin Stevens, no. 1334, 4; McCusker, "The American Invasion of Nassau in the Bahamas," 191. The French phrase Beaumarchais' uses is "de quid côté se tourner."

¹³² McCusker, "The American Invasion of Nassau in the Bahamas," 189-190.

¹³³ John Montagu, Fourth Earl of Sandwich, "To North, Admiralty, 6th March 1778," in *The Private Papers of John, Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty, 1771-1782*, eds. G. R. Barnes and J. H. Owen, vol. 1, *August 1770 – March 1778*, Publications of the Navy Records Society 69 (London: Navy Records Society, 1932), 350; McCusker, "The American Invasion of Nassau in the Bahamas," 190n5. The principal stations that constituted "American waters" consisted of the four Western Hemisphere stations of the Royal Navy located at Newfoundland, Halifax, Jamaica, and the Leeward Islands. Yet, these figures belie the imbalance of the Royal Navy's strength in the Atlantic during the first two years of the

American and Caribbean waters, Britain unwittingly enabled Comte d'Estaing's Mediterranean-based Toulon fleet to sail out into the Atlantic on May 16th, 1778 unhindered by the depleted Gibraltar station.¹³⁴ The Toulon fleet's entry into the Atlantic forced the British to fight the American Revolution on multiple fronts in the North Atlantic and Caribbean. The French and American fleets' operations divided British strategy into one that fought defensively to maintain their Caribbean colonies, and offensively to suppress the thirteen colonies' fight for independence. While the American patriots' invasion of New Providence failed to achieve its primary objective, it succeeded by causing the British government to shift its naval strategy in a way that ultimately worked to the Continental Congress's and Continental forces' benefit.

The North ministry's response to the attack on New Providence left the British home islands dangerously exposed to a French naval attack. At the beginning of 1778, the

American Revolution. The navy stationed many of its smaller warship classes, specifically fifth- and sixth-rate ships that carried between 20 and 44 cannons, in the western Atlantic with 80 percent of their vessels in the Americas, and about 10 percent (only 8 out of 77 frigates) operating at the British Isles. The home fleet mainly served "guard duty" at the "principal trading towns." In the case of the major ships of the line (e.g. first-, second-, and third-rate ships carrying 64 to 100 guns), only 19 of 102 ships were, according to Admiral Keppel, "fit to meet a seaman's eye" and ready for immediate deployment. Similar assessments from Admirals Rodney and Palliser supported Keppel's assertions. Of the 19 warships, 8 were already in service in American waters. See: John Montagu, Fourth Earl of Sandwich, "To North, Admiralty, 6th March 1778," in *The Private Papers of John, Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty, 1771-1782*, eds. G. R. Barnes and J. H. Owen, vol. 1, *August 1770 – March 1778*, 350; McCusker, "The American Invasion of Nassau in the Bahamas," 190n5; "Debate in the Lords on the Address of Thanks" in *The Parliamentary History of England, from the earliest period to the year 1803. From which last-mentioned epoch it is continued downwards in the work entitled "The Parliamentary debates,"* ed. William Cobbet, vol. 19, *Comprising the period from the twenty-ninth of January 1777, to the fourth of December 1778* (London: T. C. Hansard, 1814), 371, 376; "Debate in the Commons on the Navy Estimates" in *The Parliamentary History of England*, ed. William Cobbet, vol. 19, *Comprising the period from the twenty-ninth of January 1777, to the fourth of December 1778*, 450; "Debate on Mr. Fox's Motion of Censure on the Conduct of the Admiralty, in sending out Admiral Keppel with too small a Force" in *The Parliamentary History of England*, ed. William Cobbet, vol. 20, *Comprising the period from the seventh of December 1778, to the tenth of February 1780* (London: T. C. Hansard, 1814), 184; Thomas Robert Keppel, *The Life of Augustus, Viscount Keppel, Admiral of the White, and First Lord of the Admiralty in 1782-1783* (London: H. Colburn, 1842), 2:19-20, 22-23; Robert G. Albion, *Forests and Sea Power: The Timber Problem of the Royal Navy, 1652-1862* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 293.

¹³⁴ McCusker, "The American Invasion of Nassau in the Bahamas," 189.

remains of the Royal Navy's fleet guarding the British Isles accounted for a third of its total strength.¹³⁵ Despite this sizeable portion of the British fleet, only six vessels proved capable of entering service immediately.¹³⁶ If the Royal Navy made an effort to pursue and contain the Toulon fleet in the open Atlantic, it would require the government to "sacrifice every other intended service to this object," and consequently "expose [its] own coast and Ireland...as the Brest fleet would be superior to anything we shall have ready for sea."¹³⁷ King George III leveled a dismal appraisal of the decision in a letter to Lord Sandwich, the First Lord of the Admiralty, stating that "having been obliged to send...everything we had to America, has crippled us."¹³⁸ Consequently, the poor condition of the Royal Navy's home guard prevented Britain from pursuing and cutting off d'Estaing's squadron, and permitted the French fleet to blockade Admiral Howe's warships temporarily at Sandy Hook in New York harbor before sailing on to engage British forces in the Caribbean.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Keppel, *The Life of Augustus, Viscount Keppel*, 2:19-20, 22-23; Albion, *Forests and Sea Power*, 293.

¹³⁶ Keppel, *The Life of Augustus, Viscount Keppel*, 2:19-20, 22-23; Albion, *Forests and Sea Power*, 293.

¹³⁷ John Montagu, Fourth Earl of Sandwich, "Lord Sandwich's Opinion, 6 April 1778" in *The Private Papers of John, Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty, 1771-1782*, eds. G. R. Barnes and J. H. Owen, vol. 2, *March 1778 – May 1779*, Publications of the Navy Records Society 71 (London: Navy Records Society, 1933), 23.

¹³⁸ King George III, "From the King, Queen's House, 29 April 1778" in *The Private Papers of John, Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty, 1771-1782*, eds. G. R. Barnes and J. H. Owen, vol. 2, *March 1778 – May 1779*, 38-39.

¹³⁹ McCusker, "The American Invasion of Nassau in the Bahamas," 190n9; "Philadelphia, July 14," *The Pennsylvania Packet or the General Advertiser*, 14 July 1778, 2; "Trenton, July 22. Extract of a Letter from Elizabeth-Town, dated July 14, 1778," *The New-Jersey Gazette*, 22 July 1778, 3; "Worcester, July 23," *Thomas's Massachusetts Spy Or, American Oracle of Liberty*, 23 July 1778, 3; "New-York, July 27," *The New-York Gazette; and The Weekly Mercury*, 27 July 1778, 3; O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 170, 209, 231.

In addition, the American invasion resulted in the Bahamians receiving an exemption from Congress's embargo, and free passage to enter Patriot-held ports to supply arms to the Continental Army in return for American provisions. Congress revised a declaration from March 23rd, 1776, which authorized privateering attacks against ships "belonging to any inhabitant or inhabitants of Great Britain" by inserting the phrase "except the inhabitants of the Bermuda, and Providence or Bahama islands."¹⁴⁰ This newly extended clause expanded privateering actions to encompass all British subjects supporting the "unjust war against these states" except Bermudians and the Bahamians.¹⁴¹ Congress thus affirmed its connections with the British Atlantic Islands and recognized the islanders' support for the Patriots' cause. While Congress did not provide an itemized list with quantities of provisions for the Bahamas, as it did with Bermuda, the body did not place any restrictions on commerce traveling between the Bahamas and the rebellious thirteen colonies.¹⁴²

The American patriots' raids against the British Atlantic Islands' gunpowder stockpiles brought desperately needed supplies for the islanders and arms to Continental forces, while spreading the American Revolution out into the Atlantic. Moreover, the American attack forced British officials to overcommit the Royal Navy's warships and resources to the western Atlantic, which enabled a French naval fleet to move unhindered from the Mediterranean into North American waters. The Bahamians' decision to aid the

¹⁴⁰ Continental Congress, "Saturday, March 23, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 4, *January 1, 1776 – June 4, 1776*, 230-231; Continental Congress, "Wednesday, July 24, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 5, *June 5, 1776 – October 8, 1776*, 606.

¹⁴¹ Continental Congress, "Wednesday, July 24, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 5, *June 5, 1776 – October 8, 1776*, 606.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 606.

American rebellion through raiding and trading munitions was driven by their determination to survive by maintaining their commercial status quo with the mainland colonies; they were desperate to prevent the American Revolution from ripping apart their lives and livelihoods. The islanders' support for the Patriots, in turn, shaped both the Continental Congress and its diplomats' perspectives on expanding the geographic boundaries of an independent United States. Patriot officials sought to expand the United States by drawing nearby colonies into the Revolution through encouraging the inhabitants' pro-American sympathies and recommending military assaults to capture bordering colonies. Patriot diplomats also attempted to expand the United States by using peace negotiations to annex neighboring British colonies and territories. Through annexing neighboring North American colonies, the Continental Congress hoped to secure Americans' liberties and sovereignty from Britain's intrusion.

Conceptions of an Independent America

Securing the United States' sovereignty during and after the American Revolution forced the Continental Congress to grapple with the necessity of territorial expansion as a defensive measure in light of the United States' military weakness and dearth of funds to fight the British Empire. Congress and its diplomats attempted to square this circle through strategically exploiting imperial rivalries between Britain and continental Europe in their endeavors to gain military and financial support. Benjamin Franklin attempted to gain the French government's support by incentivizing future control over the British Caribbean's lucrative sugar colonies following the partitioning of British America. French control of Britain's sugar islands would enrich France and impoverish Britain by

creating a near French monopoly in sugar production and exportation. Making this promise cost the Continental Congress nothing in terms of blood and treasure. The United States could then pursue territorial annexation and expansion across the entire length of eastern North America, Bermuda, the Bahamas, and the Turks and Caicos. By engaging in this approach, the Congress and Patriot diplomats stood to gain needed support against Britain, while securing the United States' independence and sovereignty beyond the American Revolution.

While American patriots and the British Atlantic islanders reestablished a mutually beneficial commercial relationship, Patriot delegates and diplomats conceived of the islands as part of a more expansive, independent United States. Congress asserted broad foreign policy goals that sought to push the British Empire out of the Americas, and create a unified, independent North American continent. Benjamin Franklin advocated for a similar definition of the United States in his early negotiations with both the British military and French government during 1776 and 1778. Congress and Franklin's negotiations reveal that they saw the British Atlantic Islands as potential "fourteenth states," along with Canada and the Floridas, which constituted crucial territories the nascent United States needed to control to ensure its long-term security. While the British Atlantic Islands played a key role in the Patriots' acquisition of wartime stores, the islands also took a central role in Patriot officials' conceptualization of a sovereign United States.

The Continental Army and Patriot militias' failed military adventurism in Canada demonstrated to the Continental Congress the limitations of American military strength, wartime finances, and their cause's appeal outside the thirteen colonies. The Continental

Army's invasion of Canada shifted weapons and military supplies away from American forces, and left some American regiments "inactive from want of arms" and "New York and Long Island left open to the invasion of the Enemy [sic]."¹⁴³ The arrival of five Royal Navy warships with British troops forced the weary Continental Army to abandon its siege of Quebec, flee Montreal, and abort its campaign to annex Canada.¹⁴⁴ The American commissioners at Montreal conceded to John Hancock that due to the British reinforcements' arrival, plus the heavy losses of supplies and artillery in their hasty retreat from Quebec, it "will not be in our power to render our Country any further services in this Colony."¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, the commissioners and commanders acknowledged the "necessity of abandoning Canada," and the need to "evacuate all this country...[as] no provisions can be drawn from Canada."¹⁴⁶ Continental forces' failure to forcibly annex Canada dealt a severe blow to Patriot leaders' efforts to unify the North American colonies against Great Britain.

Similarly, the Continental Army and Patriot militias failed in East Florida. Between 1775 and the end of 1778, British and Loyalist raids against the Georgia frontier from East Florida sapped money and arms from the Continental Congress as they

¹⁴³ Continental Congress, "Thursday, March 14, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 4, *January 1, 1776 – June 4, 1776*, 203-204.

¹⁴⁴ Commissioners to Canada, "The Commissioners to Canada to Philip Schuyler, Montreal, May 10th, 1776" in *PBF*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 22, *March 21, 1775 through October 27, 1776*, 427-428. The commissioners reported to Schuyler that they surmised the five warships to be a part of a larger fifteen-ship squadron at anchor further up the St. Lawrence River.

¹⁴⁵ Commissioners to Canada, "The Commissioners to Canada to John Hancock, Montreal, May 10th, 1776" in *PBF*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 22, *March 21, 1775 through October 27, 1776*, 426-427.

¹⁴⁶ Commissioners to Canada, "The Commissioners to Canada to Philip Schuyler, Montreal, May 10th, 1776" in *PBF*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 22, *March 21, 1775 through October 27, 1776*, 427-428.

attempted to reinforce Georgia's Patriot militias and Continental forces.¹⁴⁷ Georgia's revolutionary government saw the expenditures as worthwhile investments in capturing East Florida, which constituted a far more desirable prize than the distant West Florida. Infighting between Georgia's Patriot civilian and military leadership, however, hindered the organization of a successful attack on St. Augustine, and ultimately squandered the Congress's financial support with little substantive achievements.¹⁴⁸

Continental and provincial military losses lent credence to the belief that the Continental military's efforts should be focused conservatively on expelling the British military from the thirteen colonies. South Carolinian delegate Henry Laurens championed this rationale. Patriot forces' endeavors to capture Canada, the Floridas, and Hopkins' raid on the Bahamas diverted crucial troops and resources from expelling the British from within the thirteen colonies' borders. American troops and munitions, Laurens argued, "were extremely wanted to act against the British Troops in this quarter and move as

¹⁴⁷ Continental Congress, "Thursday, February 6, 1777" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 7, *January 1, 1777 – May 21, 1777*, 96; Continental Congress, "Saturday, July 19, 1777" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 8, *May 22, 1777 – October 2, 1777* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1907), 566-567; Gary D. Olson, "Thomas Brown, the East Florida Rangers, and the Defense of East Florida" in *Eighteenth-Century Florida and the Revolutionary South*, ed. Samuel Proctor (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1978), 15-28; Robin F. A. Fabel, "West Florida and British Strategy in the American Revolution" in *Eighteenth-Century Florida and the Revolutionary South*, ed. Samuel Proctor (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1978), 49-67; Wright, *Florida in the American Revolution*, 31-44.

¹⁴⁸ Continental Congress, "Friday, March 1, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 4, *January 1, 1776 – June 4, 1776*, 180-181; Continental Congress, "Thursday, August 8, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 5, *June 5, 1776 – October 8, 1776*, 638; Kenneth Coleman et al., *A History of Georgia, Second Edition*, ed. Kenneth Coleman (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 76-80; Christopher Hibbert, *Redcoats and Rebels: The American Revolution through British Eyes* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1990), 239-240; Wright, *Florida in the American Revolution*, 38-39, 42-44, 56-57, 133, 176.

auxiliaries in the Southern States.”¹⁴⁹ Laurens concluded that revolutionary forces’ adventurism on “foreign exploits,” such as in West Florida, would bring “almost certain shame and loss” to Patriot forces.¹⁵⁰ With the Continental Army engaged across New England and the Middle Colonies, the southern colonies risked being isolated from the Continental Army’s support in the event of an attack by Britain or its Native American allies. Furthermore, the Army and Congress’s northern focus gave the appearance of a sectional division and bias in favor of protecting the New England and Middle colonies. Military operations once seen as a means of unifying the North American mainland against Britain now undermined American patriots’ efforts to win the thirteen colonies’ independence.

While Patriot efforts against Canada and the Floridas raised doubts about the practicality of expanding the war beyond the thirteen colonies, others pushed for the British Atlantic Islands’ annexation to counter British aggression in the western Atlantic. As the American Revolution increasingly turned “into a naval war,” American diplomat Silas Deane surmised, “it must be the policy of *America* to intercept, as far as possible, their intercourse between each other [Britain and its dominions], as well to supply ourselves as to distress them.”¹⁵¹ He implored Congress to expand the “United States of North America” to incorporate Bermuda and the Bahamas to strengthen the Patriots’

¹⁴⁹ Henry Laurens, “Henry Laurens to the President of South Carolina (John Rutledge), Philadelphia, 12th August 1777” in *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*, ed. Edmund C. Burnett, vol. 2, *July 5, 1776 to December 31, 1777* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1923), 446-448.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 447-448; Henry Laurens, “Henry Laurens to Lachlan McIntosh, Philadelphia, 11th August 1777” in *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*, ed. Edmund C. Burnett, vol. 2, *July 5, 1776 to December 31, 1777*, 444.

¹⁵¹ Silas Deane, “Extract of a Letter,” 26 April – 1 May 1776, *American Archives, Fourth Series*, 5:1084-1085.

military position against Britain.¹⁵² Deane, who stayed on Bermuda with Henry of Somerset and Colonel Tucker in April 1776 while in route to France, conveyed his concerns about Continental forces delaying a possible invasion of Bermuda in a communiqué from Paris to the Secret Committee.¹⁵³ Deane argued Congress needed to take measures to fortify Bermuda, and conveyed reports of the British ministry having similar plans “in contemplation, and propose doing it next spring.”¹⁵⁴ The American diplomats in Paris who were “acquainted with Bermuda” concurred with Deane’s assessment.¹⁵⁵ Congress and Continental forces needed to act quickly to secure Bermuda since, as Deane observed, the reverberations of Commodore Hopkins’ assault on New Providence continued to echo through the ministry at Whitehall.¹⁵⁶ Deane asserted the British government had now “got it by the end” to adjust its military strength and strategy to defend its Caribbean possessions.¹⁵⁷ He urged Congress to authorize the Continental

¹⁵² Silas Deane, “Deane to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, 8 October 1776,” in *RDCUS*, ed. Frances Wharton, 2:167.

¹⁵³ Deane, “Deane to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, 18 August 1776,” in *RDCUS*, ed. Frances Wharton, 2:125; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 59.

¹⁵⁴ Deane, “Deane to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, 18 August 1776,” in *RDCUS*, ed. Frances Wharton, 2:125.

¹⁵⁵ Deane, “Deane to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, 8 October 1776,” in *RDCUS*, ed. Frances Wharton, 2:167.

Two years later Franklin and his delegation to the French court briefly inquired to Congress’s Committee for Foreign Affairs about whether it would still be possible for Congress and Continental forces to “take Possession [of Bermuda], with the Consent of the Inhabitants of that Island, and fortify the same as soon as possible.” See: “The American Commissioners to the Committee for Foreign Affairs” in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 25, *October 1, 1777 through February 28, 1778* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 726-730.

¹⁵⁶ Deane, “Deane to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, 8 October 1776,” in *RDCUS*, ed. Frances Wharton, 2:167.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 2:167.

military to have “the islands...fortified this winter.”¹⁵⁸ In Deane’s imagination, Bermuda and the Bahamas constituted colonies that could effectively shift British defenses further away from the revolutionary mainland, and subsequently expand the revolutionary battlefield into North American, Caribbean, and Atlantic Ocean fronts that stretched Britain’s military forces in the metropole’s effort to defend its empire.

By gaining a foothold at Bermuda and the Bahamas, the Continental Congress stood to unleash attacks by Patriot privateers and the Continental Navy from Atlantic bases against Britain’s western Atlantic shipping lanes. With the British Atlantic Islands as privateering bases, American and pro-Patriot Bermudian and Bahamian privateers could figuratively turn the financial and economic screws to both the British government and Caribbean sugar planters. Deane argued that by controlling Bermuda “the whole *West India* trade must be intercepted,” since the “natural situation of the Island” was such that “every vessel passing between *Great Britain* and the *West-Indies*...sails within about one hundred leagues.”¹⁵⁹ Patriot privateers and their European allies wrecked the British sugar trade through food and supply shortages, increased insurance and freight rates, vessel and labor shortages, delayed transatlantic convoys, and financial losses for numerous planters, merchants, mariners, and many others involved in the trade and finance industries.¹⁶⁰ The Revolution’s early years saw Patriot privateers in the Caribbean intercept nearly all the supplies sent to Tobago from Britain, cutting the tiny island

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:167.

¹⁵⁹ Deane, “Extract of a Letter,” 26 April – 1 May 1776, *American Archives, Fourth Series*, 5:1084-1085; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 416.

¹⁶⁰ Richard B. Sheridan, “The Crisis of Slave Subsistence in the British West Indies during and after the American Revolution,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (Oct., 1976), 618-622; O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 163.

colony off from the metropole, as well as intercepting some of the most valuable cargo ships from the Jamaica fleet.¹⁶¹ The threat posed by American privateers forced British West Indian commerce to cross the Atlantic in immense merchant ship convoys guarded by the Royal Navy.¹⁶² Yet, American privateers managed to intercept and capture two convoys bound from Britain to the Leeward Islands in 1780, as well as most of a third bound for Jamaica.¹⁶³ In 1777, revolutionary American privateering already cost £1,800,000 in estimated damages to the British Caribbean's trade, and by 1781 privateers' disruptions increased the price of British sugar by over two-and-a-half times per hundredweight in comparison to pre-war prices.¹⁶⁴ Annexing the British Atlantic Islands and buttressing them with Continental warships and Patriot privateers would further threaten British wartime commerce at crucial Atlantic junctures and sea-lanes around Bermuda, the Bahamas and Straits of Florida, and at the Windward and Mona passages that neighbored Turks Island.

Despite the strategic advantages American forces stood to gain by following Deane's plan, Congress rejected the idea as a costly drain on its already strained military

¹⁶¹ O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 163; Lord George Macartney to Lord George Germain, 2 April 1777, CO 101/20/142; Address of the Assembly of Jamaica to the King, 21 November 1777, CO 140/57.

¹⁶² O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 163.

¹⁶³ Selwyn H. H. Carrington, *The British West Indies during the American Revolution*, Caribbean Series 8 (Providence, RI and Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Foris Publications, 1988), 93; O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 163-164.

¹⁶⁴ O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 163-164; [Samuel Estwick], *Considerations on the Present Decline of the Sugar-Trade; and on the Means which are Proposed, by the Refiners of London, for Reinstating It* (London: n.p., 1782), 51; Carrington, *The British West Indies during the American Revolution*, 93.

Prior to the American Revolution, the price of a hundredweight of Jamaican sugar shipped to Britain stood at 14s, but by 1781 the price increased to 37s 1½d. The price increase primarily reflects the substantial rises in insurance rates for ships and cargoes, duties imposed by Parliament, and freight costs. See: [Estwick], *Considerations on the Present Decline of the Sugar-Trade*, 51; O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 164.

and treasury. The Continental Army reeled from the previous year's failed invasion of Quebec, and Hopkins' attack on New Providence angered the Virginian and Carolinian delegations because he failed to clear the Chesapeake and Carolinian coasts of British warships.¹⁶⁵ Similar to Hopkins' invasion of New Providence, Continental forces' invasion and capture of Bermuda would also divert forces the Virginian and Carolinian delegates desired for defending their colonies from British army and naval reinforcements.¹⁶⁶ Bermuda's isolated position in the Atlantic made it vulnerable to naval blockades and invasions. To defend the island effectively, the Congress and Continental military would need to maintain a large and constant military presence on Bermuda to repulse attacks and invasions by the Royal Navy. The money and munitions necessary for Continental forces to capture and fortify Bermuda would stress Congress's meager revenue and available supplies. Capturing Bermuda would also divert resources from the

¹⁶⁵ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 416; Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 154. The Continental Congress officially censured Commodore Hopkins on August 16th, 1776 after the Virginian and Carolinian delegations complained about his decision to raid Nassau instead of engaging Lord Dunmore's fleet in the Chesapeake. Hopkins believed engaging the Royal Navy in the Chesapeake would put the infant Continental Navy at serious risk. The censure damaged his military standing and authority, and Congress ultimately relieved him of his command on January 2nd, 1778. See: Continental Congress, "Friday, August 16, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 5, *June 5, 1776 – October 8, 1776*, 661-662; Tim McGrath, *Give me a Fast Ship: The Continental Navy and America's Revolution at Sea* (New York: NAL Caliber, 2014), 79; Field, *Esek Hopkins, Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Navy during the American Revolution, 1775 to 1778*, 154-161; Continental Congress, "Friday, January 2, 1778" in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 10, *January 1, 1778 – May 1, 1778* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1908), 13; Thomas Jefferson, "Outline of Argument Concerning Insubordination of Esek Hopkins, 12 August 1776" in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P. Boyd, vol. 15, *27 March 1789 to 30 November 1789* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958), 578-582.

¹⁶⁶ Continental Congress, "October 6, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 482-484; Continental Congress, "Monday, March 25, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 4, *January 1, 1776 – June 1, 1776*, 235; Continental Congress, "October 21, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 3, *September 21, 1775 – December 30, 1775*, 499-501; Continental Congress, "Saturday, November 16, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 6, *October 9, 1776 – December 31, 1776*, 956-957.

army's defense of New England, New York, and Philadelphia.¹⁶⁷ Although Congress rejected Deane's plan, the threat posed by British forces at Bermuda and the Bahamas necessitated an effort to gain control of the two island colonies through alternative means.

Benjamin Franklin attempted to win the peace from Great Britain by securing the independence of a continental United States that encompassed all eastern North America and the British Atlantic Islands. In his "Sketch of Propositions for a Peace," Franklin desired Great Britain and General William Howe to "renounce and disclaim all pretence [sic] of right or authority to govern in any of the United States," and to agree to a unified North American continent under the control of the United States and the Continental Congress.¹⁶⁸ "To prevent those occasions of misunderstanding which are apt to arise where the territories of different powers border on each other through the bad conduct of frontier inhabitants," Franklin contended astutely, "Britain shall cede to the United states the provinces or Colonies of Quebec, St. John's, Nova Scotia, Bermuda, East and West Florida, and the Bahama islands, with all their adjoining and intermediate territories."¹⁶⁹ In exchange for sovereignty over eastern North America and the Atlantic islands, Franklin proposed offering Britain an unstipulated amount of money that the United

¹⁶⁷ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 416.

¹⁶⁸ Benjamin Franklin, "Sketch of Propositions for a Peace 1776," in *PBF*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 22, *March 21, 1775 through October 27, 1776*, 630-631; Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 321-322.

¹⁶⁹ Benjamin Franklin, "Sketch of Propositions for a Peace 1776," in *PBF*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 22, *March 21, 1775 through October 27, 1776*, 630-631; Gordon S. Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 169-170.

Franklin's position here was one that assumed the British government would negotiate with the rebellious Patriots in good faith, and that they would not intentionally seek to exploit borderland conflicts and misunderstandings in order to instigate military efforts to retake its former colonies.

States would pay in annual installments over an unspecified number of years.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, Franklin guaranteed the United States would grant “a free trade to all British subjects” throughout their dominion, as well as Britain’s continued “Possession of her islands in the West Indies.”¹⁷¹

An independent United States encircled by British-occupied Bermuda, the Bahamas, Canada, and the Floridas left the burgeoning nation vulnerable to continued military and diplomatic entanglements with the British Empire. The frontier regions of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys, in addition to the wider Great Lakes basin, presented American patriot and British officials with large, contested, and ambiguous spaces for

¹⁷⁰ Benjamin Franklin, “Sketch of Propositions for a Peace 1776,” in *PBF*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 22, *March 21, 1775 through October 27, 1776*, 630-631; Gerald Stourzh, *Benjamin Franklin and American Foreign Policy, Second Edition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 200. The proposal for a monetary transaction between the rebellious colonies and Britain, essentially purchasing their liberty and independence, was a test to see how receptive British negotiators were to this tactic for quickly concluding the conflict. A financial blank check for an unspecified amount of money over an unknown number of years, if agreed to by British and American patriot negotiators and governments, would likely hamstring the nascent independent states (or unified country) financially, and limit government spending on defense (e.g. maintaining militias and forts, supplying armories with munitions, and constructing and maintain warships) and repaying war debts.

¹⁷¹ Benjamin Franklin, “Sketch of Propositions for a Peace 1776,” in *PBF*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 22, *March 21, 1775 through October 27, 1776*, 630-631. Franklin’s proposal to establish free trade with Britain and the British Caribbean colonies illustrates both the pragmatism of needing to successfully secure the United States’ independence and sovereignty, and the revolutionary American political figures’ optimism and naïveté towards international relations and commerce with European empires. Britain’s continued possession of its Caribbean colonies was a practical concession by Franklin. The nascent, independent United States did not possess the military power and available revenue to suppress slave revolts on the islands, nor defend them from invasion and conquest by Britain or other European powers. Franklin’s free trade provision parallels the commercial ideals outlined in the Continental Congress’s “Model Treaty,” which they approved on September 24th, 1776. British-American free trade would preserve a measure of the triangle trade without the thirteen colonies participating in Britain’s mercantilist economic system. Franklin may have hoped that an independent North America’s commercial importance for Britain and its Atlantic empire would insulate the United States from British aggression and efforts to reconquer its lost colonies. A free trade agreement permitted the United States to maintain the importation of British manufactured goods, as well as produce, goods, and slaves from British trading posts in India and Africa. The British Caribbean sugar islands preserved their primary sources of foodstuffs, timber, ships, and other supplies necessary for feeding their slave-majority populations, maintaining sugar works for refining sugar, producing rum, and shipping British sugar to North American and European markets. Britain and its merchants gained commercial revenue from selling goods to North American markets, as well as producing and selling sugar produce to American, British, and continental European consumers.

both American and British settlers, land speculators, traders, and allied and hostile Native American nations to engage in violent confrontations.¹⁷² In removing the British Empire from the continent, American officials sought to forge a future that limited the contested spaces surrounding the United States.¹⁷³ The American gaze could then shift towards dealing with the Native American tribes on the western borderlands. By removing competing European empires, the United States could significantly change the North American frontier's diplomatic and military power dynamics to its overwhelming benefit by eliminating Natives' ability to play Euro-American powers against one another to maximize their tribes' negotiating power.¹⁷⁴ With the United States dominating eastern

¹⁷² White, *The Middle Ground*; Colin G. Calloway, "'We Have Always Been the Frontier': The American Revolution in Shawnee Country," *American Indian Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (Winter, 1992), 39-52; Daniel Ingram, "A Year at Niagara: Negotiating Coexistence in the Eastern Great Lakes, 1763-1764" in *Contested Territories: Native Americans and Non-Natives in the Lower Great Lakes, 1700-1850*, eds. Charles Beatty-Medina and Melissa Rinehart (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2012), 1-34; Keith R. Widder, "The French Connection: The Interior French and Their Role in French-British Relations in the Western Great Lakes Region, 1760-1775" in *Sixty Years' War for the Great Lakes*, eds. David Curtis Skaggs and Larry L. Nelson (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001), 125-144; Reginald Horsman, "Great Britain and the Illinois Country in the Era of the American Revolution," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 69, no. 2 (May, 1976), 100-109; Henry O. Robertson, "Tories or Patriot? The Mississippi River Planters during the American Revolution," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 40, no. 4 (Autumn, 1999), 445-462; Robert V. Haynes, *The Natchez District and the American Revolution* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1976).

For the works on the North American frontier as a contested space between the United States, Great Britain, and the Native American nations in the decades following the American Revolution, see: Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*; Alan Taylor, "Remaking Americans: Louisiana, Upper Canada, and Texas" in *Contested Spaces of Early America*, eds. Juliana Barr and Edward Countryman, Early American Studies (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 208-226; Jeff Seiken, "'To Obtain Command of the Lakes': The United States and the Contest for Lakes Erie and Ontario, 1812-1815" in *Sixty Years' War for the Great Lakes*, eds. David Curtis Skaggs and Larry L. Nelson, 353-372.

¹⁷³ Benjamin Franklin, "Sketch of Propositions for a Peace 1776," in *PBF*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 22, *March 21, 1775 through October 27, 1776*, 630-631; Continental Congress, "Treaty of Alliance, Eventual and Defensive" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 11, *May 2, 1778 – September 1, 1778*, 448-453.

¹⁷⁴ Karim M. Tiro, *The People of the Standing Stone: The Oneida Nation from the Revolution through the Era of Removal*, Native Americans of the Northeast: Cultures, History, and the Contemporary (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 39-64; Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities*, Cambridge Studies in North American Indian History (New York and Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 244-271,

North America, “occasions of misunderstanding” and the “bad actions of frontier inhabitants” that Franklin predicted could not pull the United States into a protracted, damaging, and expensive conflict with a European power.¹⁷⁵ In gaining control of the remaining British North American territories, Patriot officials hoped to limit the United States’ need to engage in a multidirectional focus that divided political and military concerns along poorly defined borders within and surrounding the continent.

The British Atlantic Islands’ existence as territorial grey areas created a zone of uncertainty with respect to legal and military jurisdictions in the western Atlantic. The zone of uncertainty between the United States and Britain endangered the sovereign recognition of American mariners and merchant ships by British maritime forces. If left under British authority, Bermuda and the Bahamas stood to become dangerous locations from which Britain could employ privateers and the Royal Navy to harass American shipping or launch assaults against the United States’ ports and coastline. British attacks on American merchant ships, in addition to the impressment of American sailors, threatened the nascent United States’ emerging commercial relationships with Europe and the Caribbean.¹⁷⁶ American interstate commerce passing between the mainland and

272-291; Jenny Hale Pulsipher, “Gaining the Diplomatic Edge: Kinship, Trade, and Religion in Amerindian Alliances in Early North America” in *Empires and Indigenes: Intercultural Alliances, Imperial Expansion, and Warfare in the Early Modern World*, ed. Wayne E. Lee, Warfare and Culture Series (New York and London: New York University Press, 2011), 19-48; Max M. Mintz, *Seeds of Empire: The American Revolutionary Conquest of the Iroquois* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1999); Colin G. Calloway, *The Shawnees and the War for America*, The Penguin Library of American Indian History (New York: Viking, 2007), 85-108.

¹⁷⁵ Benjamin Franklin, “Sketch of Propositions for a Peace 1776,” in *PBF*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 22, *March 21, 1775 through October 27, 1776*, 630-631.

¹⁷⁶ For newspaper reports on British efforts to suppress American shipping and impress American sailors during the early years of the American Revolution, see: “Boston, (Thursday) February 16,” *The Connecticut Courant, and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer*, 20 February 1775, 2; “Boston, Thursday,

Bermuda, or near the Bahamas, faced these threats, while British naval and privateering interference stood to undermine an independent United States' commercial growth and security.¹⁷⁷ Although the Continental Congress and Patriot diplomats hoped to force Britain off the North American continent, they needed the aid of France to support their fight for independence.

Franklin, his fellow diplomats, and the Continental Congress pursued an alliance with France they hoped would end Britain's present and future threat to an independent United States. In the Treaty of Alliance of 1778, Congress sought "to attempt the Reduction of the British Power remaining in the Northern Parts of America" and bring the remaining British North American colonies into the United States, while the British Caribbean would "appertain to the Crown of France."¹⁷⁸ The United States and France's division of the British Empire proposed in the Treaty of Alliance reveals Congress's

February 16," *The Essex Journal and Merrimack Packet: or, The Massachusetts and New-Hampshire General Advertiser*, 22 February 1775, 2.

For Patriots' concerns about British army and naval attacks against American commerce, see: Continental Congress, "Friday, June 2, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 77; Continental Congress, "Saturday, July 8, 1775" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 2, *May 10, 1775 – September 20, 1775*, 166; "Williamsburg, March 28," *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 8 April 1777, 192; "London, Feb. 8," *The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury*, 28 April 1777, 1; "London, December 1," *The Connecticut Journal*, 9 April 1777, 3; "Extract of a Letter from a General Officer in the Army of the United-States of America, Dated Morris Town, January 28," *The Norwich Packet and the Connecticut, Massachusetts, New-Hampshire, and Rhode-Island Weekly Advertiser*, 17-24 February 1777, 3.

For Patriot and Loyalist newspaper reports of British privateering attacks against American ships at or near Bermuda and the Bahamas, see: "Extract of a Letter from Providence, N.E. Dated August 13," *The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury*, 19 August 1776, 2; "Extract of a Letter from Tunbridge, Aug. 10," *The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury*, 25 November 1776, 2; "New-Port, April 2," *The Royal Pennsylvania Gazette*, 24 April 1778, 2.

¹⁷⁷ Continental Congress, "Thursday, May 29, 1777" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 8, *May 22, 1777 – October 2, 1777*, 400-403.

¹⁷⁸ Continental Congress, "Treaty of Alliance, Eventual and Defensive" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 11, *May 2, 1778 – September 1, 1778*, 450-451. The portions quoted pertain to the treaty's fifth and eighth articles.

conception of an independent and secure United States, which combines North America and the Atlantic islands into a single, united super-state. A united North America under the United States' flag that brought together the Patriot-sympathizing Bermudians and Bahamians of the Atlantic islands, and the more ambivalent Canadian and Floridian colonists. The British Caribbean colonies that sided with the metropole immediately after the Continental Congress declared independence became tools to commercially and financially humiliate a defeated Great Britain by expelling it from the Americas. While American officials emphasized the role of the United States' commerce as an important benefit to France, as they firmly believed the American trade would become a critical element in the European balance of power, they recognized the need to offer aid and military cooperation to gain an alliance with France.¹⁷⁹

Congress and Benjamin Franklin attempted to sway the French government by underscoring their openness to supporting France's efforts to gain control of Britain's sugar islands. Since the United States' military power and overseas successes were limited, Congress and Patriot officials' support for a French conquest of the British Caribbean centered on practical contributions, which consisted of supporting French territorial gains and Britain's cession of Caribbean islands during peace talks. Through peace treaty negotiations with Britain, the American patriot and French governments could solidify their territorial gains on the North American mainland and in the

¹⁷⁹ Jonathan R. Dull, *A Diplomatic History of the American Revolution* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 54-55; Samuel Flagg Bemis, *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (1935; reprint, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957), 46-47, 52-53.

Caribbean.¹⁸⁰ Acquiring the British sugar islands would give France greater security over its existing Caribbean colonies, expand its sugar production and export market share, and remove competition for French sugar exported to North America, the British Isles, and continental Europe.¹⁸¹ By offering France Britain's Caribbean colonies while securing the

¹⁸⁰ Dull, *A Diplomatic History of the American Revolution*, 54; Bemis, *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution*, 46-47, 52; Stourzh, *Benjamin Franklin and American Foreign Policy*, 142-143; Continental Congress, "Monday, December 30, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 6, *October 9, 1776 – December 31, 1776*, 1054-1058; "The Committee of Secret Correspondence to the American Commissioners," in *PBF*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 23, *October 27, 1776 through April 30, 1777*, 96-100; Continental Congress, "Thursday, July 18, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 5, *June 5, 1776 – October 8, 1776*, 579; Continental Congress, "Treaty of Alliance, Eventual and Defensive" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 11, *May 2, 1778 – September 1, 1778*, 448-453.

For additional discussion on the Franco-American alliance of 1778, as well as the peace proposals of 1779, see: Larrie D. Ferreiro, *Brothers at Arms: American Independence and the Men of France and Spain Who Saved It* (New York: Vintage, 2016), 64, 93-105; Dull, *A Diplomatic History of the American Revolution*, 64, 92-94, 98, 100; William C. Stinchcombe, *The American and the French Alliance* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1969), 62-76.

¹⁸¹ John Adams, "Notes of Debates in the Continental Congress, March 1, 1776" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 6, *October 9, 1776 – December 31, 1776*, 1073.

Between 1768 and 1772, sugar exports from the British Caribbean produced £3,383,915 in revenue for Britain's domestic markets, plus an additional £526,685 from sales to her North American colonies. In 1775, on the eve of the American Revolution, the British sugar islands produced 2,002,224 cwt in sugar, while France imported approximately 1,601,200 cwt from its Caribbean colonies. The French Caribbean sugar colonies of Saint Domingue, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Cayenne shipped 166,353,834 lbs. of sugar worth £61,849,381 1s 9d to France. French merchants then re-exported 104,099,866 lbs. for £38,703,720 7s 2d. Acquiring the British sugar islands would deprive Britain of its imported domestic sugar and force it to open its economy to foreign sugar to meet consumer demand. In 1775, the British public consumed over two-and-a-half times more sugar than the French public consumed despite Britain having about a quarter of France's population. Of the imported sugar, Britain exported only 414,802 cwt from Britain, and retained 1,587,422 cwt or 79.3 percent. By contrast, France re-exported about 1,002,000 cwt of sugar, approximately 62.6 percent, while keeping around 599,200 cwt of its imported sugar. Britons' large consumption of sugar, in relation to the French, resulted from two principal factors: first, their disparate levels of wealth and affluence; and, second, Britons increasingly added refined and distilled sugars to their drinks. Eighteenth-century Britons typically consumed sugar with tea, and rum increasingly came to supplant wine and brandy as the aged and distilled alcoholic beverage of choice. By eliminating the British Empire's colonial sources for sugar, France stood to be able to extend its export markets for sugar and rum into high-demand British markets. Acquiring the British sugar islands would also increase France's sugar production for exports to neighboring European markets, particularly in the Dutch Republic and German states. See: O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 72-77; McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America*, 160; Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 24-25, 27-31; David MacPherson, *Annals of Commerce, Manufactures, Fisheries, and Navigation, with Brief Notices of the Arts and Sciences Connected with Them* (London: Nichols and Son, 1805), 3:582-583; John Campbell, *Candid and Impartial Considerations on the Nature of the Sugar Trade: The Comparative Importance of the British and French Islands in the West-Indies: with the Value and Consequence of St. Lucia and Grenada, truly stated*

North American mainland, the Continental Congress attempted to both obtain a vital alliance and remove future threats to the United States' sovereignty stemming from Britain's continued presence in the Americas.¹⁸²

Patriot officials conceptualized a secure and sovereign United States that encompassed North America's entirety and the British Atlantic Islands. Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane, and the Continental Congress understood that the British Empire's continued presence on the North American continent, as well as in the western hemisphere more broadly, constituted the primary threat to the United States' long-term sovereignty and security. Poorly defined border zones surrounding the nascent United States presented an opportunity for Britain to undermine the Americans' relationships with neighboring European settlers and Native American nations along the frontiers. The western Atlantic also posed a threat as an emerging border-sea. Franklin and Deane determined that Britain's continued control of Bermuda and the Bahamas presented a similar threat to both American merchant shipping and the post-revolution, Anglo-American peace. Franklin and Deane's fears ultimately came to fruition as Britain attempted to strengthen its defenses and exert control over the British Atlantic Islands in 1778 and 1779.

(London: Printed for R. Baldwin, 1763), 33; Robert Louis Stein, *The French Sugar Business in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 99-100; Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985), 189-190.

¹⁸² Continental Congress, "Treaty of Alliance, Eventual and Defensive" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 11, *May 2, 1778 – September 1, 1778*, 448-453; "France: February 6, 1778" [Treaty of Alliance] in *Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America*, ed. Hunter Miller, vol. 2, *Documents 1-40: 1776-1818* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1931), 38, 42; Coy Hilton James, *Silas Deane – Patriot or Traitor?* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1975), 54-55; Stourzh, *Benjamin Franklin and American Foreign Policy*, 200-201.

Conclusion

The American Revolution's explosive outbreak brought American patriots and their Bermudian and Bahamian sympathizers into conflict with the British government, and consequently expanded the war beyond a regional revolt in New England to one that spanned the British Atlantic world. The British Army's march against Concord in 1775 sparked a scramble to secure munitions in the thirteen colonies, the neighboring British Atlantic Islands, and from foreign entrepôts in the Caribbean. Congress engaged with neighboring colonies to acquire weapons, ammunition, and gunpowder that the Continental Army desperately needed to fight the British military. Patriot mariners and the Continental Navy raided the poorly guarded forts and magazines of Bermuda and the Bahamas to seize their stockpiles for Continental forces' use. The American raids, specifically on New Providence, caused the North administration to overreact to the threat posed to Britain's Caribbean sugar islands. The Royal Navy's strengthening of the western Atlantic depleted the Britain's naval defenses around the British Isles and the Straits of Gibraltar, which enabled the French navy to move out into the Atlantic unchallenged. British officials' overreaction unintentionally bolstered Continental forces with French naval support. The Continental Congress's conceptualization of an independent United States forced Patriot officials to not only focus on the war in the present, but to also look beyond the Revolution and consider what their new world order would look like free from Britain's control. Consequently, American delegates and diplomats endeavored to construct geopolitical boundaries that pulled in neighboring British North American and Atlantic island colonies to form an expanded United States

of North America, which eliminated contentious border regions to form a new, post-British, Atlantic world.

The realities of the American Revolution, however, undermined the dreams of a peaceful and independent North American continent, while testing the British Atlantic islanders' sympathies and identities. The American raids against Bermuda and the Bahamas fostered social and political divisions within the colonies, and stoked Governors George James Bruere and Montfort Browne's distrust of the islanders. Patriot-sympathizing Bermudians and Bahamians openly engaged in illicit trading with the rebellious thirteen colonies, undermined their British governors, and immigrated to the mainland to join the Patriots' side. Governors Browne and Bruere took steps to rein in their Patriot-sympathizing colonies. The governors' efforts to bring the archipelagos into line, however, pushed the islanders to contest their designs to pull the colonies away from the political and commercial middle ground and firmly into the Loyalist camp. The American Revolution's tumultuous effects on Bermudian and Bahamian identity challenged how the islanders conceptualized their roles and situations within the British Empire and culminated in a radical transformation in how the islanders engaged with a divided Anglophone Atlantic world.

CHAPTER III
THE REVOLUTIONARY CONTESTS FOR THE BRITISH ATLANTIC
ISLANDS' FUTURE

Introduction

The American Revolution's pivotal years of 1778 and 1779 heralded a defining moment in the war for both the American patriots and the British Atlantic islanders. British general John Burgoyne's surrender to American general Horatio Gates' forces at Saratoga on October 17th, 1777 strengthened Benjamin Franklin's negotiating position with the French government. Gates' victory at Saratoga constituted a significant turning point in the Revolution because it demonstrated the Continental military's capability of defeating the British Army, which convinced the French government to enter a military alliance against Britain on February 6th, 1778. For the British Atlantic Islands, 1778 and 1779 also proved to be a crossroads in the islanders' struggles with Governors George James Bruere and Montfort Browne, as well as the British military, for control of their colonies' directions during the war. The islanders faced increasing social and economic strain as the American Revolution dragged on. British efforts to cut off illicit trading between the islanders and Patriot-held mainland threatened Bermudian and Bahamian communities with famine and disease, while drawing the island colonists into political and legal conflicts with British authorities as they attempted to continue their status quo relationship with the rebellious mainland.

For the Bahama Islands, Governor Montfort Browne's return from his American imprisonment plunged the Bahamian government into political paralysis. Governor Browne's two-year absence from the islands strengthened the colonial legislature as it expanded its authority to compensate for the absence of the British-appointed governor. The legislature's increased authority enabled Bahamian merchants, smugglers, and privateers to trade with and support the American patriots openly without interference from British authorities in the Bahamas. Governor Browne attempted to rein in the Bahamians' interactions with the Patriots and root out Patriot-sympathizers lurking within the colonial government.¹ Bahamian colonists resisted Browne's draconian actions to restrain their commerce with the American rebels. In response, the islands' officials engaged in an insurrectionary political battle against Browne. Bahamian officials sought to secure themselves and their positions against Browne's efforts to purge suspected Patriot-sympathizers from the colonial government.² Browne and the colonial legislature sprang into a petition war against each other, in which both sides attempted to convince Lord George Germain and the British military commanders in America that the opposing side bore responsibility for the colony's capture in 1776.³

¹ A Proclamation, 4 January 1779, CO 23/9/93; CO 23/23/116-118; Address by Governor Browne to the Council and the General Assembly, 17 March 1779, CO 23/24/125; Testimony of William Watherston, 10 March 1779, CO 23/24/127; Testimony of John Grant, 11 February 1779, CO 23/24/128; Montfort Browne to Lord George Germain, 10 May 1777, CO 23/23/126r; Extract of a Letter from Governor Browne to Lord George Germain, 11 January 1779, CO 23/9/138-139; Testimony of Thomas Smith, 9 January 1779, CO 23/24/133; Extract of a Letter from Governor Browne to Lord George Germain, 15 January 1779, CO 23/9/140r; Testimony of William Clarkson, Ensign, 8 March 1779, CO 23/24/153-154.

² Letter from the Council to the Board of Trade, 22 February 1779, CO 23/9/90; The Remonstrance of His Majesty's Council and the General Assembly, 12 March 1779, CO 23/24/145; Protest by the Council Marked "B," 9 March 1779, CO 23/24/121-122; Petition from the Lieutenant Governor, His Majesty's Council, and the late General Assembly to the King, 27 July 1779, CO 23/24/239-242; The Memorial of William Bradford and Andrew Symmer to Lord George Germain, 8 May 1780, CO 23/10/46-47; The Memorial of the Inhabitants of New Providence, 23 April 1779, CO 23/9/133.

To the North, the practical and pragmatic Bermudians tried to continue straddling the revolutionary line dividing British loyalists and pro-Patriot rebels. As the American Revolution entered its third and fourth years, Bermudians suffered the economic, political, and social strain of imperial division and British forces' increased presence at the island. After approximately a century of salutary neglect by the British military, Bermudians found their island took on a greater military purpose as the Royal Navy and colonial government converted garrisons, homes, and merchant ships into prisons for the captured American soldiers and civilians.⁴ Confronted with the Royal Navy and privateers' presence in the waters surrounding Bermuda, the island colonists attempted to maintain home rule using legal actions to rein in the Royal Navy's oppressive actions.⁵

The Royal Navy's entrenchment at Bermuda and the increasing uncertainty of Bermuda's position within a partitioned British Atlantic world required Bermudians to

³ Copy of the Testimony of Captain Thomas Hodgson, 30 December 1779, CO 23/24/135; A Narrative of the Transactions & on the Invasion of the Island of New Providence by the Rebels in 1776, 15 June 1779, CO 23/9/112-113; Copy of a Narrative of the Transactions & on the Invasion of the Island of New Providence by the Rebels in 1776, 15 June 1779, CO 23/24/113-116; Testimony of Captain George Dorsett, 20 April 1779, CO 23/9/120; At a Council held this Day, 3 March 1776, CO 23/9/122; Fort Nassau during March 3rd, 1776, CO 23/9/126-129; CO 23/24/145; CO 23/9/90; CO 23/24/121-122; Letter from the Council to the Board of Trade, 31 March 1779, CO 23/9/97; Montfort Browne to Lord George Germain, 29 June 1779, CO 23/24/225-227; CO 23/24/239-242; Montfort Browne's Response to the Remonstrance, 15 March 1779, CO 23/24/148r.

⁴ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 434-435; Account of payments made out of the public treasury for the accommodation of His Majesty's garrison battalion, 1779-1783, CO 37/39/23-25; William Scott, Letter: Fort Moultrie, to Major General Lincoln, Charlestown, [S.C.], 17 December 1779, 43/0504, South Carolina Historical Society Archives, Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library, College of Charleston; Letter from Micah Hammond, *The Boston Evening-Post and the General Advertiser*, 3 August 1782, 3; William Browne, "Browne to the Commissioners of the Sick and Wounded, October 15, 1783," *Bermuda Historical Quarterly* 1 (1944), 77.

⁵ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 415-416, 418-423; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 66-68; *Ancient Journals of the House of Assembly of Bermuda*, 3:1702; Deposition of William Merrick, 24 March 1777, CO 37/22/18-23; Deposition of Robert Richardson, 24 March 1777, CO 37/22/97; Henry Tucker, Sr., Articles of Complaint, August 1779, CO 37/22/6-8; Henry Tucker, Sr. to Lord George Germain, 24 September 1779, CO 37/22/9; George James Bruere to the Board of Trade, 25 March 1780; CO 37/22/10; Deposition of William Williams, 5 May 1780, CO 37/22/72-73; Deposition of Thomas Jones, 6 May 1780, CO 37/22/75-77; Deposition of Mary Tucker, 6 July 1780, CO 37/22/74; Deposition of John Harvey, 12 July 1780, CO 37/22/70-71.

alter their course to ensure survival. The American Revolution's push and pull caused British authorities, American patriots and their European allies, and the British Atlantic islanders to engage in three distinct strategies to assert authority over the islands' border-sea. One strategy was for the British governors and military to assert their authority and power to deprive the rebellious Americans' external support from Patriot-sympathizing Bermudians and Bahamians.⁶ The island colonists, however, turned to privateering after their colonies' commercial networks became increasingly strained by the Revolution.⁷ As a result, the Continental Congress and American diplomats found themselves forced to address the reality of the British Atlantic Islands' diminishing support for the fight against Britain. In response, the Congress restricted and terminated its commercial relationships with the Bermudians and Bahamians. Finally, American and Spanish commanders took joint measures to secure the Carolinas, Straits of Florida, and Spain's Caribbean colonies from American-loyalist and Bahamian privateering attacks.⁸ American patriot and Spanish efforts proved only temporary as Loyalist forces and British negotiators in Paris secured Bermuda and the Bahamas' places within the British Empire after the American Revolution.

⁶ Lord George Germain to Montfort Browne, 14 January 1777, CO 23/23/116-118; Address by Governor Browne to the Council and General Assembly, 17 March 1779, CO 23/24/125; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 168-169; Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 142-143; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 416-418, 419, 421-422.

⁷ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 425-430; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 168; Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 142-143.

⁸ Lewis, *The Final Campaign of the American Revolution*; Eric Beerman, "The Last Battle of the American Revolution: Yorktown. No, the Bahamas! (The Spanish-American Expedition to Nassau in 1782)," *The Americas* 45, no. 1 (July, 1988), 79-95; Eric Beerman, "Old Navy: The 1782 American Spanish Expedition," *Proceedings Magazine* 104/12/910 (Dec., 1978), 86-87; "Plan de Operaciones," Marqués de González de Castejón to José Solano, El Pardo, 8 April 1780, Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Seville, Santo Domingo, legajo 2086; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 168-169; Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 143-144.

Islanders Attempt to Control their Destiny

Montfort Browne's capture and George James Bruere's constrained authority empowered Bermudians and Bahamians to pursue stratagems that preserved their commercial connections with the rebellious thirteen colonies. Bermudians and Bahamians employed privateering, open trade, and smuggling to circumvent British naval and Loyalist privateering patrols. Some islanders petitioned the Continental Congress for passports to travel to the mainland and join the Patriot's revolt. In Browne's absence, Bahamian officials labored to shape the British government's image of their colony by controlling and limiting communications with the metropole and British military commanders in North America. By engaging in these practices during the first half of the Revolution, Bermudians and Bahamians endeavored to maintain control of their colonies' paths through the imperial civil war, while preserving the commercial and physical security they enjoyed in the pre-revolutionary British Atlantic world.

During the first half of the Revolution, Bermudians considered the conflict a "temporary matter" that would end once the British administration abandoned its plans to tax the American colonists.⁹ In July 1777, Colonel Tucker confided in his son, St. George, that he preferred "neither side get an Advantage" in the war, since it "may make them begin to think of peace."¹⁰ Although the "happy Event" of peace between Britain and the rebellious thirteen colonies was one the Colonel wished for, he did not expect it

⁹ Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 41.

¹⁰ Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 21 July 1777, TCP.

to materialize quickly.¹¹ Hopeful the British administration would come to its senses and reconcile with its thirteen North American colonies, the Colonel latched onto a circulating rumor that Lord Chatham had supplanted Lord North. The Colonel believed a new ministry with the intent of rescinding the “obnoxious Acts relative to America” would lead to “a full ground for a peace” in Britain’s Atlantic empire.¹² Tucker preferred the idea of a union between Britain and the American colonies to “Independency,” which would create harmful commercial obstacles and border-seas that bisected Bermuda’s Atlantic trade network, and hoped that a “scheme many be concerted to satisfie [sic] all parties.”¹³ While Colonel Tucker and his fellow islanders desired a swift, peaceable conclusion to the conflict between Britain and the thirteen colonies, the inability for a quick and decisive end increased Bermudians’ desire to resume the British Atlantic’s commercial status quo.

The HMS *Nautilus* and *Galatea*’s arrival in June and September of 1776 threatened Bermudians’ maritime industry and survival, because the warships intercepted the islanders’ trade with the rebellious mainland. The *Nautilus* and *Galatea*’s commanders, Captains John Collins and Thomas Jordan respectively, initiated an operation to capture and thwart the Bermudian-American trade operating around the island.¹⁴ The Royal Navy pressured Bermuda’s merchant and mariner populations during

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 23 April 1778, TCP.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ “Williamsburg, September 12,” *The Connecticut Journal*, 9 October 1776, 1; “Notice is hereby given...,” *The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury*, 16 December 1776, 4; “Notice is hereby given...,” *The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury*, 16 December 1776, 4.

the spring and summer of 1777 by deploying a schooner tender, a small two-mast vessel that moved people and goods between offshore vessels and a harbor's docks, at Ely's Harbour on the West End's Atlantic side.¹⁵ The British commanders used the schooner to lure Bermudian smugglers onto the island's western reefs, and captured the stranded mariners with contingents of marines.¹⁶ The Royal Navy also employed seized Bermudian vessels, such as Captain Thomas Tucker's ship, as friendly decoys out in the Atlantic, which aided the navy in taking two Bermudian and three American vessels.¹⁷ Between November 1776 and the end of December 1778, the *Galatea* and *Nautilus* wreaked disaster on the American trade capturing at least 31 ships, and hauled in 27 vessels in 1777 alone.¹⁸

Bermudians also faced attacks on their rights and personal property. Royal Navy sailors formed shore parties that raided the islanders' warehouses, looting the colony's dwindling food and supplies, without the legal authorization granted through warrants, which they carried out under the pretense of seizing smuggled goods from the rebellious colonies.¹⁹ The shore parties also targeted the islanders' homes at random and "forcibly entered...under various unwarrantable pretences [sic] and in many instances despoiled of

¹⁵ George James Bruere to Lord George Germain, 4 March 1777, CO 37/23/127; Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 2 April 1777, TCP; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 68-69.

A schooner is a wooden sailing ship of at least two masts, with the foremast shorter than the main mast.

¹⁶ Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 2 April 1777, TCP; "Charlestown, [S. Carolina] July 7," *Dunlap's Pennsylvania Packet or, the General Advertiser*, 29 July 1777, 2; Jarvis, "'In the Eye of All Trade,'" 707n28; CO 37/22/7-8; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 68-71.

¹⁷ Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 2 April 1777, TCP.

¹⁸ Jarvis, "'In the Eye of All Trade,'" 798-799, 804; Royal Navy captures, 1776-1779, CO 37/37/79-81.

¹⁹ CO 37/22/18-23; CO 37/22/97; CO 37/22/6-8; CO 37/22/10; CO 37/22/72-73; CO 37/22/75-77; CO 37/22/74; CO 37/22/70-71.

their property.”²⁰ Governor Bruere claimed ignorance of the raiding parties’ actions.²¹ Bermudians who Jordan and Collins suspected of trading or being in league with the American patriots faced arrest and imprisonment either at the island or on one of the Royal Navy’s notorious prison ships in New York harbor.²² Captain Collins accused William Murray, a schoolmaster and resident of Somerset Island at the West End, of smuggling, and imprisoned him onboard the *Nautilus*.²³ Held without a trial, Murray spent two months on the ship as a prisoner before Collins transferred him to the prison hulks at New York.²⁴ Murray did not return to Bermuda until October 1778 after a 14-month imprisonment.²⁵ Enslaved, black Bermudians faced impressment by British forces stationed at the island, who coerced them to man captured Bermudian vessels and equip the frigates with captured supplies.²⁶ Bermudian slaveholders’ efforts to receive compensation and recover their slaves from the British military encountered challenges caused by the slaves’ vague legal status in both Bermudian and British law, because the slaves maintained identities as both “citizen-subjects” and private property.²⁷

²⁰ CO 37/22/18-23; CO 37/22/6-8.

²¹ CO 37/22/18-23; CO 37/22/6-8.

²² William Scott, Letter: Fort Moultrie, to Major General Lincoln, Charlestown, [S.C.], 17 December 1779, 43/0504, South Carolina Historical Society Archives, Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library, College of Charleston; Letter from Micah Hammond, *The Boston Evening-Post and the General Advertiser*, 3 August 1782, 3; CO 37/22/6-8.

²³ Deposition of William Murray, 28 July 1778, CO 37/22/68-69; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 417.

²⁴ CO 37/23/68-70; Jarvis, “‘In the Eye of All Trade’,” 707n28.

²⁵ CO 37/23/68-70; Jarvis, “‘In the Eye of All Trade’,” 707n28.

²⁶ CO 37/22/18-23; CO 37/22/6-9; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 417.

²⁷ CO 37/22/18-23; CO 37/22/6-9; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 417-418.

Further efforts by Bermudian courts and the government to force Captain Jordan and his subordinates to testify reveal the British sailors' flagrant disregard for the islanders' property and civil rights. Jordan rebuffed the Bermudian government's subpoenas and objections, arguing the Royal Navy sailors were "in no way accountable" to Bermudian colonial law.²⁸ Bermudians and their local officials constituted, according to an aggravated Jordan, "a set of men devoid of the principles of Honour, who have...manifested themselves as Rebels and enemies of their King."²⁹ Captains Jordan and Collins avoided condemning many captured Bermudian ships in the island's Vice-Admiralty Court. Instead, the officers favored charging their prizes in Britain's admiralty courts at New York.³⁰ By changing venues to New York City, the commanders exploited a court that would be biased in their favor, which eased the process of producing guilty verdicts, as well as deprived the Bermudians of local maritime courts and juries of their peers. Collins also held a hostile opinion of the Bermudians, stating publically that he wanted to hang "every inhabitant of the island of Bermuda."³¹ The Royal Navy commanders' hostility towards the islanders increased the divide between the two sides. Jordan and Collins' arbitrary and unlawful destruction of the islanders' property angered the Bermuda's populace, and undermined British efforts to turn the islanders' sympathies against the American patriots.

²⁸ CO 37/22/18; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 417.

²⁹ CO 37/22/18; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 417.

³⁰ CO 37/22/7r.

³¹ Jarvis, "'In the Eye of All Trade'," 706.

The Royal Navy frigates' prolonged presence at Bermuda and their routine anti-smuggler patrols increased the threat of intermittent famines devastating the island's communities. Captains Jordan and Collins succeeded in scaring off Bermuda-bound merchant vessels by October 1776, but in doing so put the islanders on the brink of famine as food imports dwindled and the islanders devoured available supplies.³² Bermudians received a brief respite when the *Galatea* and *Nautilus* sailed to New York in late autumn for refits during the winter of 1776.³³ Bermudian and American merchants and mariners capitalized on the frigates' absence to supply Bermuda with American provisions.³⁴ By the beginning of 1777, the islanders were "happy in having a sufficient supply for many months."³⁵ The return of another British warship, the HMS *Repulse*, however, quickly cut Bermudians' jubilations short with Colonel Tucker bemoaning that "our harvest is in all probability over."³⁶ The Royal Navy's seizure of Bermudian ships and ongoing patrols also disrupted the flow of income and goods acquired through the islanders' salt trade at Turks Island, which caused Bermudian merchants to turn to acquiring additional salt cargoes at "Saltatudas and Bonira."³⁷ Colonel Tucker lamented the British commanders' targeting of Bermudian commerce, decrying that "they have

³² Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 66-67; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 416.

³³ "New-York, December 2," *The Continental Journal and Weekly Advertiser*, 19 December 1776, 3; "Charles-Town, April 21," *The Norwich Packet and the Connecticut, Massachusetts, New-Hampshire, and Rhode-Island Weekly Advertiser*, 9-16 June 1777, 3; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 417.

³⁴ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 417, 632n73; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 67.

³⁵ Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 5 January 1777, TCP.

³⁶ Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 13 January 1777, TCP.

³⁷ Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 2 April 1777, TCP.

drained the country of money and are now depriving us of bread.”³⁸ Jordan and Collins’ decision to condemn their captured ships at the Vice-Admiralty Court in New York prevented Bermudians from acquiring the cargoes of provisions and supplies at auction, which worsened the inhabitants’ prospects for food shortages and famine.

Bermudian petitioners, one of whom included Henry Tucker, Jr., excoriated the naval commanders for their “daily” abuse of the islanders’ character and personal property, which the British commanders “traded” and “wantonly seized...and destroyed.”³⁹ The military’s disregard for the Bermudians’ liberty and property, coupled with the increasing severity of food shortages, drove the islanders to solicit their colonial government, General William Howe in New York, and the British administration to reestablish tranquility on the island. During 1777 and 1778, Bermudian officials launched a petition campaign to appeal to the metropole and British military commanders for hardship relief.⁴⁰ Captains Jordan and Collins, the islanders alleged, acknowledged “no civil Authority whatever amongst us” and held “our municipal Laws in Derision and Contempt,” while intentionally construing the Acts of Parliament “only as suits best their own Purposes.”⁴¹ Bermudians characterized themselves as bearing the British military’s abuses without Bruere seemingly offering the “least Resistance” in defense of the islanders. Bermudian petitioners noted Bruere’s perceived indifference to his subjects’

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ “Minutes of His Majesty’s Council, 22 April 1777,” *BJAMH* 12 (2001), 165.

⁴⁰ “Minutes of His Majesty’s Council, 22 April 1777,” 164-168; “Minutes of His Majesty’s Council, 6 May 1777,” *BJAMH* 12 (2001), 168; “Minutes of His Majesty’s Council, 14 June 1777,” *BJAMH* 12 (2001), 168; “Minutes of His Majesty’s Council, 10 October 1777,” *BJAMH* 12 (2001), 169; “Minutes of His Majesty’s Council, 5 May 1778,” *BJAMH* 12 (2001), 171; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 418.

⁴¹ “Minutes of His Majesty’s Council, 22 April 1777,” 165.

plight, and they asserted “that the People, stimulated and goaded as they are, may be driven to some Act of fatal Desperation, when...the Privilege of Soliciting in a legislative and constitutional Way for Relief” was being hindered by the governor.⁴²

Bermudian officials and inhabitants defied Bruere by taking legal action to rein in the Royal Navy’s abuses of their rights and property. John Esten, the Chief Justice of Bermuda’s Vice-Admiralty Court, resigned in an effort to close the court and deny Jordan and Collins a local venue to condemn Bermudian vessels.⁴³ Esten’s efforts made only a marginal impact on British captures.⁴⁴ The chief justice of Bermuda’s supreme court, Jonathan Burch, issued writs of *habeas corpus* in an attempt to force Jordan and Collins to deliver the captured Bermudian mariners to the colony’s courts for trial.⁴⁵ The British commanders disregarded the Bermudian judiciary’s move against their imprisonment of the islanders, and they transferred the detained Bermudians to the New York prison ships. By transferring Bermudian prisoners to locations outside of the colony’s jurisdiction, British authorities deprived the arrested colonists of proper trials in either the local courts or the island’s Vice-Admiralty Court. Bermudians filed civil suits in their local courts against the British military, specifically Jordan and Collins, for property damage caused by the shore parties’ raids. Bermudian juries granted sizable sums in compensation for Bermudian plaintiffs with £126 7s 4d awarded to George Harvey for his stolen vessel,

⁴² Ibid., 165-166.

⁴³ Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 66-67; George James Bruere to Lord George Germain, 30 November 1776, CO 37/22/123-124; Lord George Germain to George James Bruere, 2 April 1777, CO 37/22/125-126.

⁴⁴ Jarvis, “‘In the Eye of All Trade’,” 704.

⁴⁵ CO 37/22/20-23; CO 37/22/6-9; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 417.

and £368 4s 10d for Thomas Tucker's ship and slaves.⁴⁶ Despite juries ruling in the injured Bermudians' favor, collecting restitution from the British commanders proved impossible.

British commanders' hostile measures to suppress the illicit Bermudian-American trade forced the inhabitants to engage in their own aggressive tactics to defend their way of life. On February 20th, 1777, following the navy's pursuit of Robert Davenport's sloop, laden heavily with foodstuffs and supplies for the colony, an angry Bermudian mob attacked a party of marines attempting to seize the stranded ship.⁴⁷ The mob pressured the outnumbered British marines to retreat from the ship.⁴⁸ The Bermudians, however, failed to prevent the soldiers from returning the next day and burning Davenport's ship to the waterline.⁴⁹ Bermuda's three Vice-Admiralty Court justices resigned their positions to protest the Royal Navy's actions against the inhabitants and their property.⁵⁰ The justices' protest halted the court's operations; but instead of putting an end to Britain's hostile activities at the island, the Royal Navy captains and pro-British privateers merely sent their captured prizes to New York's Vice-Admiralty Court.⁵¹

In the Bahamas, the colonial government took steps to defend the inhabitants from increased scrutiny by the British government and military following Hopkins' raid

⁴⁶ CO 37/22/20r; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 418; Jarvis, "In the Eye of All Trade," 706-707, 707n28.

⁴⁷ CO 37/22/7-8; Deposition of Thomas Jones, Composite Volumes, 15:75-78, Bermuda Archives.

⁴⁸ CO 37/22/7-8; Deposition of Thomas Jones, Composite Volumes, 15:75-78, Bermuda Archives.

⁴⁹ CO 37/22/7-8; Deposition of Thomas Jones, Composite Volumes, 15:75-78, Bermuda Archives.

⁵⁰ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 417; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 66-67.

⁵¹ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 417; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 66-67.

and Browne's abduction. Bahamian officials, in the months following the American attack, drafted their own accounts of events that laid out an explicit defense of both the council and the inhabitants' actions in their defense of Nassau and the forts' gunpowder stores.⁵² Chief Justice Thomas Atwood's narrative of the Bahamians' defensive preparations and the American attack asserted that, despite the absence of British Regulars, the inhabitants and council believed themselves "secure with [their] own internal strength and Defence" with a continuous militia presence at the forts.⁵³ Assembly president John Brown's narrative of the Continental Navy's attack on New Providence sought to shift imperial administrators' attention from the inhabitants and local officials. Brown took pains to demonstrate to British administrators at Whitehall that local Bahamian officials pursued a course of action to defend the colony by "dispatching an Express to...[the] Admiral in Jamaica" following the attack.⁵⁴ Browne requested the admiral send "what assistance he could for the defences & protection" of the islands, and also dispatched additional accounts to "His Majesty's Ministers of this Rebellious Transaction, and of the present defenceless condition of these islands."⁵⁵ President Brown also assumed control of the Bahamas as the acting governor, gaining control of the colony's great seal and "the commission for the Trial of Piracies."⁵⁶ Bahamians' control of the governorship removed the metropole's ability to attempt to control the colony's

⁵² John Brown to Lord George Germain, 2 May 1776, CO 23/23/61-65; CO 23/23/56-58.

⁵³ CO 23/23/56r.

⁵⁴ CO 23/23/63.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ CO 23/23/64.

affairs and its obedience to imperial laws. Bahamian officials used their unchecked authority and lack of oversight to project an image of imperial allegiance, colonial stability, and adherence to Britain's wartime commercial policies to the British administration in London.

Bahamian officials used their accounts of the American invasion to shape British authorities' perspectives of Governor Montfort Browne and the inhabitants. Assembly President John Brown's account sought to establish the inhabitants' innocence and frame Governor Browne's ineffective leadership of New Providence's defense. By detailing the actions taken by Browne, the council and assembly, and the inhabitants early on without placing the blame for the islands' capture squarely on one party, Brown tried to discourage the prospect of British administrative and military oversight of the assembly, council, and colonists.⁵⁷ Chief Justice Atwood, on the other hand, asserted that the American force descended upon the island due to "the Treachery of some few Individuals" who had "been apprized [sic] of our unguarded Situation, and invited here...by the Enemys [sic] of Government."⁵⁸ Atwood, writing at the behest of Governor Browne, made no indication that Patriot-sympathizers maintained any serious strength.⁵⁹ The Chief Justice did not indicate that an internal threat existed, and that British reinforcements being dispatched to the Bahamas was unnecessary.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ CO 23/23/61-64.

⁵⁸ CO 23/23/57r.

⁵⁹ CO 23/23/56-57.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

By appealing to the Crown's benevolence, the Bahamian government continued to try to exploit their hardscrabble situation for increased financial support, which the islanders could use to improve the colonial capital's defenses. While Brown and Atwood acted to sway British authorities' views of the Bahamians with their accounts, the council and assembly enacted legislation to enforce the metropole's image of a loyal Bahamas. The assembly made token efforts to rehabilitate New Providence's decaying fortifications, while simultaneously curbing British expectations for improvement. Following the American fleet's departure, President Brown convened the assembly and encouraged them to appoint commissioners who would oversee the forts' renovations to put them into a defensible state.⁶¹ Yet, the assembly did not approve any new funds to cover the prospective costs of repairing and resupplying the forts. The Bahamas' dearth of incoming trade did not generate the commercial tax revenue necessary to provide sufficient funds to cover the government's basic expenditures the additional money necessary for the forts' repairs.⁶² The Bahamian government's move to strengthen the island's defensive infrastructure imply that increased taxes and duties would worsen the islanders' already desperate situation, since the island's trade was "almost entirely ruined" to the point that "His Majesty's Servants and Subjects [relied] on his known Goodness" for their support and protection in their current situation.⁶³ The Bahamian government's request skirted either eliciting direct oversight by the British military or

⁶¹ CO 23/23/63v; CO 23/23/66Av.

⁶² CO 23/23/63v; CO 23/23/66Av.

⁶³ CO 23/23/64r.

expressly calling for any stationed force of British Regulars or detachment of Royal Navy warships.

Patriot sympathizers emigrated to the rebellious mainland to join the American cause during Governor Browne's absence. Between 1776 and 1780, Bahamians defected directly to the American patriots' side. British merchant and mariner Leonard Bowles, who settled in the Bahamas following the Seven Years' War in 1764, left his home in the Bahamas to join the Patriots in Pennsylvania. Bowles petitioned the Continental Congress for a passport permitting safe travel to the mainland after he received a recommendation from the "supreme executive council of the State of Pennsylvania...where he propose[d] to reside."⁶⁴ Bowles' decision to immigrate to Pennsylvania in all likelihood stemmed from an effort to preserve his merchant connections with the rebellious mainland, particularly after Patriot privateers captured one of his ships, the sloop *Recovery*, in September 1779.⁶⁵ The Continental Congress subsequently ordered a passport drafted and delivered to Bowles for his safe conduct from the Bahamas to Patriot-held Pennsylvania.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Continental Congress, "Tuesday, September 7, 1779" in JCC, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 15, *September 2, 1779 – December 31, 1779* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909), 1035; Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, "In Council. Philadelphia, September 5th, 1779, Monday.," *Minutes of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, from its Organization to the Termination of the Revolution*, vol. 12, *May 21, 1779 – July 12, 1781* (Harrisburg, PA: Theodore Fenn, 1853), 92-93.

⁶⁵ "To all whom it may concern," *The New-Jersey Gazette*, 22 September 1779, 4. Patriot privateer John Field captured the *Recovery* late in the summer of 1779. The capture appears to have occurred prior to September 4th, 1779, because a newspaper advertisement from Joseph Bloomfield mentioning Bowles' sloop began circulating on September 8th for a duration of three weeks. A newspaper announcement in *The New-Jersey Gazette* gave notice that New Jersey's Court of Admiralty would put the *Recovery* up for public auction on Thursday, September 30th. See: "To all whom it may concern," *The New-Jersey Gazette*, 8 September 1779, 3; "To all whom it may concern," *The New-Jersey Gazette*, 22 September 1779, 4.

Precisely because the inhabitants had such strong affinities for and commercial relations with the rebellious thirteen colonies, Bahamian officials worked hard to cultivate a public image of loyalty to shield them from the metropole's suspicions. The assembly endeavored to create a proactive defense through the passage of several laws bolstering the local militia, repairing the forts, and barring exports of provisions, while simultaneously obfuscating the colonists' ongoing trade with the rebellious Americans.⁶⁷ Bahamian and American merchants traded fruits, turtles, hardwoods, and salt for American bread, grain, and rice.⁶⁸ James Gould, a Rhode Island-born merchant and former speaker of the Bahamian assembly, reportedly absconded to the rebellious mainland in 1778 with approximately eighty members of New Providence's militia.⁶⁹ Gould and his men's departure left the island guarded by a skeleton force of "licentious, poor, haughty and insolent" militiamen.⁷⁰ In all likelihood, Gould's actions corresponded with maintaining a wartime trade with the Patriots on the mainland as he returned to the Bahamas by 1784.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Continental Congress, "Tuesday, September 7, 1779" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 15, *September 2, 1779 – December 31, 1779*, 1035.

⁶⁷ Jackson's Report on 8 Acts passed in December 1775 and March 1776, 8 January 1777, CO 23/9/69; Jackson's Report on 5 Acts passed in October and November 1776, 4 August 1777, CO 23/9/71; John Brown to Lord George Germain, 16 May 1776, CO 23/23/67; Duplicate of List of Acts passed in the last two sessions, 16 May 1776, CO 23/23/69.

⁶⁸ "Watertown, October 2," *The Connecticut Gazette; and the Universal Intelligencer*, 6 October 1775, 3; "Worcester, October 6," *The Connecticut Journal*, 11 October 1775, 2; "By Capt. Bigelow, From South Carolina, Are Favored with Public Papers to the 28th of April," *The Independent Chronicle and the Universal Advertiser*, 20 May 1779, 1; "Providence, May 15," *The New-Jersey Gazette*, 2 June 1779, 2; "New-London, June 10," *The Independent Chronicle and the Universal Advertiser*, 17 June 1779, 2. A later example of Bahamian wartime exports can be found in: "New-York (City) January 1," *Thomas's The Massachusetts Spy: Or, Worcester Gazette*, 17 July 1783, 1.

⁶⁹ Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 157.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 157.

Both public and private Bermudians and Bahamians tried to combat the threat posed by increased British military and administrative oversight. British naval frigates hunted American patriot and Bermudian merchant vessels traveling between Bermuda and the mainland, while soldiers and sailors targeted perceived Patriot-sympathizers' homes, warehouses, slaves, and ships to seize necessary goods, supplies, and laborers. Bahamians carried on clandestine smuggling operations to carry provisions and goods from rebel-held ports to the islands, while Bahamian officials obstructed Governor Montfort Browne's efforts to suppress the trade and undermined his authority in their narratives of the Continental Navy's invasion in March 1776. Despite Bermudians and Bahamians' efforts to hold off British intrusions into their affairs, however, the Revolution's stresses on the islands' commerce and supply lines for food shifted the islanders towards embracing British efforts to suppress the mainland rebellion. This shift came to a head in 1779 as the governors of the Bahamas and Bermuda, as well as Royal Navy forces, clashed with the island colonists over their commerce with the American patriots, and British officials' fears of the islanders holding Patriot-sympathies that stemmed from the American raids in 1775 and 1776.

Governors Bruere and Browne Exerted Control over the Islands

By 1779, the British officials, Royal Navy, and Loyalist privateers grappled with the Patriot-sympathizing inhabitants for control of Bermuda and the Bahamas. Following Congress's declaration of independence, British reinforcement of Bermuda attempted to reduce the American trade by targeting Bermudian merchant vessels. British efforts to

⁷¹ "Newport, May 21," *The Newport Mercury*, 22 May 1784, 3.

reestablish order in the Bahamas, by contrast, centered on Montfort Browne's restoration as the colony's governor, and his efforts to curtail the Bahamians' illicit trade. The islanders' contraband trade supported the American patriots by moving arms and supplies from the French and Dutch Caribbean to the American patriots on the mainland, as well as shipping American food and supplies back to the islands. While British authorities endeavored to compel the islanders to support Britain, intermittent famines, epidemics, and a reliance on privateering to sustain the islands' societies caused the islanders to shift their support from the American patriots to Britain. Bermudian and Bahamian privateers turned their guns against Patriot vessels, which jeopardized the islanders' trade connections with the mainland that they retained through their support for the Patriots' cause. While British loyalism attempted to assert its dominance, the inhabitants pushed back to preserve their shipping industry and commercial lifelines to the mainland.

At Bermuda, Bruere's efforts to strengthen the British military's presence brought more British ships and troops to the island, as well as American prisoners of war. Bruere's challenging of the Bermudian colonists brought him into conflict with the colony's political elites, his extended family, and his meticulously constructed pre-Revolution alliances within Bermuda's assembly. Montfort Browne's return to New Providence in July 1778 initiated a deep political paralysis driven by suspicion and a desire for retribution against the islanders who he blamed for Hopkins' raid in 1776. Browne attempted to purge the colonial government of Patriot-sympathizers and solidify the islanders' loyalty to the British government. Ejecting suspected Patriot-sympathizing Bahamians from the colonial government brought Browne into direct conflict with local

officials who attempted to remove him from power to protect themselves and their fellow inhabitants.

Following the Bermudian gunpowder theft and British warships' arrival at Bermuda, Bruere sought to harmonize Bermudian civil government with the British military's presence at the island. The *Nautilus* and *Galatea* provided Bruere with confidence that British military and administrative authorities could bring the Patriot-sympathizing inhabitants into line, while deterring the islanders from joining their mainland brethren in an open, armed rebellion against British rule. While Bruere held the Bermudians in contempt for their contraband trading and pro-Patriot sympathies, the former army officer often found himself defending the islanders against the behavior of a new generation of British army and naval officers who disregarded colonial authority and English civil law abroad.⁷² Captains Collins and Jordan, as well as Major William Sutherland who commanded the garrisoned British troops, considered themselves above Bermudian civil law, and they frequently defied the island government's efforts to protect the colonists' civil liberties.⁷³ Attempting to defend both the islanders and his own civil authority, Bruere attempted to use his knowledge and previous military experience to gain an advantage over the naval and army officers.⁷⁴ Bruere petitioned Lord George Germain to renew his military rank as a promoted "brevet" colonel.⁷⁵ Although Lord

⁷² Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 421.

⁷³ George James Bruere to Lord George Germain, 7 November 1778, CO 37/37/33-34; George James Bruere to Lord George Germain, 20 March 1779, CO 37/37/44; George James Bruere to Lord George Germain, 1 June 1779, CO 37/37/50; "George James Bruere to Sutherland, 16 January 1779" in "Minutes of the Bermuda Council, 16 January 1779," *BJAMH* 12 (2001), 173-174.

⁷⁴ CO 37/37/44; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 421, 633n81.

Germain assured Bruere that his position as a governor gave him the rank equivalent of a brigadier general, Germain did approve Bruere for a position as a lieutenant colonel, which went into effect on January 19th, 1780 when Bruere received notification from London.⁷⁶ While Bruere gained a degree of authority over British forces at Bermuda, it was well over a year too late to temper the consequences of the British commanders' activities.

Famine and epidemic in 1778 and 1779 required Bruere to walk carefully along the line between imperial loyalty and pragmatic efforts to secure Bermuda's welfare. Bermudian privateering activities against American patriot and allied French ships in the western Atlantic increased in the winter of 1778 and 1779, which brought in 91 ships and their crews to be detained at the island.⁷⁷ The American and French prisoner population strained available Bermudian provisions, and imported foodstuffs from the rebellious American mainland became scarce. Patriot merchants and mariners' hesitance to journey to the island compounded food scarcity issues because they feared the Royal Navy and privateer blockade would ensnare them too. Preventing famine and epidemics to promote the general welfare, in practice, meant seeking aid from the American rebels. Bruere attempted to alleviate food scarcity by authorizing nine Bermudian vessels, one from each of Bermuda's parishes, to cross the Atlantic's revolutionary divide to purchase

⁷⁵ CO 37/37/44; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 421, 633n81. A "brevet" rank bestowed a higher rank in the British Army in title only, typically for previous meritorious service, and did not include increased authority or pay as part of the commission.

⁷⁶ Lord George Germain to George James Bruere, 5 May 1779, CO 37/37/42-43; Lord George Germain to George James Bruere, 19 January 1780, CO 37/37/61-62.

⁷⁷ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 421.

provisions from Patriot-held ports.⁷⁸ The Royal Navy commanders, however, proved indifferent to the islanders' plight and unwilling to turn a blind eye to Bermudian blockade runners at Bruere's requests. Consequently, Jordan and Collins seized and auctioned the ships of loyal Bermudian merchants licensed by Bruere.⁷⁹

Bermuda's situation as a bastion of Patriot support that the British military and administration desired to bring firmly into the Loyalist camp taxed Governor Bruere's health and resolve. For five years, Governor Bruere's "constant exertions [that] he was obliged to [make]" to hold the colony within the loyal British Empire and ensure its survival took their toll.⁸⁰ The chronic stress caused by attempting to manage close familial relationships with the predominately Patriot-supporting Tuckers, the colony's obstructionist legislature and citizenry, repeatedly reassuring Whitehall that Bermuda remained loyal to the Crown, and addressing island-wide outbreaks of illness and famine in 1779, resulted in Bruere falling ill in July 1780 and dying on September 10th, 1780.⁸¹ Bruere's military funeral served as an act of British military might and pageantry in the face of ongoing Bermudian subversive actions, with 350 soldiers lining the torchlight

⁷⁸ George James Bruere to Lord George Germain, 1 February 1780, CO 37/37/102; George James Bruere to Lord George Germain, 26 February 1780, CO 37/37/75; CO 37/22/7-8.

⁷⁹ George James Bruere to Board of Trade, 25 March 1780, CO 37/22/10; Depositions of William Hall, Jr., Thomas Forbes, and Richard Hinson, 6 May 1780, CO 37/22/85-92; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 421, 633-634n82.

⁸⁰ George Bruere, Jr. to Lord Dartmouth, 7 August 1776, CO 37/36/104-106; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 429.

⁸¹ *Royal Gazette*, 21 October 1780, 3.

funeral procession through St. George's, and the thunderous sounds of multiple cannon and musket salutes carrying across the island.⁸²

Lord George Germain's appointment of Governor Bruere's hot-tempered, eldest son, George Jr., as a temporary replacement installed a staunch defender of British loyalism bent on subduing the native Bermudians' pro-American patriot support and commerce. George Jr. served as a British officer at the Battle of Bunker Hill, where he was wounded in action, and in skirmishes with Patriot forces at Beaufort, South Carolina in 1779. For much of the war, George Jr. received letters from his father detailing the Bermudians' treacherous gunpowder theft, numerous subversive and obstructionist actions against himself and the British military, smuggling, and brazen support for the American rebels.⁸³ Consequently, George Jr. held a deep-seated hatred for both the American patriots and Bermudians colored by his own experiences fighting on the mainland, and his father's experiences fighting to hold the line against the pro-Patriot islanders. George Jr.'s hatred and desire to suppress the Bermudian supporters of the American rebels, particularly their American commerce, hurled him into action upon his arrival at Bermuda in October 1780.

Governor George Bruere, Jr. initiated a series of appointments at the outset of his nascent administration to ensure the projection of a strong Loyalist control and influence governing the island. The governor took a combative stance in his interactions with the Patriot-sympathizers and allies who dominated the Bermudian assembly by castigating

⁸² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸³ George Bruere, Jr. to Lord Dartmouth, 7 August 1776, CO 37/36/104-106; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 429.

them for their ongoing commercial relationship with the rebellious mainland, their refusal to approve funds to repair the island's forts and support the garrisoned British troops, and their efforts to undermine Bermudian loyalists and their privateering efforts.⁸⁴ George Jr.'s use of shame and threats of reprisals pressured enough Bermudian assemblymen to defect from the pro-Patriot block, and weakened Bermudian opposition within the legislature.⁸⁵ Bermudian councilors and legislators attempted to obstruct George Jr. The governor, however, circumvented their efforts by replacing a majority of the council with army officers and newly arrived Loyalist émigrés, which consequently secured a majority supportive of Bruere's agenda in the legislature's upper chamber.⁸⁶ New administrative appointments supported by the metropole included: Daniel Leonard, a Loyalist lawyer who battled John Adams and other revolutionaries in American newspapers under the pseudonym of "Massachusettensis" in 1774 and 1775, as Bermuda's attorney general; Loyalist lawyer William Brimpage of North Carolina as chief justice and Vice-Admiralty Court judge; and, Robert Traill of New Hampshire as a customs collector and Vice-Admiralty Court judge.⁸⁷ The Loyalist vice-admiralty justices now held a majority

⁸⁴ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 14 March 1781; "Address of the General Assembly of Bermuda, Sept. 29, 1781," *Royal Georgia Gazette*, 8 November 1781, 4; Henry Tucker, Sr., Articles of Complaint, 3 May 1781, CO 37/38/137-141; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 429-430; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 97, 99-105, 107.

⁸⁵ Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 100-101.

⁸⁶ George Bruere, Jr. to Lord George Germain, 12 December 1780, CO 37/38/19-22; George Bruere, Jr. to Lord George Germain, 26 March 1781, CO 37/38/42-46.

⁸⁷ Lord George Germain to George Bruere, Jr., 7 February 1781, CO 37/38/23-24; *Novanglus and Massachusettensis; or, Political Essays, Published in the Years 1774 and 1775, on the Principal Points of Controversy, between Great Britain and Her Colonies* (Boston: Hews and Goss, 1819); Sydney W. Jackman, "Daniel Leonard, 1740-1829," *Bermuda Historical Quarterly* 13 (1956): 136-145; "Daniel Leonard" in Clifford K. Shipton, *Sibley's Harvard Graduates, Volume 14: The Classes of 1756-1760*

on the court, which stifled pro-Patriot opposition from the American-sympathizing lawyer George Bascome, and opened the court to quickly work through the American prizes captured by Loyalist privateers.⁸⁸ Finally, George Jr. radically reshaped the sympathies of the colony's militia commanders through voiding the commissions of all local militia officers, and filling the officer ranks and fort commander positions with Loyalists and British military officers.⁸⁹

Governor George Bruere Jr.'s loyalist reforms of Bermuda's colonial government, court system, and militia pulled the island colony into the loyal British Empire. Within a few months, George Jr. accomplished objectives that his father proved incapable of achieving during the Revolution.⁹⁰ Unlike his father, the young, fiery Bruere harbored a

(Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1968), 640-648; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 429; Wilkinson, *Bermuda in the Old Empire*, 441; CO 37/38/19-22; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 100-102.

⁸⁸ Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 102-105; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 429.

⁸⁹ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 429.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 428-430, 443; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 23-37, 99-128; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 14 March 1781; "Address of the General Assembly of Bermuda, Sept. 29, 1781," *Royal Georgia Gazette*, 8 November 1781, 4; CO 37/38/137-141; CO 37/38/19-22; CO 37/38/42-46.

The American Revolution's effects on Bermuda radically changed the political and ideological dynamics that George James Bruere understood, which he used to govern the colony effectively between 1764 and 1775. Bruere carefully built personal and professional relationships with the colony's established politicians (e.g. his daughter Francis married Henry Tucker, Jr.), merchant families, and gentry, which he used to leverage influence in the assembly. Yet, during the American Revolution, Bruere's allies in the assembly and council turned against and isolated him. This consequently stunted his efforts to end the Bermudians' contraband trade with the American patriots and ensure the island remained a part of the loyal British Empire. The Royal Navy's armed sloops and small frigates were necessary for hunting smugglers, and they provided an armed presence to deter the islanders from a push to declare independence and formally join the rebellious mainland colonies. The navy and privateers negatively impacted the influx of foodstuffs to the island, causing famines to sweep the colony sporadically, which Bruere wanted to avoid and permitted some Bermudian-American patriot commerce to ensure the islanders' survival.

George, Jr. was not willing to make compromises regarding loyalty to Britain. Hardened by his battles with Patriot forces on the mainland, where American bullets wounded him twice, George, Jr. lacked the interpersonal and familial connections, adherence to Whig ideology and acknowledgement that the Bermudians maintained their own civil liberties. George Jr. also lacked an understanding of the colony's precarious social and commercial situation that his father developed over his sixteen-year tenure as governor. George, Jr.'s hatred for the Bermudians and rebellious Americans, coupled with his service as a British Army officer during the Revolution, led him to place greater trust in British military officers and

deep-seated hatred for the American patriots and Bermudians, and he was not willing to compromise on obedience to Britain or rooting out subversive members within Bermudian society.⁹¹ For the obdurate George Jr., loyalty and active allegiance superseded the islanders' civil liberties as British subjects in an imperial civil war. George Jr. succeeded in striking a severe blow to American support within the Bermuda government, and reduced the contention between the British military forces occupying the island and the civil government.⁹² The reconfiguration of the colonial government freed up Loyalist and British privateers to prey on the Bermuda-American trade, using the island as a point of return to patrol and condemn captured ships. This change made Bermudian and American patriot smugglers operating off Bermuda's West End more dangerous.⁹³ While the Brueres' efforts to reestablish Loyalist supremacy in Bermuda's colonial government gained traction, Governor Montfort Browne's exertions to reclaim the Bahamas as a loyal province proved to be more challenging as the Bahamians engaged in a staunch defense.

Loyalist immigrants to Bermuda than the islanders themselves. Rather than constructing a network of local relationship, like his father did, George, Jr. imported and installed his own network of confidants to operate much of the colony's government to ensure the forces of British loyalism prevailed. His use of shame and threats cowed the pro-American patriot assembly members into taking a proactive position on funding, repairing, arming, and supporting British forces garrisoned at Bermuda. George, Jr.'s tactics were ones his father probably could have neither used effectively, because of the personal and familial consequences doing so would have caused for himself and his daughter, nor done so convincingly from the Bermudians' perspective as it would have further isolated him politically within the colony. It would have also cast himself, George James Bruere, as a representative example of tyrannical British authority in British America, and potentially driven Bermuda into open revolt against Britain.

See: Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 428-431, 443; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 23-37, 99-128; Hamilton, *The Making and Unmaking of a Revolutionary Family*, 17-18, 31

⁹¹ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 428.

⁹² CO 37/38/20.

⁹³ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 430.

Montfort Browne's capture and imprisonment by Hopkins' forces in 1776 hardened him against the American patriots and their Bahamian sympathizers. Continental forces held Browne as a prisoner of war in Connecticut for approximately six months before they exchanged him and Major Cortland Skinner for Major-General William Alexander, the rebel pretender Lord Stirling.⁹⁴ On October 25th, 1776, Browne received a commission as a colonel, and a warrant from General Howe to raise a regiment of volunteers.⁹⁵ Yet, Browne did not remain content with his position, and aspired to play a greater role in his service to the Crown.⁹⁶ Browne successfully raised ten companies of American loyalist volunteers, which comprised the Prince of Wales' American Regiment, and engaged Continental forces in several battles in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and northern New Jersey during 1777.⁹⁷ After being wounded in Danbury, Connecticut on April 27-28th, 1777, Browne received a promotion to brigadier general in the army on

⁹⁴ Walter T. Dornfest, *Military Loyalists of the American Revolution: Officers and Regiments, 1775-1783* (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland, 2010), 49; Mark M. Boatner, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* (New York: David McKay, 1974), 1012.

⁹⁵ Dornfest, *Military Loyalists of the American Revolution*, 49, 392.

⁹⁶ Montfort Browne to Lord George Germain, 1 April 1777, PRO 30/55/5/1; Montfort Browne to Maurice Morgann, 6 April 1783, PRO 30/55/66/7334.

⁹⁷ Boatner, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, 118, 1012; Dornfest, *Military Loyalists of the American Revolution*, 49, 392; W. O. Raymond, "Loyalists in Arms, 1775-1783: A Short History of the British American Regiments, with the Roll of Officers," *Collections of the New Brunswick Historical Society* 2, no. 5 (1904), 193-195.

The Prince of Wales' American Regiment operated a rolling enlistment because it had to replace the "non-effectives" on a continuous basis. Before Browne's departure for the Bahamas, the Prince of Wales' American Regiment consisted of 377 effective rank and file on September 15th, 1778. Yet, by November 15th, 1779, the regiment's muster rolls indicate that 613 men enlisted in the corps, and over its two-year existence suffered casualty rates of 74 killed, 19 made "prisoners with the rebels," 25 discharged, 30 men transferred to other regiments, and 113 men who deserted. This produced a total number of "non-effectives" in the ranks to 261 men, and 353 effective soldiers as of the December 1st, 1779 muster in New York. See: Dornfest, *Military Loyalists of the American Revolution*, 392; Raymond, "Loyalists in Arms," 193-195.

May 30th, 1777.⁹⁸ While the Prince of Wales' American Regiment continued to remain entrenched in Rhode Island and Connecticut in the autumn and winter of 1778, Browne traveled to New York in preparation to sail for New Providence with two companies of soldiers to fortify the island.⁹⁹ Browne's return to New Providence in November 1778 precipitated an ideological storm, which attempted to blow away Patriot-sympathizers and the islanders who did not demonstrate their loyalty to Britain.

On January 4th, 1779, Governor Browne unleashed over two years of pent-up frustration and rage against the Bahamian legislature and inhabitants. The "Conduct and Behavior" of the islanders, Browne fumed, "Countenance[d] and Incurage[d] [sic]" the Continental forces to invade the island, and "manifest[ed] their designs in favor of the Rebels."¹⁰⁰ The Bahamians displayed an "uncommon degree of Insolence" towards the British colonial authorities.¹⁰¹ The islanders' disrespectful disposition, while not uncommon for eighteenth-century Bahamians, led Browne to pursue more stringent measures of securing the islanders' obedience to both himself and the British

⁹⁸ Dornfest, *Military Loyalists of the American Revolution*, 49; "List of the officers belonging to His Majesty's British American forces in North America under the command of his Excellency Sir Guy Carleton, K.B. etc. 25 November 1783," 25 November 1783, CO 5/111/231; General Orders of 31 May 1777, William Howe Orderly Book, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan.

⁹⁹ Montfort Browne to Sir Henry Clinton, 18 November 1778, Series 1: Chronological Materials, Volume 46, Folder 15, Henry Clinton Papers, William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan. Browne's decision to leave his command and return to New Providence was a difficult and forced one. During his two-year campaign, the British government increasingly pressured Browne to resign one of his two appointments: his governorship, and his army command. On two occasions in the summer of 1779, Adjutant General Lord Francis Rawdon, the Marquess of Hastings, demanded an answer from Browne, who subsequently managed to avoid providing one on both occasions. See: Lord Rawdon to Montfort Browne, 28 June 1779, *Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, comp. John P. Butler (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1978), M247, r65, i57, v1, 515; Lord Rawdon to Montfort Browne, 4 August 1779, *Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, comp. John P. Butler, M247, r65, i57, v1, 519-521.

¹⁰⁰ CO 23/9/93.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

government.¹⁰² The “Sundry Inhabitants,” Browne contended, disregarded “their Allegiance they Owe to their Lawful Sovereign, and instigated by a View of Gain have contrary to His Majesty’s Royal Proclamation.”¹⁰³ The Bahamians actively engaged in making, corresponding, trading and bartering with the American patriots in rebellion, which Browne needed to bring to heel.¹⁰⁴

During Browne’s captivity in Connecticut and the military campaign in Rhode Island, his suspicions about the Bahamian colonists’ involvement in the Continental Navy’s raid hardened to certainty. For Browne, the Bahamians’ commerce with the American rebels intertwined with the Continental Navy’s invasion of New Providence. The rebellious American military “were invited here,” Browne contended in his address to the Bahamian assembly, “for the Purpose on which they came” to steal the island’s gunpowder supplies.¹⁰⁵ Correctly surmising that an exchange of goods lay behind the Bahamian-American patriot collusion, Browne concluded that the arrival of “a Quantity of Flower [sic]” delivered to New Providence by the Continental Congress served “that particular service” of encouraging Bahamian involvement in the raid.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Ibid. For examples and discussion of Bahamians’ disregard for imperial and colonial authorities during the eighteenth century, see: Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 104-114, 115-119, 126, 130, 133-134, 137-138, 139-142, 144-147, 159-162, 163-164; Alan L. Karras, “‘Custom Has the Force of Law’: Local Officials and Contraband in the Bahamas and the Floridas, 1748-1779,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 80, no. 3 (Winter, 2002), 281-311; Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 81-83, 84-99, 102-109, 116-119, 125-126, 132-135, 145-148, 150-151, 156-157; Williams, “The Politics of Salt,” 47-88; Hanna, *Pirate Nests*, 150-151, 153, 192-193, 244, 364, 367, 368.

¹⁰³ CO 23/9/93.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ CO 23/24/125; Burns, *History of the British West Indies*, 519.

¹⁰⁶ CO 23/24/125.

British governors leveraged political pressure and accusations of disloyalty to the British Crown as a means of both minimizing internal colonial dissent and attempting to unify their colonies against external military threats. Browne's accusations mirrored similar charges levied by British Caribbean royal governors against their colonists, specifically by Governors William Matthew Burt of the Leeward Islands and Valentine Morris of St. Vincent.¹⁰⁷ Burt held a deep suspicion of colonial assemblies, because they constituted bodies "where arises opposition to Government," and advocated for the colonial administration's reform in order to strengthen the governor's authority.¹⁰⁸ The Leeward Islands' officials and inhabitants, however, uncovered and publically divulged Burt's reforms and efforts to punish the colony's legislature, which culminated in the legislature's refusal to engage in any serious business in the months prior to Burt's death on January 27th, 1781.¹⁰⁹ Morris took a different approach to advancing his colonial authority and policies at St. Vincent. Morris attempted to alter the size and configuration of the legislature by packing it with more elected members in order to overwhelm any opposition.¹¹⁰ The assembly packing scheme "infatuated [Morris] almost to the point of

¹⁰⁷ O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 186.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*; William Matthew Burt to the Board of Trade, 14 January 1778, CO 152/34/18; William Matthew Burt to the Board of Trade, 14 January 1778, CO 152/34/14.

¹⁰⁹ O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 187; William Matthew Burt to the Board of Trade, 28 July 1780, CO 152/34/54; William Matthew Burt to the President of the Council of St. Kitts, 11 September 1780, CO 152/34/77; William Matthew Burt to the Board of Trade, 11 October 1780, CO 152/34/75; Anthony Johnson to the Board of Trade, 13 May 1781, CO 152/35/5; Journal of the Assembly of St. Kitts, 23 May 1780, CO 241/11; Minutes of the Council of St. Kitts, 26 October 1780, CO 241/12; Frederick G. Spurdle, *Early West Indian Government: Showing the Progress of Government in Barbados, Jamaica, and the Leeward Islands, 1600-1783* (Palmerston North, New Zealand: Frederick G. Spurdle, 1963), 188-189.

¹¹⁰ O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 186-187; Selwyn H. H. Carrington, "Eighteenth-Century Political Conflict in the British Empire: A Case Study of St. Vincent, 1775-1779," *Journal of Caribbean History* 20, no. 2 (1985-1986), 151, 153.

fanaticism.”¹¹¹ The prospect of the governor arbitrarily altering the size and composition of the assembly, however, disregarded the English tradition of permitting legislative assemblies to determine their electoral rules and qualifications.¹¹² More combative and militarily-ambitious governors, such as John Dalling of Jamaica and James Cunningham of Barbados, often verbally clashed with their colonies’ respective legislatures and administrative officials over their cuts of taxes, fees, and privateering prize money during the Revolution.¹¹³

The British colonial and military administration agreed with Browne’s assessment of the Bahamas’ situation and urged him to step up pressure to bring the islands firmly into Britain’s imperial orbit. In a letter written to Browne in January 1777, Lord George Germain concluded that there “can be little doubt, from the whole behavior...of the Inhabitants of the Bahamas, that the Rebels were invited to undertake the Enterprise they formed” against the colony.¹¹⁴ Germain concluded that President John Brown and the Bahamian council’s “refusal...to deliver the Ordinance and Stores to General Gage’s order” was undoubtedly “in consequence of a Plan they had concerted with the Rebels for putting [the gunpowder] into their hands.”¹¹⁵ Upon returning to New Providence, Browne’s “chief object of [his] attention” was to “discover the principal contrivers or

¹¹¹ O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 186-187; Carrington, “Eighteenth-Century Political Conflict in the British Empire: A Case Study of St. Vincent, 1775-1779,” 151, 153.

¹¹² O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 187.

¹¹³ O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 186-187; James Cunningham to Lord George Germain, 14 September 1780, CO 28/58/307.

¹¹⁴ CO 23/23/116.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

abettors of this traitorous proceeding.”¹¹⁶ Germain requested that Browne transmit to him the names of the Bahamian councilmembers and other officers that he “suspected were privy to it,” so he could lay them before King George III “as altogether unworthy of holding any Office under His Government.”¹¹⁷ Browne and Germain’s efforts to purge the Bahamian government would serve to consolidate and bolster British loyalism within the colony’s assembly and judiciary.

While Germain and Browne initiated plans to expunge the Patriots’ influence from the Bahamian government, they believed the presence of British forces would also be necessary to solidify Browne’s efforts to bring the archipelago into line with the metropole’s expectations of colonial loyalty. Germain reassured Browne that although “the time for showing a proper resentment for such treachery” was still in the future, once Britain’s military put down the rebellion a small military force would be sent “to those Islands for your security and the re-establishment of Legal Authority there.”¹¹⁸ With British soldiers’ increased presence at New Providence, Browne could take measures to curtail the illicit Bahamian-American trade, solidify his political and legal authority, and project the British government’s strength against the American patriots’ influence on the islands.

Dispatching a contingent of British troops to fortify the Bahamas mirrored the Royal Navy’s dispatching of the *Nautilus* and *Galatea* to Bermuda. British soldiers’ presence would strengthen the metropole’s efforts to control activities seen as detrimental

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ CO 23/23/116-117.

¹¹⁸ CO 23/23/116.

to the empire's commercial and political stability, while lending support to the governor and customs officials for pursuing and prosecuting smugglers operating in the Bahamas. A detachment of Regulars would display Britain's power over an island population historically averse to complying with the metropole's authority and desire for order. While British forces' presence in the Bahamas would hamper the established Bahamian contraband trade, it also brought greater security and stability for inhabitants, merchants, and mariners living and operating legally at the islands. The security presented by British army or naval reinforcements stood to provide a stouter defense against American raiders, as well as invasions from far more menacing French and Spanish naval forces to the south. As British forces exacted costs on the islanders for their continued subversive activities and the benefits of British support became more apparent with British troops' presence, the Bermudians and Bahamians who gravitated towards the American patriots for practical and pragmatic reasons shifted back to supporting the Crown and Parliament.

Bruere and Browne's efforts to secure British loyalism and undermine the Patriots' influence in their island communities did not progress without resistance from the remaining Patriot-sympathizing Bermudians and Bahamians. Trade and commercial connections with the mainland served as the primary motivations for the islanders' resistance to the royal governors' agendas.¹¹⁹ Resistance to fundamental changes in the islanders' colonial governments, public accusations of the islanders' disloyalty to the

¹¹⁹ Montfort Browne to Lord George Germain, 29 June 1779, CO 23/24/225-227; "Bahama, fo. 171-176," "Journal, August 1779: Volume 86" in *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations*, ed. K. H. Ledward, vol. 14, *January 1776 – May 1782* (London: H. M. S. O., 1938), 265-271; Henry Tucker, Jr. to St. George Tucker, 18 April 1779, TCP; Eliza Tucker to St. George Tucker, 29 November 1779, TCP; Frances Tucker to St. George Tucker, 16 November 1779, TCP; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 14 March 1781. From here onwards the *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations* are abbreviated *JBTP*.

Crown, and the governors' efforts to drive out perceived Patriot-sympathizers from positions of authority further angered the islands' communities.¹²⁰ Both the inhabitants and their local officials unleashed their frustrations and dismay at the governors and British officials in London through petitions and remonstrances.¹²¹ The islanders tried, particularly in the Bahamas, to instigate changes in the colony's administration that would return the islands to a state of salutary neglect. The metropole's resumption of salutary neglect policies would enable them to survive and even profit from their established wartime trading practices and continue the pre-Revolution commercial status quo with the rebellious mainland.¹²²

In 1779, Bahamian assembly and council members furiously issued letters and petitions to the British government detailing their account of Hopkins' attack, which contested Governor Browne's version of their actions. In addition to directly petitioning the Board of Trade and Secretary of State Lord Germain, the Bahamian assembly and council enlisted the assistance of the colony's agent, a Mr. Cumberland, to "make the

¹²⁰ A Proclamation, 4 January 1779, CO 23/9/93; Council to the Board of Trade, 31 March 1779, CO 23/9/97; Thomas Atwood to Montfort Browne, 23 February 1779, CO 23/9/99; Protest of Council against appointment of a new Council member, 9 March 1779, CO 23/9/101; "Bahama, fo. 131-132," "Journal, June 1779: Volume 86" in *JBTP*, ed. K. H. Ledward, vol. 14, *January 1776 – May 1782*, 250-257; "Bahama, fo. 171-176," "Journal, August 1779: Volume 86" in *JBTP*, ed. K. H. Ledward, vol. 14, *January 1776 – May 1782*, 265-271; "Address of the General Assembly of Bermuda, Sept. 29, 1781," *Royal Georgia Gazette*, 8 November 1781, 4; CO 37/38/137-141; CO 37/38/19-22; CO 37/38/42-46; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 429-430; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 97, 99-105, 107.

¹²¹ The Remonstrance of His Majesty's Council and the General Assembly, 12 March 1779, CO 23/24/145r; "Bahama, fo. 124-125," "Journal, June 1779: Volume 86" in *JBTP*, ed. K. H. Ledward, vol. 14, *January 1776 – May 1782*, 250-257; Petition from the Lieutenant Governor, His Majesty's Council, and the late General Assembly to the King, 27 July 1779, CO 23/24/239-242; Protest by the Council Marked "B," 9 March 1779, CO 23/24/121-122; George James Bruere to Lord George Germain, 2 August 1779, CO 37/37/54; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 422.

¹²² Extract from a Letter from Governor Browne to Lord George Germain, 11 January 1779, CO 23/9/138-139; Extract from a Letter from Governor Browne to Lord George Germain, 15 January 1779, CO 23/9/140; Testimony of Thomas Smith, 9 January 1779, CO 23/24/133.

necessary Enquiries and acquaint [British officials] with such Particulars...of that affair.”¹²³ The council, led by John and Samuel Gambier, pushed back against Browne’s “very gross Misrepresentations” of the Bahamians’ conduct during the Continental Navy’s attack.¹²⁴ The council and assembly undertook the “opportunity of vindicating themselves,” and “place the transactions of that day in their true Light” as to remove any negative impressions made on “the Royal Mind.”¹²⁵ The “many Irregularities” made by Browne following his return and issuance of his proclamation illustrated “his unfriendly Disposition,” and took “as Facts, matters that certainly remain to be proved, to make us and the Inhabitants...appear in the most odious Light.”¹²⁶ In countering Governor Browne’s version of the invasion, the council and assembly asserted that they possessed the truth, casting Browne’s “official” account into doubt, and drawing attention away from the native Bahamian officials who were actually engaged in the contraband trade with the American patriots.

In challenging Browne’s characterizations, the officials strove to counter the metropole’s interpretation of Browne’s actions, consequently putting the governor and his actions at the center of any future British inquiry into the Nassau raid. In a remonstrance forwarded by the assembly to Lord Germain, the Bahamian officials specifically cited Browne’s assertions that he was “deserted by all the Inhabitants in the

¹²³ His Majesty’s Council of the Bahama Islands to the Board of Trade, 22 February 1779, CO 23/9/89r.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

defence of the Place, and that they were all Rebels” during the American attack.¹²⁷ The Bahamians argued forcefully that “the Inhabitants in General did their Duty,” and followed Browne’s orders “with a determined Spirit” to engage and try to defeat the Patriot invaders.¹²⁸ The petitioners deflected accusations of desertion and conspiracy by placing the blame for New Providence’s capture on Browne’s decision to retreat from Fort Montagu, and abandon it for Hopkins’ forces to capture easily.¹²⁹ Browne’s abandonment of Fort Montagu left the militiamen’s “Homes, Property and Families to the ravage of the Enemy.”¹³⁰ The governor’s failure to hold the western edge of the island and repulse Hopkins’ advancing forces put the inhabitants in a position requiring them to prioritize what they needed to defend personally. Consequently, the petitioners implied that their decision to protect their homes, businesses, and families from Patriot forces was a logical choice after Browne abandoned them, leaving the militiamen without direction for defending the island successfully.

The Bahamian council and assembly’s efforts to excuse the inhabitants’ actions by placing the blame squarely on Browne’s poor decisions also worked to divert British officials’ attention from the on-going Bahamian-American trade led by colonial officials. Prior to Browne’s return, former-Acting Governor John Gambier and President John Brown managed the Bahamas’ legislative and external affairs. Gambier lent support to Nassau’s mariners and merchants by supplying them with various licenses to “carry on an

¹²⁷ CO 23/24/145r; “Bahama, fo. 124-125,” “Journal, June 1779: Volume 86” in *JBTP*, ed. K. H. Ledward, vol. 14, *January 1776 – May 1782*, 250-257.

¹²⁸ CO 23/24/145v.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

open and free Intercourse” with the American patriots.¹³¹ The Gambiers’ support for Bahamian smugglers and the contraband trade was by no means new. John Gambier’s brother, Samuel, served as a Vice-Admiralty Court judge during the Seven Years’ War, but he ran afoul of Governor William Shirley when he began deciding cases in favor of British-American contrabandists conducting illicit commerce with French Saint Domingue.¹³² In these cases, Samuel argued that “the king had no right to prevent trade by his subjects...[and] it should be deemed legal and beneficial.”¹³³ Gambier and Brown likely used the issuance of licenses and letters of marque to benefit themselves and other Bahamian officials during Montfort Browne’s absence. In further correspondence with Lord Germain, Browne related an encounter with John Hunt, the Bahamas’ customs and tax collector, who requested Browne grant him several “Letters of Marque and Reprisal.”¹³⁴ These letters enabled Hunt to disguise his smuggling operations under a cloak of legality, and permit “two ships of his now loading...in Carolina” to receive safe passage from British privateers and warships on future supply runs to the mainland.¹³⁵

Local Bahamian officials’ efforts to excuse the islanders’ actions and justify Governor Browne’s failure to defend the Bahamas against Hopkins attempted to protect the colony’s contraband trading in three important ways. First, by shifting the British

¹³¹ CO 23/9/138-139.

¹³² Sworn Petition from Governor Shirley Complaining of Judge Gambier’s Arbitrary and Irregular Proceedings, 18 October 1760, CO 23/7/54-56; Testimony of William Mouat, 5 November 1760, CO 23/7/69.

¹³³ CO 23/7/54-56; CO 23/7/69.

¹³⁴ CO 23/9/140r.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

government's attention away from the Bahamians, local officials worked to ensure their follow Bahamians' ability to procure provisions and supplies from the mainland. The continued influx of victuals, supplies, and income from the rebellious mainland enabled Bahamian families to alleviate sporadic famines in the islands' communities, such as on Harbour Island, where the "best bread...for the use of the blessed Sacrament, is made of Tree-roots."¹³⁶ Second, shielding the islanders' contraband trade aided in sustaining the colony's economy and influx of income. Bahamian merchants and mariners exported cargoes of the islands' salt, timber, turtle meat, and native fruits to mainland port cities from Salem, Massachusetts, to Savannah, Georgia. The Bahamas' export trade generated hard currency from outside the archipelago to purchase imported supplies and manufactured goods aboard, and augment additional cash brought in through privateering and salvaging recent shipwrecks. It also maintained access to the rebellious mainland's large market for Bahamian experimental cash crops. Edward Kennedy of New Providence contacted the Continental Congress on December 16th, 1777 with a scheme to plant and export some experimental crops of "green indigo, a new manufacture discovered by him," which he believed could be sold to the mainland for a profit.¹³⁷ Lastly, Bahamian politicians and officials distorted privateering licenses to disguise their own merchant businesses' involvement in contraband trading with the American patriots, and try to protect themselves from being prosecuted and punished by the metropole or

¹³⁶ Letter from Richard Moss, 26 April 1779, *The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, Series B: Letter Books, 1702-1786, Volume 6, Film 446, Reel 13, The David Library of the American Revolution*. Also see: Riley, *Homeward Bound*, 98; Charles Frederick Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the S. P. G.: An Historical Account of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1701-1900* (London: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1901), 1:219.

¹³⁷ Continental Congress, "Tuesday, December 16, 1777" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 9, *October 3, 1777 – December 31, 1777*, 1028-1029.

Royal Navy.¹³⁸ The social and economic benefits to the Bahamians preventing British authorities' interference in their contraband trade with the American patriots influenced their fellow islanders at the archipelago's southeastern reaches.

Upon Andrew Symmer's arrival at Turks Island from Jamaica in 1778, he discovered the islands' inhabitants and seasonal Bermudian salt rakers, who dried and collected sea salt for sale around the Atlantic, "had entered into a secret Agreement" with the French governor of Saint Domingue.¹³⁹ British Atlantic islanders' use of smuggling and covert trading at Turks Island functioned both to produce desperately needed income and supplies, and to connect the rebellious North American states with the Caribbean islands. The Turks Islanders "carefully secreted" the terms of the deal from Symmer, as well as the British and Bahamian authorities, to prevent interference that would bring an end to their advantageous illicit commerce.¹⁴⁰ Since Symmer served as the Crown's agent at Turks Island, the islanders' illicit trade with the non-Anglophone Caribbean and the Patriots subverted his authority and diminished his income. The Turks Islanders' participation in the contraband trade between the Caribbean and North American mainland, as well as support for the American patriots, avoided paying the salt and tonnage taxes on imports and exports at the islands. Consequently, this deprived the British government of revenue that ultimately funded the military's war against the Patriots and their allies. It also constituted a two-part act of civil disobedience against

¹³⁸ CO 23/24/133; CO 23/9/140; CO 23/9/138.

¹³⁹ Andrew Symmer to Lord George Germain, 13 December 1779, CO 23/10/86r.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Symmer, which avoided paying the half-penny salt tax that paid his salary and subverted his authority as the Royal Agent at the island.

To secure British authority at Turks Island, as well as his own livelihood, Symmer attempted to bring the common grounds back into line with the loyal British Empire. Symmer, exercising the “only method left” in his power to bring order to the island, managed to force the settlers and salt rakers to “take the Oath of Allegiance to His Majesty,” albeit after a “good deal of difficulty.”¹⁴¹ Yet, the Turks Islanders’ professed allegiance proved temporary. Once it became apparent to the islanders that Symmer’s authority lacked a genuine force, other than “from a few Loyal Subjects,” to compel their loyalty to Britain and obedience to its colonial and maritime laws, they “altered their conduct” to act in “the most open Rebellious manner” that “set Government at Defiance.”¹⁴²

Symmer’s efforts to bring the common grounds into a state of order required more power and authority than he alone could command. The Patriot-sympathizing Turks Islanders’ large presence, in conjunction with Spain’s entry into the war and the reported arrival of Comte d’Estaing’s fleet at nearby Cap Français, forced the few loyal inhabitants to flee Turks Island.¹⁴³ Symmer now stood alone on an anarchistic island. His missives and reports to the British and Bahamian governments aimed to bolster his authority at the Turks and Caicos with naval support, while ensuring that the islanders complied with the metropole’s wartime commercial policies, regulations, and taxes.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

Symmer quickly found himself at the “Mercy of a lawless Banditti from whom [his] life was in danger,” which compelled him to abandon the islands in order to seek assistance from Governor Browne at New Providence.¹⁴⁴ Support from New Providence, however, did not materialize as Symmer found Browne’s government “too illy [sic] supported” for him to provide any relief.¹⁴⁵

When Browne discovered the Bahamian-American trade’s broad social and political support, he instituted coercive measures to bring the islands firmly under Britain’s colonial and maritime authority. Browne found to his “great mortification” that the Bahamians’ commerce with the American patriots “carried on [in] so glaring a manner,” and Lieutenant-Governor Gambier “has repeatedly applyed [sic] to me...[to] continue a License” permitting the Nassau merchants to continue “an open and free Intercourse with the Rebels, under the pretext of procuring Provisions.”¹⁴⁶ In further correspondence with Lord Germain, Browne related an encounter with John Hunt, the Bahamas’ customs and tax collector, who requested Browne grant him several “Letters of Marque and Reprisal.”¹⁴⁷ These letters enabled Hunt to disguise his smuggling operations under a cloak of legality, and permit “two ships of his now loading...in Carolina” to receive safe passage from British privateers and warships on future supply runs to the mainland.¹⁴⁸ Browne “peremptorily refused” both Gambier and Hunt’s requests.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ CO 23/9/138r; CO 23/24/133.

¹⁴⁷ CO 23/9/140r.

¹⁴⁸ CO 23/9/140r.

In addition to denying requests to continue covert trading with the Americans, Browne took what measures he could to secure the Bahamian capital from potential attacks and root out subversive elements within the colony. Browne began by arming the forts with available munitions, and ordering the cannons to fire on approaching enemy ships.¹⁵⁰ Browne endeavored to put a check on the Bahamian-American collusion and intercourse by sending out as many armed vessels as he could procure to “intercept the Rebellious Intercourse,” and prevent the possible end to “all legal Government” at the islands.¹⁵¹ In launching a privateer fleet against Bahamian and American patriot shipping, Browne believed the privateers would act as an information network that collected and transmitted to him “the earliest information possible of the Designs of the Enemy.”¹⁵² The privateer information network would enable Browne, or nearby British forces, to secure the islands against future enemy attacks and invasions.

Browne’s defensive measure met with some early, albeit brief, success 1779. On January 9th, the governor ordered Fort Montagu’s cannons to fire on one ship, which had become detached from a convoy out of St. Eustatius. Upon being fired on, the ship’s captain threw overboard several “Packets and Dispatches from Beaufort on the Continent to the disaffected Inhabitants of [New Providence].”¹⁵³ The letters and dispatches detailed

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.; CO 23/9/138r.

¹⁵⁰ CO 23/9/138.

¹⁵¹ CO 23/9/138v-139r.

¹⁵² CO 23/9/139r.

¹⁵³ CO 23/9/138v.

a plan that was “in contemplation with the French to Surprise this Garrison.” Browne feared another invasion would be “attended with fatal consequences.”¹⁵⁴

Similar to the Bermudians, the Bahamians attempted to maintain the British Atlantic world’s pre-American Revolution commercial order, while limiting British colonial and military interference in their local affairs. John Hunt’s use of letters of marque to disguise his personal smuggling operations with American patriots in Charleston represents a quintessential instance of Bahamian wartime commercial activity in the eighteenth century. The letters enabled Hunt’s ships to traverse the revolutionary divide on the Atlantic. British privateers, warships, and customs officials who might board and inspect the ships’ cargos would be presented with official privateering commissions granted by the Bahamas’ colonial government. The official letters and commissions enabled smugglers to pass off American supplies acquired directly from the Patriot mainland as captured wartime prizes. Obscured under the cloak of legitimacy, Bahamian smugglers maintained the archipelago’s commercial connections with the revolutionary mainland, subverting enforcement efforts from hostile governors and naval officers, while presenting a front of loyalism to assuage any suspicions held by metropole officials.

Bahamian officials’ obstruction of Browne, coupled with their efforts to turn the British government against him, forced the governor to accelerate his mission to purge the colonial government of Patriot-sympathizers. In order to secure his authority and hold on to the Bahamas, Browne systematically began to dismiss members from the colony’s council, and then replaced them with non-Bahamians loyal to him. Samuel Gambier’s

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

dismissal from his position as a judge on the Bahamas' Vice-Admiralty Court and the colony's receiver general occurred with "no fault to find" in Gambier's execution of his duties.¹⁵⁵ Two likely explanations account for Samuel Gambier's dismissal. First, Samuel Gambier's previous history of liberal rulings on privateering prizes and smuggling during the Seven Years' War made him a liability for Browne's efforts to end the trade between the Bahamas and the American patriots and their European allies.¹⁵⁶ Second, Samuel's removal from the court would also indirectly attack John's smuggling operations, and enable Governor Browne to fill the vacancy with someone willing to prosecute the Gambiers for illicit trading. While John and Samuel represented the two most powerful smugglers and perceived Patriot-sympathizers, Browne saw a cabal entrenched in multiple administrative positions across the colonial government, which he intended to remove from power using whatever justification he could.

Browne targeted other officials using questionable rationale or none at all. Long-serving officials, such as Robert Sterling, who served for fifteen years as "Vendue Master," and the colony's Provost Marshal William Rogers were replaced without explanation.¹⁵⁷ Browne also targeted relatives of officials as a means of exacting revenge.

¹⁵⁵ Council to the Board of Trade, 22 February 1779, CO 23/9/90v; "Bahama, fo. 131-132," "Journal, June 1779: Volume 86" in *JBTP*, ed. K. H. Ledward, vol. 14, *January 1776 – May 1782*, 250-257.

¹⁵⁶ Sworn Petition from Governor Shirley Complaining of Judge Gambier's Arbitrary and Irregular Proceedings, 18 October 1760, CO 23/7/54-56; Testimony of William Mouat, 5 November 1760, CO 23/7/69; Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 145-146; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 160.

¹⁵⁷ CO 23/9/90v; "Bahama, fo. 131-132," "Journal, June 1779: Volume 86" in *JBTP*, ed. K. H. Ledward, vol. 14, *January 1776 – May 1782*, 250-257; "Bahama, fo. 215," "Journal, October 1779: Volume 86" in *JBTP*, ed. K. H. Ledward, vol. 14, *January 1776 – May 1782*, 275-278.

Reports from the council to the Board of Trade claim that Browne fired Sterling because he would not "agree to divide with the Governor the Profits" of the auction house. Browne's dismissal of the Provost Marshall from his office occurred "contrary to the 49th Article of His Majesty's Instructions." See: CO

A chief example of the governor's pettiness was his sacking of President John Brown's son from his position as the colony's secretary. Browne claimed this decision to be justified by President Brown's "glaring Behaviour" during his tenure as acting commander-in-chief between 1776 and 1778.¹⁵⁸ Since Brown's position as assembly president could not be directly dismissed by the governor, only by a vote of the assembly, Browne's dismissal of Brown's son probably served as an effort to intimidate the assembly president into cooperating with Browne's agenda of strict loyalty to the British government.

Browne coupled his efforts to shape the Bahamian government into a political and legal body that advanced British loyalism with moves to alter the colony's higher courts. Chief Justice Thomas Atwood's departure from the Bahamas on an approved leave of absence presented Browne with the opportunity to replace him quickly with a handpicked associate.¹⁵⁹ Two days following Atwood's departure from New Providence, Browne

23/9/90v; Council to the Board of Trade, 5 July 1779, CO 23/24/228-229; "Bahama, fo. 215," "Journal, October 1779: Volume 86" in *JBTP*, ed. K. H. Ledward, vol. 14, *January 1776 – May 1782*, 275-278.

¹⁵⁸ CO 23/9/90v-91r; "Bahama, fo. 131-132," "Journal, June 1779: Volume 86" in *JBTP*, ed. K. H. Ledward, vol. 14, *January 1776 – May 1782*, 250-257.

John Brown served as the acting governor and commander-in-chief of the Bahamas from Montfort Browne's capture by Hopkins on March 4th, 1776 to January 20th, 1778 when the colonial government fell to a second American naval attack, this time from a single American warship, orchestrated by the commanders of the *Providence*. See: CO 23/9/91r.

¹⁵⁹ CO 23/9/99; CO 23/9/101; "Bahama, fo. 131-132," "Journal, June 1779: Volume 86" in *JBTP*, ed. K. H. Ledward, vol. 14, *January 1776 – May 1782*, 250-257; "Bahama, fo. 171-176," "Journal, August 1779: Volume 86" in *JBTP*, ed. K. H. Ledward, vol. 14, *January 1776 – May 1782*, 265-271.

Chief Justice Atwood requested a leave of absence to accompany some French prisoners of war, currently held in the Bahamas, to be exchanged at Hispaniola. In an earlier meeting between the governor and council, he requested the nomination of anyone the council through "fit and proper" to negotiate the prisoner exchange on the colony's behalf. After none of the councilmembers put forward any candidates, Atwood volunteered his services to oversee the prisoners' transportation to Saint Domingue and lead the subsequent prisoner negotiations with the French administration. Since the courts had adjourned for a lack of business, Atwood concluded that he had the leisure to engage in other services on behalf of the colonial government. Atwood volunteered his services and requested a leave of absence from the courts and council

declared the chief justice's seat on the council to be vacant and moved to fill it with his friend Robert Cummings.¹⁶⁰ The council rejected Browne's claims, stating that "no vacancy" existed, and adjourned in an attempt to block Browne from making any further attempts to oust Chief Justice Atwood.¹⁶¹ While Browne's efforts to change the council's balance were radical, so too were his attempts to alter the Bahamian court system's composition. In addition to his efforts to replace Chief Justice Atwood, Browne attempted to pack the "two Assistant Judges" onto the bench of a maritime court, which the governor desired to establish without the consent of the other justices, the legislature, or under the apparent authority granted by his commission.¹⁶² The council saw through Browne's judicial meddling. "There were present a sufficient Number of Members to...constitute that Court," the council asserted flatly, and they told the Board of Trade that the governor's actions embodied "an arbitrary Act" that ran contrary to the Crowne's commission.¹⁶³ The governor's interference with the Bahamas' council and judiciary prompted "the most active and capable of [the Bahamas'] Magistrates to decline acting any longer."¹⁶⁴ Browne's labors to purge the council and judiciary of Patriot

under the impression that he would be absent temporarily and would resume his seats upon his return to New Providence. See: CO 23/9/99; CO 23/9/101.

¹⁶⁰ "Bahama, fo. 131-132," "Journal, June 1779: Volume 86" in *JBTP*, ed. K. H. Ledward, vol. 14, *January 1776 – May 1782*, 250-257.

¹⁶¹ CO 23/9/97.

¹⁶² CO 23/9/91r.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ CO 23/9/91v; Parr Ross to John Gambier, 6 February 1779, CO 23/9/95-96; "Bahama, fo. 171-176," "Journal, August 1779: Volume 86" in *JBTP*, ed. K. H. Ledward, vol. 14, *January 1776 – May 1782*, 265-271.

One recorded instance of a magistrate resigning in protest of Governor Browne's conduct is that of Parr Ross, who side stepped the governor and delivered his resignation and accompanying justifications to

sympathizers, both genuine and imagined, constituted a dangerous “Usurpation of Powers” in the eyes of the colony’s council.¹⁶⁵ Browne’s attempts to transform the council and judiciary into loyalist dominated bodies, while stamping out the Bahamian-American patriot trade, widened the rift between the governor and the council’s “Juncto” that sought to preserve the commercial status quo with the mainland.¹⁶⁶

Browne’s attempts to purge the council and judiciary of Patriot supporters culminated in an even more drastic *coup de grâce*: he dissolved the assembly.¹⁶⁷ Browne’s disbanding of the assembly and monopolization of power threatened Bahamians’ defenses against foreign threats. Since the Lower House could not be seated and vote to renew the militia and revenue laws, Browne hurt the islands’ ability to defend itself.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, Browne’s drastic action hindered the collection of tax revenue necessary for refurbishing and resupplying New Providence’s forts.¹⁶⁹

Lieutenant Governor John Gambier. Ross highlights three primary instances of Browne’s misconduct that precipitated Ross’ decision to resign. The first reason centered on Browne’s attempt to deceive Ross in his office by falsely claiming that a man in Browne’s employ, Stephen Lary, was licensed to sell liquor, and in compliance with the colony’s laws regarding keeping a “disorderly house.” The second reason stemmed from the first, in which Ross accused Governor Browne of “encouraging and Protecting a foreigner in keeping a disorderly House contrary to the Law,” and interfering with the ability of the civil magistrate to administer the law effectively. Ross’ final reason directly charged Browne with “abusing the Provost Marshall for executing a precept from [him], which he was by Law obliged to execute.” For the entirety of his ten years of service as a magistrate, Ross had “never been opposed in [his] office” until he encountered Browne’s defiance of judicial orders, instructions, and abuse of authority. See: CO 23/9/95-96; “Bahama, fo. 171-176,” “Journal, August 1779: Volume 86” in *JBTP*, ed. K. H. Ledward, vol. 14, *January 1776 – May 1782*, 265-271.

¹⁶⁵ CO 23/9/89-91; CO 23/9/97; CO 23/24/225-227; “Bahama, fo. 171-176,” “Journal, August 1779: Volume 86” in *JBTP*, ed. K. H. Ledward, vol. 14, *January 1776 – May 1782*, 265-271. The members of the council decrying Governor Browne’s “Usurpation of Powers” included John and Samuel Gambier, John Brown, Robert Hunt, and Robert Sterling.

¹⁶⁶ CO 23/9/89-91; CO 23/9/97; CO 23/24/225-227; “Bahama, fo. 171-176,” “Journal, August 1779: Volume 86” in *JBTP*, ed. K. H. Ledward, vol. 14, *January 1776 – May 1782*, 265-271.

¹⁶⁷ Petition from the Lieutenant Governor, His Majesty’s Council, and the General Assembly to the King, 27 July 1779, CO 23/24/239-242.

Unbeknownst to Browne, his aggressive efforts to purge the Bahamian government of Patriot sympathizers contributed to the end of the Bahamian-American trade. Browne's systematic removal of multiple members from their positions on the Bahamas' council, efforts to influence the islands' courts and assembly, requiring and administering loyalty oaths to the British government, and encouragement of Bahamian and Loyalist privateer activities against Patriot commerce formed, what the Congress described as, a "military government of the king of Great Britain."¹⁷⁰ The Bahamas were lost to Britain. Congress viewed the consolidation of power under the British governor, coupled with his demands for loyalty to himself and the metropole, as dangerous developments in a colony they hoped would become a part of an independent United States. The Continental Congress terminated its embargo exemption and subjected the Bahamians to same trade restrictions as the rest of the hostile British Empire.¹⁷¹ Yet, Browne's aggressive actions proved too heavy-handed and the Bahamians' numerous complaints against the governor too bothersome for British authorities in London.

The council's petitions effectively shaped the British colonial administration's opinion of Browne's actions and views concerning the Bahamians. British officials viewed the breakdown in political and social relations between the islanders and Browne, in addition to the governor's dictatorship, as a serious problem that needed to be

¹⁶⁸ CO 23/24/240r.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Continental Congress, "Monday, March 29, 1779" in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 13, *January 1, 1779 – April 22, 1779* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909), 388.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 388.

corrected lest written protests turn into violent contests for power.¹⁷² The Board of Trade realized the political conflict caused the Bahamas to descend into “an absolute State of Anarchy.”¹⁷³ The islands needed support from renewed laws for “the Revenue, the Militia, and other purposes” deemed essential for the islanders’ welfare.¹⁷⁴ Whitehall officials agreed that the Bahamas required more stable and less abrasive leadership, and they determined it necessary to replace Browne with John Maxwell on August 6th, 1779.¹⁷⁵ Maxwell’s appointment as governor and arrival in the Bahamas in March 1781 temporarily ended the internal strife between the British governor and the Bahamians.

Seeking Security as the Empire Splits

The British Atlantic Islands’ shift towards allegiance to the British government further increased tensions in the border-sea separating the forces of British loyalism from the American patriots and their European allies. Bermudian and Bahamian privateering in the western Atlantic and Straits of Florida threatened American patriot and Spanish shipping. The Bahamian and Bermudian threat to American patriot citizens in the western Atlantic pushed the Continental Congress to reevaluate their support for the islands and treat them as a new hostile force in league with the British government. The islanders’ use of privateering also altered the revolutionary American government and Continental

¹⁷² Board of Trade to King George III, 6 August 1779, CO 23/24/177-181.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.; Lord George Germain to Henry Clinton, 4 November 1779, British Headquarters Papers: New York City, 1774-1783 (Carleton Papers), reel M-349, document 2409, Library and Archives Canada (LAC).

military's relationship with Imperial Spain. Bahamian and Loyalist privateering necessitated that American patriots and Spain work in agreement to neutralize Britain's privateering nest in the Bahamas. The American patriot and Spanish operation served to protect the rebellious mainland's southern colonies, while advancing Spain's military objectives to regain control of the Floridas and Jamaica.

During the second half of the American Revolution, Bermudians increasingly shifted their allegiances away from supporting the rebellious colonies and towards Britain. After Congress's restriction of the Patriots' provisions trade to Bermuda resulted in famine and an epidemic, Bermuda's assembly sought to smooth over problems and alleviate British administrators' concerns stemming from the gunpowder theft of 1775 and the islanders' contraband trade with the American rebels. By reconciling with London, Bermudian officials hoped to secure regular shipments of foodstuffs and supplies to the island from the metropole and the loyal British colonies in North America and the Caribbean. On their behalf, Colonel Tucker engaged in a diplomatic mission to the British government in 1779.¹⁷⁶ Colonel Tucker's mission to London caused a profound personal change, in which he gradually "came to love London" and developed an understanding of the "imperial point of view."¹⁷⁷ The Colonel's change towards appreciating London and the British Empire paralleled the pragmatic shift of the Bermudian populace. By 1782, trade between Bermuda and the Patriot-held mainland

¹⁷⁶ George James Bruere to Lord George Germain, 2 August 1779, CO 37/37/54; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 422.

¹⁷⁷ Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 94; Kaye, *The Life and Correspondence of Henry St. George Tucker*, 4; Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 3 June 1779, TCP; Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 27 December 1779, TCP.

had ceased, and an increase in Bermudian privateering attacks against Patriots' vessels caused American military and political leaders to view Bermuda as a hostile enemy.¹⁷⁸

The British military's stationing of two warships and a permanent garrison of troops at the island in 1778 and 1779, bolstered by Loyalist privateers patrolling the surrounding waters, cut off Bermudians' supply lines to the rebellious mainland. Patriot merchant captains, like Captain Leonard Albouy, warned Congress that British forces were intercepting relief supplies bound for the island with increasing frequency.¹⁷⁹ Following a conversation with Albouy, Thomas Paine and a committee of delegates concluded that "it is not altogether certain that any provisions...will go to the relief of the Bermudians" while British forces watched over the colony.¹⁸⁰ The present British threat to maintaining Bermudian support for Congress and Continental forces surpassed "how powerfully soever [sic] humanity may plead in [the Bermudians] behalf, and the disposition of Congress incline them to relieve the distresses of Bermuda."¹⁸¹ Congress's continued authorization for Patriot ships to carry shipments of food and supplies to Bermuda unintentionally and needlessly supported the Royal Navy and Loyalist privateers, and sent American patriot crews to be imprisoned by the British. For the Congress and Patriot forces, already over three years into the war, the losses of food,

¹⁷⁸ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 435-436.

¹⁷⁹ Continental Congress, "Friday, April 23, 1779" in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 14, *April 23, 1779 – September 1, 1779* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909), 501.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 501.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 501.

supplies, ships, and men necessary for fighting the British and supporting the American populace needed to be restricted as best as possible.

By April 23rd, 1779, at the time of the committee's pronouncement, Bermudian requests and petitions to Congress for food and supplies stalled in committees, and the delegates denied authorization for further American shipments to sail for Bermuda. A petition by Captain John Lightbourn was one such instance. Lightbourn's petition reiterated the "distresses of the inhabitants," and prayed for "liberty to carry thither bread, flour, and Indian corn" to relieve the islanders' situation.¹⁸² The Congress resolved, however, that "the prayer of the petition be not granted."¹⁸³ Additional Bermudian memorials and petitions from Albouy, as well as Joseph Basden and Nathaniel Prudden, received similar responses in May 1779. The Bermudians' petitions implored Congress to export 5,000 bushels of corn from Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Virginia to alleviate the suffering islanders.¹⁸⁴ Nonetheless, Congress deemed it "highly inexpedient to grant the prayer of their memorial."¹⁸⁵ Congress's reluctance to endanger its exportable supplies and Patriot merchant vessels by continuing to approve travel to Bermuda further constrained the desperate Bermudians and increasingly encouraged the islanders to turn to privateering and British support to ensure the colony's survival.

¹⁸² Continental Congress, "Friday, November 27, 1778" in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 12, *September 2, 1778 – December 31, 1778* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1908), 1165.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 1166.

¹⁸⁴ Continental Congress, "Friday, May 7, 1779" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 14, *April 23, 1779 – September 1, 1779*, 555.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 555.

While Continental forces gained the advantage on the North American mainland, British naval forces consolidated and gained a greater hold around important commercial nodes in the maritime Atlantic that also supplied and employed the Bermudian colonists. George, Jr.'s political reforms and garrison policing at Bermuda. In the eastern Caribbean, Admiral George Rodney's adventurism in the French and Dutch Caribbean islands resulted in the arrests of many Bermudians and American traders living on St. Eustatius.¹⁸⁶ These British moves interrupted the Bermudians' smuggling trade at both the origin and destination points. Rodney's raiding of St. Eustatius proved ruinous to many Bermudian merchant families, who lost accumulated wealth and goods held by relatives living at the island when Rodney auctioned off seized prizes.¹⁸⁷ The Marquis de Bouillé's French forces' capture and occupation of St. Eustatius on November 26th, 1781 further prevented Bermudian merchants and mariners from reestablishing their operations for the remainder of the American Revolution.¹⁸⁸

Congress's increased restrictions on the Bermudian-American trade and British efforts to stymie the Bermudians' illicit commerce contributed to an island-wide famine in 1779, and the islanders pled to their American family and the Patriot populace for relief. The Bermudian assembly instituted price controls in an attempt to alleviate the famine, but these became impossible to enforce, and suspended restrictions on fishing at

¹⁸⁶ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 431; St. Eustatius account sales, 1781, HCA 2/321; William Crichton, *Petition of the West-Indian Planters and Merchants to the King on the Subject of the General Seizure of Private Property, Found in the Dutch Islands of St. Eustatius and St. Martin, April 6, 1781* (London: n.p., 1781), 1-2.

¹⁸⁷ O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 217-227; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 431.

¹⁸⁸ O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 217-227; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 431.

the surrounding reefs to replenish meat supplies.¹⁸⁹ Local supplies of fresh meat and eggs became scarce as British soldiers raided and stripped Bermudian farms and homes of their cattle and fowl.¹⁹⁰ Writing to their brother St. George in Virginia, Frances and Eliza Tucker bluntly expressed how thousands of their fellow islanders “have suffered and many have perished for want of bread.”¹⁹¹ Many Bermudians resorted to consuming spoilt and rotten food in an effort to assuage hunger pains, and consequently contracted “disorders that has killed them.”¹⁹² Patriot newspapers in Boston and Williamsburg reported on the Bermudians’ dire condition communicating to their patriot readers how “several hundred [islanders]...had already perished for want of food, and that many had not tasted bread for several weeks.”¹⁹³ As the famine stretched into the summer of 1779, Bermudians struggled to support themselves with local fishing and what little provisions passed through the naval blockade, and they became “almost destitute of every article necessary for the support of life, and [were] so sorely oppressed by their new masters from New York, as to be rendered too miserable to describe.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁹ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 422.

¹⁹⁰ Eliza Tucker to St. George Tucker, 29 November 1779, TCP; Kerr, *Bermuda and the American Revolution*, 92; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 422.

¹⁹¹ Henry Tucker, Jr. to St. George Tucker, 18 April 1779, TCP; Eliza Tucker to St. George Tucker, 29 November 1779, TCP; Frances Tucker to St. George Tucker, 16 November 1779, TCP.

¹⁹² Eliza Tucker to St. George Tucker, 29 November 1779, TCP; Frances Tucker to St. George Tucker, 16 November 1779, TCP.

¹⁹³ “Boston, Feb. 22,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 17 March 1779; “Williamsburg, April 2,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 14 April 1779; “John Green to Benjamin Franklin, 25 June 1779” in *PBF*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 29, *March 1, 1779 through June 30, 1779* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 737-738.

¹⁹⁴ “George Norton to James Withers, 29 November 1779” in *John Norton and Sons: Merchants of London and Virginia, being the papers from their counting house for the years 1750 to 1795*, ed. Frances Norton Mason (Richmond, VA: Dietz Press, 1937), 429; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 421-422.

Unsanitary conditions caused by American prisoners of war and British troops' presence at the island spread disease to the starving and weakened Bermudians. In 1779, an outbreak of "camp fever," attributed to typhus, broke out in St. George's in the spring and proceeded westward through the island during the summer and autumn.¹⁹⁵ The famine left "very few families" able to escape the spreading illness.¹⁹⁶ Most of the islanders believed the British military bore responsibility for the famine and disease, and Eliza Tucker argued that these problems were "the good effects of our being overrun with soldiers and privateers and of the ill conduct of a misjudging governor."¹⁹⁷ Bermudian efforts to alleviate the famine and plague's debilitating effects necessitated local authorities to pursue aid from Britain.

The pragmatic representatives in the Bermudian legislature sought to mend relations with the British administration in London as part of a ploy to counter negative characterizations by Governor Bruere and his son, while simultaneously securing a more regular source of food and supplies from Britain to relieve the island's famine and epidemic. Bermudian assemblymen turned to the experienced Colonel Tucker and dispatched him to London to lobby for relief aid, while also attempting to convince Lord Germain and other administration officials to end George Bruere Jr.'s tenure as Bermuda's governor.¹⁹⁸ While living in London, Colonel Tucker's position in the battle between the American patriots and Britain shifted with regards to his advocacy of

¹⁹⁵ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 422.

¹⁹⁶ Eliza Tucker to St. George Tucker, 25 November 1779, TCP; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 422.

¹⁹⁷ Frances Tucker to St. George Tucker, 26 November 1779, TCP; Eliza Tucker to St. George Tucker, 25 November 1779, TCP.

¹⁹⁸ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 430.

Bermuda's provincial interests. Colonel Tucker assuaged imperial administrators' concerns and distrust of the Bermudians by touting the colony's strategic significance in the reality of American independence and the British Empire's altered influence in the Americas. Tucker countered representations of Bermuda's reputation as a privateering and contraband base that supported the American rebels, and highlighted to the ministry on "every occasion...[of] the harmony that subsisted between [the British military] and the people."¹⁹⁹ The Bermudian lobbyist's diplomatic work in London impressed imperial officials, specifically Lord Germain and Undersecretary of State Thomas de Grey, and Tucker received encouragement to campaign for a seat in Parliament in 1780.²⁰⁰ Tucker, however, rejected the suggestion after concluding that it would be too expensive and a strain on his personal finances.²⁰¹ Tucker's endeavors to earn favor with the British government and alleviate their suspicions of his fellow islanders illustrate his pragmatic shift to embracing the view that Bermuda and the metropole needed a positive and beneficial relationship.

Colonel Tucker's shift towards British loyalism mirrors the wider pragmatic turn of his fellow islanders away from strongly supporting the American patriots and towards aiding Britain. Bermudians' pragmatic change occurred because of three primary factors: first, the unlikelihood and impracticality of Bermuda's annexation by the United States; second, the islanders' acceptance, albeit grudgingly, of the British military's presence at

¹⁹⁹ Henry Tucker, Sr. to Henry Tucker of Somerset, 30 September 1780, CO 37/39/124; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 439.

²⁰⁰ CO 37/39/124-126; Henry Tucker, Sr. to George Bascome, 8 August 1780, CO 37/39/128-131.

²⁰¹ CO 37/39/124-126; CO 37/39/128-131; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 438-439.

the island; and, third, Bermudians' reliance on privateering to provide income and supplies for their maritime society. The addition of four companies of invalid British troops and a contingent of royal artillery further expanded the colony's garrison in November 1779. While invalid, the soldiers' increased presence made it abundantly clear to Bermudians, and especially the assembly members, that the British occupation would last for the duration of the war, and that any attempts by Continental forces to annex the island by force would prove futile against the British Army and Royal Navy. The islanders had lost the ability to maintain their century-long autonomy and sovereignty within Britain's Atlantic empire. Bermudians increasingly came to tolerate and accommodate the British military's presence at the island. The arrival of a small, but enterprising, group of Loyalist merchants and mariners drove Bermuda's anti-American privateering efforts along the North American coast, which influenced American patriots' apprehension and opposition towards continued support for the Bermudians.

British and Bermudian privateers' ravaging of American patriots' ships challenged the Continental Congress's assessment of Bermudians' affinity to their cause, and they forced the delegates to restrict the revolutionary colonies' commercial ties to the isolated colony. In a debate before Congress, James Madison and James Duane of New York pushed for their fellow delegates to reevaluate and revise their previous trade exemption permitting trade with Bermuda and Bermudian vessels.²⁰² While Congress exempted vessels, arms, munitions, and other goods and wares belonging to Bermudians from seizure and condemnation by Patriot privateers, Madison and Duane pushed for an

²⁰² Continental Congress, "Friday, March 16, 1781" in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 19, *January 1, 1781 – April 23, 1781* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1912), 270-271.

end to this exemption and gained a resolution instructing the “Board of Admiralty or the Secretary of Marine” to alter privateering commissions and instructions allowing for Bermudian merchant ships to now be targeted for seizure.²⁰³ Eleven days later, Congress ameliorated their termination of Bermuda’s trade embargo exemption by permitting only Bermudian vessels loaded with salt to “arrive in any of these United States” by May 1st, 1781.²⁰⁴ Congress, however, progressively pushed out the expiration date of their new Bermudian trade restrictions until the end of the American Revolution. The delegates empowered the revolutionary Governor of Virginia, then Thomas Nelson, Jr., to issue sets of passports “licensing...Bermudian vessels to import salt only into Virginia, Maryland, or North Carolina.”²⁰⁵ In exchange, Congress approved the exportation “for Bermudas only” of American grains, specifically corn, flour, rice, wheat, rye, and barley.²⁰⁶ At the conclusion of the Revolution, the Continental Congress formally ended its trading relationship with Bermuda. The United States no longer recognized Bermuda as a separate entity from the rest of the British Empire, but rather a part of the whole.

British forces’ bifurcated strategies to engage the Continental Army in North America and its French and Dutch allies in the Caribbean created a gap in Britain’s military forces in the western Atlantic around the Bahamas and East Florida.

²⁰³ Ibid., 270-271.

²⁰⁴ Continental Congress, “Tuesday, March 27, 1781” in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 19, *January 1, 1781 – April 23, 1781*, 316.

²⁰⁵ Continental Congress, “Friday, September 14, 1781” in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 21, *July 23, 1781 – December 31, 1781* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1912), 959; Continental Congress, “Tuesday, August 14, 1781” in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 21, *July 23, 1781 – December 31, 1781*, 872.

²⁰⁶ Continental Congress, “Tuesday, August 14, 1781” in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 21, *July 23, 1781 – December 31, 1781*, 872.

Consequently, the Royal Navy increasingly limited itself to protecting the Caribbean, Bermuda, and British-held North American ports, while Loyalist privateers patrolled the North American coast and western Atlantic for Patriot ships.²⁰⁷ When allied Continental and French forces defeated Lord Cornwallis' army at Yorktown in October 1781, the British Army's principal North American force became confined to the Virginian tidewater. In the Caribbean, Admiral Rodney's occupation and plundering of St. Eustatius limited his fleet to the Leeward Islands, and his refusal to pursue further military operations in the Atlantic denied relief for Lord Cornwallis and his forces. Consequently, the approximately 1,592-mile gap between the British Army at Yorktown and naval reinforcements in the eastern Caribbean created an exploitable crack in Britain's military presence around the Bahamas and Straits of Florida. Inside this zone, however, American loyalist and Bahamian privateers attempted to maintain the line of British authority and strength, which they displayed by launching campaigns of harassment against American patriot and Spanish merchant vessels.

British privateers in the region gained strength from the American loyalists fleeing the revolutionary conflict in the Lower South. American loyalists turned to British-held East Florida and the Bahamas as perceived zones of safety.²⁰⁸ Driven by

²⁰⁷ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 168-169; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 431-435, 442-443; Richard Buel, Jr., *In Irons: Britain's Naval Supremacy and the American Revolutionary Economy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); List of Privateers belonging to Bermuda, 4 April 1782 to 4 April 1783, CO 37/39/25; Bridger Goodrich (Bermuda) to Bartlett Goodrich (London), 12 January 1782, CO 37/40/234; Robert Traill to Lord Shelburne, 19 September 1782, CO 37/38/164; Memorial of John William and Bridger Goodrich, October 1782, *BJAMH* 12 (2001), 195-196.

²⁰⁸ Maya Jasanoff, "The Other Side of Revolution: Loyalists in the British Empire," *William and Mary Quarterly* 65, no. 2 (Apr., 2008), 208, 208n4, 220; Thelma Peters, "The Loyalist Migration from East Florida to the Bahama Islands," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (Jan., 1962), 131-132, 137-138;

vengeance, American loyalist privateers joined with Bahamian privateers pursuing income and supplies from unsuspecting Patriot vessels. The Bahamian and American loyalist privateers plunged the western Atlantic sea-lanes into a chaotic fight between privateering hunters and merchant prey. Together American loyalist and Bahamian hunters hauled 37 American vessels to Nassau's Vice-Admiralty Court by June 30th, 1780.²⁰⁹ Over the next two years, roving patrols more than tripled the number of American vessels captured and impounded in Bahamian courts, reaching 127 vessels in April 1782, and their efforts inflicted great financial distress on merchants and mariners in Cuba, Saint Domingue, and the rebellious mainland.²¹⁰ The privateers' actions increased the number of prisoners held in New Providence to a level that stressed available stocks of food and supplies as the colony proved unable to "keep or Victual them."²¹¹ To alleviate the crisis caused by the growing privateer fleet, Governor John Maxwell unsuccessfully requested that the colony receive additional naval support to "keep the Privateersmen in Order."²¹² Maxwell, in an effort to avoid further stressing the island colony's provisions stocks, decided to implement a catch-impound-release strategy that stripped Patriot ships of their cargos, and the returned them to the nearest American

Wilbur H. Seibert, *Loyalists of East Florida, 1774-1785* (DeLand, FL: Florida State Historical Society, 1929), 150, 159; A. Deans Peggs, *A Short History of the Bahamas* (Nassau, The Bahamas: The Deans Peggs Research Fund, 1959), 17; Charlene Johnson Kozy, "Tories Transplanted: The Caribbean Exile and Plantation Settlement of Southern Loyalists," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (Spr., 1991), 25.

²⁰⁹ John Maxwell to Lord George Germain, 31 August 1780, CO 23/25/7.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

ports.²¹³ Consequently, this process turned the Bahamas' Vice-Admiralty Court into a revolving door for Atlantic privateering.

The Bahamas' reawakening as a privateering base for attacking Patriot commerce forced the Continental Congress to terminate its commercial relationship with the archipelago. Delegates fixated on two principal changes in the American patriot-Bahamian wartime relationship: the rise of a colonial military dictatorship under Governor Montfort Browne; and, the Bahamian privateers' frequent attacks against Patriot vessels.²¹⁴ "Such privateers and armed vessels have," the delegates observed, "actually captured divers[e] vessels, the property of the citizens of these states, on the coast of South Carolina."²¹⁵ These developments necessitated Congress's earlier embargo exemption to be repealed and "held void."²¹⁶ Congress's termination of its embargo exemption, a policy that had been in effect since July 1776, isolated the few remaining ideological Patriot-sympathizers who had not emigrated to the Patriot-held mainland, and turned the colony's populace into practical loyalists. Subsequently, the islanders relied on the contraband trade and privateering as the primary means of acquiring income and provisions to sustain their families and communities between 1779 and 1782.

The Bahamians' embrace of both Britain's authority and war effort also enlightened the Congress to the colony's larger threat to American domestic and regional security. James Madison, joined by James Duane, made a joint motion before the

²¹³ Ibid.; Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 158.

²¹⁴ Continental Congress, "Monday, March 29, 1779" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 13, *January 1, 1779 – April 22, 1779*, 388.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 388.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 388.

chamber against the continuation of commerce with the Bahamians. Madison and Duane advocated for ceasing the commercial intercourse that Congress originally designed to encourage importing munitions and arms from “virtuous individuals” from the islands.²¹⁷ Aggressive privateering and Browne’s “military government” created an image of pro-British Bahamians, who had turned upon the Continental Congress after taking advantage of American patriots’ bounty and generosity. The on-going Bahamian-American trade gave rise to Madison and Duane’s suspicions that “a clandestine trade and intercourse is carried on” with British forces and sympathizers.²¹⁸ Madison and Duane believed the Bahamians’ clandestine trade was “better enabled to support the burdens of the war and prosecute the arts of seduction among the citizens of these States,” and the Bahamians would “give colour to their [American patriots] misrepresentations in Europe of a latent predilection in these States towards them.”²¹⁹ The Congress’s continued authorization of the Bahamian trade threatened to spread subversive intelligence and propaganda to undermine the American patriots’ alliances to Britain’s benefit.

The possibility of Bahamians circulating rumors and false intelligence concerning Continental forces and their European allies imperiled Congress’s hard won trans-Atlantic political and military relationships. Congress’s trans-Atlantic bonds were crucial to securing the thirteen colonies’ independence, as well as France and Spain’s efforts to fracture Britain’s hold on eastern North America and the Caribbean. The loss of these

²¹⁷ Continental Congress, “Friday, March 16, 1781” in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 19, *January 1, 1781 – April 23, 1781*, 270.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 270.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 270.

relationships would threaten tipping the war back in favor of Great Britain, which would allow British forces to regain the upper hand and retake control of the thirteen colonies. The Revolution stood to be lost. Keenly aware of this reality, Madison and Duane pointed to how misrepresentations did “not accord” with the current “intimate connection” existing between the rebellious thirteen colonies and France.²²⁰ Potential divisions between the Patriots and their European allies only added to the “resources of the common enemy” in a protracted war.²²¹

In Congress’s efforts to negotiate a formal military and commercial alliance with Imperial Spain, American representatives focused on mutual regional security against Britain’s presence and privateering activities in the Bahamas and the Floridas. In letters to John Jay, the American ambassador to Spain, the delegates asserted their willingness to assist Spain in its attempts to expel British forces from the border regions adjacent to the United States’ frontiers and Spain’s Caribbean and North American territories. Robert Morris, Jr., a Pennsylvania delegate on the Secret Committee of Trade and the Committee of Correspondence, urged Ambassador Jay to offer Continental forces’ assistance to Spain concerning “the reduction of the Floridas, & Bahamas, & perhaps of Jamaica.”²²² Morris contended American military assistance for Spain’s operations to expel Britain from the Gulf of Mexico and the western Caribbean would benefit Spain’s commercial and maritime security.²²³ Spanish-American military cooperation, the American patriots

²²⁰ Ibid., 270-271.

²²¹ Ibid., 270-271.

²²² Robert Morris, Jr. to John Jay, 4 July 1781, 8, HSP, The Papers of John Jay digital collection, Columbia University Libraries. Reference URL: <https://dlc.library.columbia.edu/jay/ldpd:10354>.

believed, would reduce and drive out British privateers and smugglers undermining Spain's commercial power that "is so much interrupted."²²⁴ Morris and the Congress attempted to assuage any concerns Jay might have about this effort to persuade Spain into an alliance by asserting that the rebellious mainland colonies' shared border with the Spanish Empire would pose no serious threat to either country's security.²²⁵ They optimistically believed that the "century to come most probably will be entirely turned to agriculture and commerce," and an allied or neutral Spanish port in East Florida would facilitate a mutually beneficial commercial relationship.²²⁶

Imperial Spain's government also concluded that the Bahamians' privateering constituted a strategic threat to its commerce sailing to and from Cuba and Santo Domingo. King Carlos III focused directly on the Bahamas as the first target in Spain's military plans to retake East Florida, and then secure the Straits of Florida for trans-Atlantic Spanish commerce.²²⁷ The Governor of Louisiana, Bernardo de Gálvez, argued

²²³ Ibid. Robert Morris, Jr.'s encouragement of Jay to offer the Continental forces' assistance to help persuade Imperial Spain to agree to an alliance with the United States was driven by unspoken national and personal interests. Morris was a Philadelphian merchant. Morris and his fellow American patriot merchants, who plied the trades between the rebellious colonies and the French, Dutch, and Spanish Caribbean colonies, were losing ships to the American loyalist and Bahamian privateers operating around the Bahamas and Straits of Florida. The Spanish Empire joining the Revolution as an ally of the American patriots in offensives against the Bahamas and Floridas would remove much of the privateering threat harassing and intercepting the American patriot-Caribbean trade. Removing the Bahamas and the Floridas as privateer threats would enable goods, supplies, and munitions to move freely to the Revolution's southern theater in Georgia and the Carolinas.

²²⁴ Robert Morris, Jr. to John Jay, 4 July 1781, 9-10, HSP, The Papers of John Jay digital collection, Columbia University Libraries. Reference URL: <https://dlc.library.columbia.edu/jay/ldpd:10354>.

²²⁵ Robert Morris, Jr. to John Jay, 4 July 1781, 10-11, HSP, The Papers of John Jay digital collection, Columbia University Libraries. Reference URL: <https://dlc.library.columbia.edu/jay/ldpd:10354>.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Eric Beerman, "The Last Battle of the American Revolution," 83. Primary sources relevant to this are cited as: "Plan de Operaciones," González de Castejón to José de Solano, El Pardo, 8 April 1780, AGI,

in a letter to his uncle José de Gálvez, a member of the Council of the Indies in Spain, that by controlling the Bahamas and suppressing British-allied privateers, Spanish and French forces' movements would be unconstrained, and able to launch a combined invasion of Jamaica from Cap Français, Saint Domingue.²²⁸ Captain-General Juan Manuel de Cagigal of Havana concurred with Governor Gálvez. The captain-general contended that the Bahamas would also provide Spanish forces with an important strategic vantage point from which hostile British warships bound to attack Havana could be monitored and intercepted travelling through the Straits of Florida.²²⁹

Despite the rebellious thirteen colonies and Imperial Spain possessing mutual enemies and overlapping security objectives, the prospects that a military alliance would be achieved proved unlikely. The Continental forces aiding Spain's military efforts against the Floridas and the Bahamas, let alone Jamaica, would be seen by Patriots and Patriot officials as a waste of men and resources necessary to defeat Britain in the thirteen colonies. Based on Henry Laurens' opinions on plans against West Florida and Hopkins' invasion of the Bahamas, Congress approving Continental forces' participation in an invasion of Jamaica would have met resistance from southern delegates.²³⁰ While

Santo Domingo, legajo 2086; José de Gálvez to Diego José Navarro, San Lorenzo del Escorial, 18 October 1780, AGI, Papeles Procedentes de Cuba, legajo 1290.

²²⁸ Bernardo de Gálvez to José de Gálvez, 1 January 1780, AGI, Indiferente General, legajo 1578; Lewis, *The Final Campaign of the American Revolution*, 34-35; Beerman, "The Last Battle of the American Revolution," 83.

²²⁹ Beerman, "The Last Battle of the American Revolution," 86; Juan Manuel de Cagigal to Bernardo de Gálvez, 21 January 1782 in "Consejo, 1785, El Sr. Fiscal con El Teniente Gral. Dn. Juan Manuel de Cagigal Sobre le Conquista de la Isla de la Providencia," Consejo de Indias 20170, no. 4, Archivo Histórico Nacional.

²³⁰ Henry Laurens, "Henry Laurens to the President of South Carolina (John Rutledge), Philadelphia, 12th August 1777" in *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*, ed. Edmund C. Burnett, vol. 2, *July 5, 1776 to December 31, 1777*, 446-448; Thomas Jefferson, "Outline of Argument Concerning

Congress's promises were hollow, they needed to secure further military aid, supplies, and money that the Spanish Empire could provide.²³¹ Spain, however, did not see an alliance with the rebellious Americans as in their best interests.²³² Spain viewed the rebellious thirteen colonies as neither hostile subjects of Great Britain, nor friends of Spain, and considered the American patriots to be neutral and entitled to limited aid demanded by hospitality.²³³ Following its entry into the war as France's ally, Spain independently pursued its own military campaigns against Britain and did not enter a formal alliance with Congress; but circumstances necessitated flexibility by Spanish and American patriot military officials in pursuing their mutual security objectives.

Imperial officials initiated their own plans and preparations for an invasion of the Bahamas as part of a multipart offensive against British forces in the Caribbean. Bernardo de Gálvez quietly amassed an invasion force in Havana throughout 1781 in preparation to launch an assault on the heart of the Bahamian and American loyalist privateering threat.²³⁴ Gálvez appointed Cagigal to take command of forty-five Spanish transport ships and approximately 2,000 soldiers, which constituted the majority of the invasion's armed personnel and transport vessels.²³⁵ Cagigal, however, lacked armed

Insubordination of Esek Hopkins, 12 August 1776" in *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P. Boyd, vol. 15, 27 March 1789 to 30 November 1789, 578-582.

²³¹ Dull, *A Diplomatic History of the American Revolution*, 70, 78, 88, 91, 112, 120.

²³² *Ibid.*, 91-92, 107-109, 112.

²³³ Diego José Navarro, Memorandum included in an official letter copy, Havana, June 27, 1779, AGI, Santo Domingo, legajo 2082.

²³⁴ Juan Ignacio de Urriza to Bernardo de Gálvez, List of the Fleet and the Form of the Fleets Sailing...against the Bahama Islands, 29 April 1782, Indiferente General, legajo 1579, AGI in Domestic Letters of the Department of State, M40, reel 3, pp. 48-53, 68-69, National Archives of the United States.

warships to protect the transport vessels, since they needed to be available for an assault against Jamaica, and finding a suitable escort delayed the invasion force's departure.²³⁶

The Bahamian and American loyalist threat prompted a military venture between Spanish authorities in Cuba and American patriot military commanders to secure the region. Commodore Alexander Gillon's arrival at Havana on January 20th, 1782 with revolutionary South Carolina's naval fleet offered Cagigal the naval support necessary to escort his troop transports to attack New Providence. The American fleet provided a sufficient substitute for Spanish naval support, and Cagigal concluded that the Americans could be persuaded with a monetary incentive.²³⁷ Cagigal negotiated with Gillon for his small twelve-ship fleet to escort the main invasion force, and offered compensation to Gillon of ten *pesos* and four *reales* per ton for each month the fleet was in Spain's service until eight days following the Bahamas' surrender.²³⁸ Gillon agreed and Cagigal's invasion force set sail on April 22nd, 1782.

With British forces' power diminished, the Bahamas' colonial government and inhabitants attempted to bolster the islands' military strength to deter attacks from the rebellious Americans. Governor Maxwell spent the first year of his governorship assembling the largest armed force to defend the Bahamas since the American

²³⁵ Juan Ignacio de Urriza to Bernardo de Gálvez, List of the Fleet and the Form of the Fleets Sailing...against the Bahama Islands, 29 April 1782, AGI, Indiferente General, legajo 1579 in Domestic Letters of the Department of State, M40, reel 3, pp. 48-53, 68-69, National Archives of the United States; Lewis, *The Final Campaign of the American Revolution*, 21, 115-116n7, 116n8.

²³⁶ José de Gálvez to Juan Manuel de Cagigal, 20 January 1782, AGI, Santo Domingo, legajo 2085B; Beerman, "The Last Battle of the American Revolution," 84; Juan Manuel de Cagigal to Bernardo de Gálvez, 21 January 1782, AGI, Santo Domingo, legajo 2085B.

²³⁷ James A. Lewis, *Neptune's Militia: The Frigate South Carolina during the American Revolution* (Kent, OH and London: Kent State University Press, 1999), 60.

²³⁸ Juan Ignacio de Urriza to Bernardo de Gálvez, 29 April 1782, AGI, Indiferente General, legajo 1579; Beerman, "The Last Battle of the American Revolution," 85.

Revolution's outbreak with 247 British regulars, 338 militiamen, and 800 armed sailors across a dozen privateering vessels.²³⁹ Even with the increased troop presence and armed privateers at New Providence, Maxwell's efforts were undermined by three historical problems that plagued the colony for much of the eighteenth century: 1. the archipelago's perceived lack of importance to the British government; 2. its crumbling fortifications and dearth of revenue for repairs; and, 3. the strategic difficulties associated with defending a small island against superior naval and army forces.²⁴⁰ These three problems proved the undoing of the Bahamas and its privateer force when confronted with Cagigal and Gillon's armada.

The Spanish-American force's overwhelming strength, combined with New Providence's defensive constraints, presented the Bahamian officials and inhabitants with one viable decision: surrender. The Bahamas' lack of profitable cash crops and plantation agriculture caused the British government to neglect sending funds and supplies to improve the archipelago's forts and defensive infrastructure, as well as station only a skeleton force of soldiers. While Maxwell increased the Bahamas military forces, on the day of Spanish-American force arrived the numbers present and fit for duty had

²³⁹ John Maxwell, State of the Royal Garrison Battalion, 2 February 1781, British Headquarters Papers: New York City, 1774-1783 (Carleton Papers), reel M-351, document 3315, LAC; John Maxwell, State of the Royal Garrison Battalion, 29 April 1782, British Headquarters Papers: New York City, 1774-1783 (Carleton Papers), reel M-355, document 4508, LAC; John Maxwell to Henry Clinton, 15 April 1782, British Headquarters Papers: New York City, 1774-1783 (Carleton Papers), reel M-354, document 4401, LAC; John Maxwell to Alexander Leslie, 17 April 1782, British Headquarters Papers: New York City, 1774-1783 (Carleton Papers), reel M-354, document 4420, LAC; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 168-169.

²⁴⁰ A Narrative of the Transactions & on the Invasion of the Island of New Providence by the Rebels in 1776, 15 June 1779, CO 23/9/113; At a Council held this Day, 3 March 1776, CO 23/9/122r; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 164-168; O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 169-172.

decreased to 203 regulars and 132 militiamen.²⁴¹ Forts Nassau and Montagu, Nassau's primary defensive structures, were in states of severe disrepair after suffering two attacks and occupations by the Continental Navy in March 1776 and January 1778.²⁴² Both American assaults left Fort Nassau's walls breeched with large cracks and buttresses crumbling into the harbor.²⁴³

Cagigal and Gillon's forces overwhelmed the small Bahamian defense force, and they compelled Governor Maxwell to surrender control of Britain's western Atlantic privateering base. On May 6th, Cagigal and Gillon's force of 57 ships and 2,000 soldiers emerged from the Bahamas' northwestern channel, and laid siege to New Providence.²⁴⁴ Francisco de Miranda commenced negotiations with Maxwell, and demanded the archipelago surrender to Spain within twelve hours.²⁴⁵ If the colony refused to capitulate, the American warships would begin bombarding Fort Nassau with their heavy artillery.²⁴⁶ Maxwell sent a request to General Alexander Leslie for "three British frigates" to be dispatched from Charleston to the Bahamas, which Maxwell believed would relieve the islands from their present situation.²⁴⁷ Yet, if the British military had forces to spare for

²⁴¹ John Maxwell, State of the Troops on the Island of New Providence, Fort Nassau, 6 May 1782, CO 23/25/67.

²⁴² CO 23/9/112-113; *Good News for America.: Salem, Tuesday, April 16, 1776*, 1, MHS; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 162, 166-168.

²⁴³ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 166-168.

²⁴⁴ John Maxwell to Lord George Germain, 11 May 1782, CO 23/25/61; Juan Manuel de Cagigal to John Maxwell, 6 May 1782, CO 23/25/62.

²⁴⁵ CO 23/25/62.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

the Bahamas' immediate defense, they lay days or weeks away from the Bahamian capital. The armada's position off New Providence's northern coast bottled up the privateer fleet and available merchant vessels in Nassau harbor, which prevented the Bahamians from launching an effective naval defense and receiving supplies necessary for surviving the siege. Following nearly two days of deliberations between Maxwell and Cagigal, Maxwell surrendered the Bahamas to Spain on May 8th.²⁴⁸ The combined force's capture and control of the Bahamas served an important strategic purpose for both Spain and the revolutionary thirteen colonies by removing a neighboring British threat.

Spain and the American patriots' capture of the Bahamas forced Britain to cede the Floridas in the peace treaty negotiations of 1783. In exchanging the Bahamas for the Floridas, Spain retained a degree of control over the Straits of Florida by denying Britain the continued possession of both the strait's Floridian and Bahamian sides, which secured safe harbors for Spanish merchants and warships traveling to and from Spain's Caribbean possessions. Delegates in the Continental Congress reasoned that their future country stood to benefit significantly from Spain's treaty negotiations and the Floridas return to Spanish rule, because it removed the threat posed by British troops and warships stationed along a porous southern U.S.-British Empire border.²⁴⁹ Virginia delegate Arthur Lee professed it "unwise to prefer G[reat] B[ritain] to Spain as our neighbor," because doing such was analogous to "the viper which was ready to destroy the family of the man

²⁴⁷ CO 23/25/61; John Maxwell to Alexander Leslie, 6 May 1782, CO 23/25/65.

²⁴⁸ Articles of Capitulation, 8 May 1782, CO 23/25/57-59; John Maxwell to Lord George Germain, 14 May 1782, CO 23/25/55-56.

²⁴⁹ Continental Congress, "Wednesday, October 4, 1780," in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 18, *September 7, 1780 – December 29, 1780* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), 901-902.

in whose bosom it had been restored to life.”²⁵⁰ Spain’s control of the Floridas gave the thirteen colonies a less hostile neighbor that might grant permission for American merchant ships to enter and leave the Mississippi, Alabama, and Apalachicola rivers safely.²⁵¹

Spain’s hold on the Bahamas proved to be even shorter lived, however, as American loyalist forces and refugees invaded the Bahamas to reestablish British rule and provide a sanctuary for Loyalist exiles fleeing Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, and later East Florida. On April 1st, 1783, unaware of Imperial Spain’s successful treaty negotiations with Britain to exchange the Bahamas for the Floridas, a contingent of South-Carolinian loyalist militiamen and privateers led by Colonel Andrew Deveaux launched an expedition to recapture the Bahamas from Spain.²⁵² After picking up additional Bahamian militia forces from Eleuthera Island, Deveaux’s fleet arrived off New Providence on April 13th.²⁵³ The Loyalist invasion force initially baffled the Spanish commander and acting governor Don Antonio Claraco y Sanz, who received word a week earlier from Cuba’s new captain-general, Luis de Unzaga, of Spain’s preliminary peace treaty that returned the Bahamas to Britain in exchange for the Floridas.²⁵⁴ On the

²⁵⁰ Continental Congress, “Saturday, 22 March,” in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 25, *September 1, 1783 – December 31, 1783* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), 939.

²⁵¹ Continental Congress, “Wednesday, October 4, 1780,” in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 18, *September 7, 1780 – December 29, 1780*, 901-902; Continental Congress, “Tuesday, October 17, 1780,” in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 18, *September 7, 1780 – December 29, 1780*, 935-947.

²⁵² Riley, *Homeward Bound*, 131-132; James W. Raab, *Spain, Britain, and the American Revolution, 1763-1783* (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland, 2008), 159.

²⁵³ Testimony of Daniel Wheeler, 21 May 1783, CO 23/26/42-43.

morning of April 14th, Deveaux landed a force of around 230 militiamen to challenge the 500 Spanish soldiers garrisoned at Nassau.²⁵⁵ The American loyalist army managed to capture Fort Montagu on Nassau's eastern edge, along with three ships in the harbor, which drove the defenders to consolidate their strength at Fort Nassau and force a two-day standoff.²⁵⁶ Claraco, believing that an engagement with Deveaux's men would prove futile and imprudent with the coming territorial exchange, surrendered to Deveaux on April 18th.²⁵⁷

The loss of the Bahamas during the peace negotiations upended Spain's hard-won bargaining chip, which threatened Britain's cession of East Florida and the unification of the Florida peninsula under Spanish rule. After being held hostage by Deveaux for several weeks, Claraco and his forces departed for Cuba where authorities charged him with the unwarranted surrender of Nassau to an inferior force, and they imprisoned him at Havana and Madrid until his acquittal in 1791.²⁵⁸ Imperial Spain wanted to hold on to the Bahamas until the Treaty of Paris was ratified and the Bahamas-East Florida territorial exchange took place. Yet, with Deveaux and his Loyalist force's successful capture of the

²⁵⁴ Lewis, *The Final Campaign of the American Revolution*, 66.

²⁵⁵ CO 23/26/42-43; "By the last advices from Savannah...", *South-Carolina Gazette; and General Advertiser*, 13 May 1783, 4; "Articles Entered upon between Don Antonio Claraco Sauz, Governour of the Babama Islands, &c. &c., and his Honour Andrew Deveaux, Colonel and Commander in Chief of the Expedition," *The South-Carolina Weekly Gazette*, 24 May 1783, 4; Riley, *Homeward Bound*, 132-133.

²⁵⁶ Raab, *Spain, Britain, and the American Revolution in Florida*, 159; "By the last advices from Savannah...", *South-Carolina Gazette; and General Advertiser*, 13 May 1783, 4; "Articles Entered upon between Don Antonio Claraco Sauz, Governour of the Bahama Islands, &c. &c., and his Honour Andrew Deveaux, Colonel and Commander in Chief of the Expedition," *The South-Carolina Weekly Gazette*, 24 May 1783, 4.

²⁵⁷ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 170-171; Raab, *Spain, Britain, and the American Revolution in Florida*, 159-160.

²⁵⁸ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 171.

Bahamas, what was an important Spanish victory critical to the return of East Florida, became a humiliating defeat at the hands of a volunteer militia force. Militia, not against the more formidable and respected British Army or the Royal Navy. The Loyalists' capture of the Bahamas gave Britain an unexpected victory at the end of the American Revolution. Britain's recapture of the Bahamas had the potentiality of changing the territorial exchanges and terms of the peace treaty between Britain, France, Spain, and the United States, which in May 1783 were still preliminary and had not been finalized and ratified. Although Spain's surrender of the Bahamas did not alter the Treaty of Paris' terms and exchanges between Britain and Spain, the possibility of the Bahamas-East Florida deal falling through was a consequence that imperial officials took seriously.

The Spanish-American military operation endeavored to secure the emergent United States' security from future British attacks out of the Floridas and the Bahamas, while safeguarding Imperial Spain's commercial trade in the northern Caribbean and attempting to release Spain's forces for a potential invasion of Jamaica. The operation succeeded in returning control of Florida to Spain and preventing Britain from retaining a toehold to challenge a sovereign United States along its southern frontier. Yet, the long-term consequences of Spanish-American operation against the Bahamas produced mixed results in the years following the American Revolution. Spain and the United States' hard-won gains vanished with Britain's military and socio-cultural entrenchment in the Bahamas during the late 1780s and 1790s and Spain's deteriorating control over its Florida territory in the early nineteenth century. Britain's concession of the Floridas in the Treaty of Paris of 1783 pushed new waves of hardened American loyalist refugees

into the Bahamas, which transformed the islands and Straits of Florida into a solidified Anglo-Spanish border-sea.

Conclusion

In the American Revolution's waning years, the British Atlantic islanders were progressively driven into the British Empire's arms. The Royal Navy's prolonged presence and activity at Bermuda burdened the islanders with famine and an epidemic in 1778 and 1779. The Continental Congress's restriction of its trade embargo's exemption for Bermuda and termination for the Bahamas increased the islanders' need to secure greater support from the metropole through commerce, naval support, and through privateering raids against Patriot shipping. Recognizing the unlikelihood of American annexation and beleaguered by famine and disease, Bermudians dispatched Colonel Tucker to forge closer ties with the metropole and reestablish a regular flow of trade from Britain to the island. For Bahamians, American loyalist refugees fleeing to the colony and the economic windfall from wartime privateering caused the inhabitants to end their support for the American patriots. Consequently, Bahamian and Loyalist privateering damaged the American patriots' relationship with the Bahamas. In response to the colony's privateering threat, American patriot and Spanish forces cooperated in an operation to destroy the Bahamian privateering nest and subdue the island colony.

The American Revolution's fracturing of the British Empire on the North American continent and western Atlantic facilitated the construction of a series of strongholds, grey borderlands, and pivot points that Britain employed to contain and subvert the nascent United States. Following the war's conclusion, the British

administration reimagined Bermuda and the Bahamas' functions within a new British Empire from military and economic security standpoints. Through the islands' strategic rebirth, Bermuda and the Bahamas transformed from colonial economies heavily dependent on the North American mainland for trade, and into island societies that relied on the British government and military for their sustainability and prosperity. The post-war British Atlantic Islands' economic and military dependency on Britain drew them into the metropole's sphere of influence. Consequently, they became points that projected Britain's presence and strength from the western Atlantic into the United States and wider North American mainland. The British Atlantic Islands' emergence as reinforceable frontier borderlands neighboring the United States transformed them into bases and rally points for Britain to reassert its authority over eastern North America, and ultimately attempt to reclaim its thirteen former colonies.

CHAPTER IV

THE WESTERN GIBRALTAR AND FORTRESS NASSAU

Introduction

The signing and ratification of the Treaty of Paris of 1783 ended a brutal civil war within the British Empire. The United States won its independence from Britain; for the moment. The Continental Congress, Patriot diplomats, and new American citizens joined the community of sovereign nations in an insecure, politically messy, and territorially precarious position. The expansive visions of Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane, and the Continental Congress for uniting eastern North America and the Atlantic islands into the United States of North America vanished with the Revolution's smoke.¹ The North American continent was now divided between the United States, the British Empire in Canada and the Great Lakes, and a revived Imperial Spain in the Floridas. The young United States found itself surrounded by borderlands, border-seas, and frontier spaces shared by neighbouring "territories of different powers."² Apt locations, as Franklin determined in 1776, for skirmishes and "occasions for misunderstanding" to bring the United States and Great Britain into war once again.³ Within these North American and

¹ Benjamin Franklin, "Sketch of Propositions for a Peace 1776," in *PBF*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 22, *March 21, 1775 through October 27, 1776*, 630-631; Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin*, 169-170; Continental Congress, "Treaty of Alliance, Eventual and Defensive" in *JCC*, eds. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., vol. 11, *May 2, 1778 – September 1, 1778*, 450-451.

² Benjamin Franklin, "Sketch of Propositions for a Peace 1776," in *PBF*, eds. William B. Willcox et al., vol. 22, *March 21, 1775 through October 27, 1776*, 630-631.

³ *Ibid.*, 630-631.

Atlantic border zones, the British government and Loyalist refugees fortified colonies and territories to oppose the United States and its citizens.

For Great Britain, the American Revolution's conclusion initiated a bifurcated approach to securing, reasserting, and expanding its imperial power in both the Atlantic and wider world. Beginning in 1765, Britain devoted increasing attention to colonizing and extending its authority over India to secure the trade in tea, spices, and manufactured goods for exportation to Europe and colonial American markets.⁴ Britain's eastward turn accelerated following the thirteen united colonies' separation from the empire, and forced Whitehall administrators, colonial governors, and members of Parliament to strengthen the empire's administrative structure and military authority in its softer Atlantic and Canadian frontier territories.⁵ In the North American frontiers and western Atlantic, the British Empire pursued a plan to constrain the nascent United States through the expansion and entrenchment of its military presence through fortification and settlement, as well as naval impressment later on, along its new borders.⁶ Britain's solidification of

⁴ Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empire*, 182-272; Eacott, *Selling Empire*, 168-226.

⁵ Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empire*, 353-379; Frank Griffith Dawson, "William Pitt's Settlement at Black River on the Mosquito Shore: A Challenge to Spain in Central America, 1732-87," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 63, no. 4 (Nov., 1983), 677-706; Frank Griffith Dawson, "The Evacuation of the Mosquito Shore and the English Who Stayed Behind, 1786-1800," *The Americas* 55, no. 1 (July, 1998), 63-89.

⁶ Nicole Eustace, *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 3, 16, 25, 78, 81, 88-92, 207-209, 243-244n7.

The Royal Navy also employed impressment against American mariners and sailors, particularly to fill depleted ranks during the French Revolutionary Wars, which became an issue of serious contention between the United States and Great Britain in the years between the American Revolution and the War of 1812. See: Denver Brunsman, "Subjects vs. Citizens: Impressment and Identity in the Anglo-American Atlantic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 30, no. 4 (Win., 2010), 557-586; Charles R. Ritcheson, "Thomas Pinckney's London Mission, 1792-1796, and the Impressment Issue," *International History Review* 2, no. 4 (Oct., 1980), 523-541; Gerard Clarfield, "Postscript to the Jay Treaty: Timothy Pickering and Anglo-American Relations, 1795-1797," *William and Mary Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (Jan., 1966), 106-120; Anthony Steel, "Anthony Merry and the Anglo-American Dispute about Impressment, 1803-6," *Cambridge*

its position against the United States transformed the Great Lakes and western Atlantic from middle grounds into divided grounds and imperial redoubts.⁷ Britain sought to buttress its Canadian territories, while simultaneously undermining the United States' authority in the Great Lakes' frontier, by not vacating its forts in American territory and resettling American loyalists to the region from New England, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.⁸ In Bermuda and the Bahamas, British efforts to strengthen their control over the western Atlantic sea lanes required overhauling and expanding the islands' fortifications, which had received little serious investment from their colonial governments and the metropole permitting them to fall into disrepair over the preceding decades.⁹

Historical Journal 9, no. 3 (1949), 331-351; Anthony Steel, "Impressment in the Monroe-Pinkney Negotiation, 1806-1807," *American Historical Review* 57, no. 2 (Jan., 1952), 352-369; Robert E. Cray, Jr., "Remembering the USS *Chesapeake*: The Politics of Maritime Death and Impressment," *Journal of the Early Republic* 25, no. 3 (Fall, 2005), 445-474; Keith Mercer, "Northern Exposure: Resistance to Naval Impressment in British North America, 1775-1815," *Canadian Historical Review* 91, no. 2 (June, 2010), 199-232; Nicholas Rogers, "British Impressment and its Discontents," *International Journal of Maritime History* 30, no. 1 (Feb., 2018), 52-73; Denver Brunzman, "Men of War: British Sailors and the Impressment Paradox," *Journal of Early Modern History* 14, no. 1-2 (Jan., 2010), 9-44.

⁷ Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (June, 1999), 818-823; Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*; White, *The Middle Ground*; Taylor, *The Divided Ground*.

⁸ Adelman and Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders," 818-823; Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812*; J. P. D. Dunbabin, "Motives for Mapping the Great Lakes: Upper Canada, 1782-1827," *Michigan Historical Review* 31, no. 1 (Spr., 2005), 1-43; White, *The Middle Ground*; Taylor, *The Divided Ground*; Bradford Perkins, "Lord Hawkesbury and the Jay-Grenville Negotiations," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 40, no. 2 (Sept., 1953), 291-304.

⁹ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 67, 392, 416, 423, 435, 455-456; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 164, 203; David, *Dunmore's New World*, 158-159, 170-171, 175-176, 229n74-75.

Scholarship on the development, construction, and importance of Bermudian and Bahamian forts, naval dockyards, and other defensive structures predominately focus on Bermuda and the Royal Navy dockyards in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Because the Bahamian forts and barracks on New Providence Island never saw action after the American Revolution, with limited use as prisons for American prisoners of war during the War of 1812, the secondary literature on Bahamian defensive structures is limited. Consequently, historical scholarship has centered on Fort Nassau's decrepit condition between 1740 and 1897, and Lord Dunmore's extensive military construction on New Providence during the 1780s and

In the Atlantic, what became a British lake following the Seven Years' War was now divided among multiple empires and a new country, and the dominant Anglophone world fractured into two antagonistic states. Despite this new disunion, Colonel Tucker maintained an optimistic outlook on Bermuda's fortunes, which he envisioned a new role for Bermuda as a free port that bridged the Atlantic to connect the independent United States and the British Empire.¹⁰ Continuing Bermuda's pre-revolutionary war economic success in a divided Anglophone Atlantic world, Tucker believed, rested on changing the island from being merely a colony within Britain's mercantilist economic system to a British free port in the middle of the North Atlantic.¹¹ Colonel Tucker surmised that if the British government classified Bermuda as an economic free port the island colony would be remade into the "storehouse of the Western world."¹² The Bermudian storehouse would generate revenues from commerce between the United States and the British Empire, and make Bermuda worth more than a half-dozen Caribbean islands.¹³ Through a Bermudian free port, Bermudian merchants and mariners stood to ensure a continuum of

1790s. The most recent and relevant work on the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Bahamas' military fortifications comes from Craton, Saunders, and David. Works addressing the Royal Navy and Bermudian defensive fortifications in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries include: Ian Stranack, *The Andrew and the Onions: The Story of the Royal Navy in Bermuda, 1795-1975* (Hamilton, Bermuda: Bermuda Maritime Museum Press, 1990); Terrance C. McGovern and Edward C. Harris, *Defenses of Bermuda, 1612-1995* (Oxford: Osprey, 2018); Wilkinson, *Bermuda from Sail to Steam*, vol. 1; Roger Willock, *Bulwark of Empire: Bermuda's Fortified Naval Base, 1860-1920* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962); J. C. Arnell, "Bermuda as a Naval Base," *Bermuda Historical Quarterly* 35 (1978), 58-63; Edward Cecil Harris, *Bermuda Forts, 1612-1957* (Hamilton, Bermuda: Bermuda Maritime Museum Press, 1997), 129-145, 147-240.

¹⁰ Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 2 August 1783, TCP; Robert Traill to Lord Shelburne, 19 September 1782, CO 37/38/164; Henry Tucker, Sr. to Lord North, 7 November 1783, CO 37/38/62.

¹¹ Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 2 August 1783, TCP; CO 37/38/164; CO 37/38/62.

¹² Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 2 August 1783, TCP; CO 37/38/164; CO 37/38/62.

¹³ Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 2 August 1783, TCP; CO 37/38/164; CO 37/38/62.

the pre-war status quo that bound the Anglophone Atlantic world together as a commercial hub and gateway.¹⁴

While Colonel Tucker and his fellow merchants and mariners living in the British Atlantic Islands held an optimistic spirit, British officials and American loyalist refugees stood in stark opposition to the islanders hoping to re-establish the status quo. Bahamian officials also desired to continue their commerce with the new United States, particularly as famine swept across the islands immediately following the war.¹⁵ Yet, the influx and settlement of American loyalist refugees and their slaves challenged the native Bahamian colonists for dominance, and fought to control the islands' political and cultural direction in the post-revolutionary war British Atlantic.¹⁶ Loyalists at New Providence violently opposed the Bahamians' reversion to their traditional, informal commercial policies, which fluctuated from a half-hearted enforcement of Britain's trade laws to the colonial government's sanctioning of Bahamians' commerce with hostile colonies and empires.¹⁷

¹⁴ Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 2 August 1783, TCP; CO 37/38/164; CO 37/38/62.

¹⁵ John Maxwell to Lord Sidney, 17 May 1784, CO 23/25/103-104; Riley, *Homeward Bound*, 160-161.

¹⁶ Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 215-245; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 179, 186-195; Gail Saunders, *Bahamian Loyalists and their Slaves* (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1983); Riley, *Homeward Bound*, 158-168; Jasanoff, "The Other Side of Revolution," 208, 208n4, 213, 220, 220n21, 221, 221n22, 223-225, 227; Paul Daniel Shirley, "Migration, Freedom and Enslavement in the Revolutionary Atlantic: The Bahamas, 1783-c. 1800" (Ph.D. diss., University College London, 2011); Thelma Peterson Peters, "The American Loyalists and the Plantation Period in the Bahama Islands" (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1960); Whittington Bernard Johnson, *Race Relations in the Bahamas, 1784-1834: The Nonviolent Transformation from a Slave to a Free Society* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000); Astrid Melzner Whidden, "The Influences of the American Loyalists on Bahamian Architecture (M.A. thesis, Florida Atlantic University, 1995); Michael John Prokopow, "To the Torrid Zone: The Fortunes and Misfortunes of American Loyalists in the Anglo-Caribbean Basin, 1774-1801" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1996), 117-296. For works on the black Loyalists and slaves who settled in the Bahamas, see: Curry, "Liberty Extended, Liberty Denied"; Curry, *Freedom and Resistance*.

Bahamians' traditional commercial practices and attempts to return to some semblance of pre-Revolution status quo clashed with the new permanent reality embodied by the Loyalist refugees settling throughout the Bahamian and Turks and Caicos archipelagos.

British fortification and Loyalist resettlement enabled the British Atlantic Islands to be recast as the empire's avant-garde borders-sea. The British Atlantic Islands took on the functions of outpost colonies for defending Britain's empire in the eyes of Britons, Americans, and the Atlantic island colonists. American, British, and European observers traveling through the islands emphasized Bermuda and the Bahamas' strategic importance for both the British Empire and United States' security.¹⁸ For the United States, American loyalists' emigration to and settlement on the British Atlantic Islands radically transformed the colonies from being pragmatic communities whose loyalties revolved around ensuring survival and security, and into looming threats to American citizens engaging in coastal and international commerce, port cities, and the United States' Atlantic coastline. The islands' established commercial connects to the newly independent United States weakened because of American tonnage fees, loyalist opposition to continuing legal and illicit trade relations, and an increasing reliance on British trade and income from imperial military projects in Bermuda and the Bahamas

¹⁷ John Maxwell to Lord Shelburne, 4 June 1784, CO 23/25/108; CO 23/25/103-104; Riley, *Homeward Bound*, 160-161; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 189.

¹⁸ John Graves, *A Memorial; or, A Short Account of the Bahama-Islands; Of their Situation, Product, Conveniency of Trading with the Spaniards: The Benefit that ariseth by the great Quantities of Salt that is made by the Sun; and the Safety all Ships that are in Distress near those Parts do find, by having so good a Harbour as Providence to bear away to for Succour* (London: n.p., 1708), 3-7; William Wylly, *A Short Account of the Bahama Islands, their climate, productions, &c. To which are added, Some Strictures upon their relative and political Situation, the Defects of their present Government, &c. &c.* (London: n.p., 1789), 1-2; John Melish, *A Description of East and West Florida, and the Bahama Islands* (Philadelphia: G. Palmer, 1813), 8-9.

between 1783 and the 1810s. The American loyalist refugees' resettlement in Bermuda and the Bahamas, coupled with increased expenditure and construction of new military fortifications, transformed the British Atlantic Islands' colonial loyalties, identities, and economies in a manner that solidified Britain's hold on the two archipelagos.

Economic and Social Transformations

In the decades following the American Revolution's conclusion, Bermudian and Bahamian economic fortunes reversed. The Bahamas began sinking back into the economic depression and isolation that characterized the islands' peacetime existence. In Bermuda, the inhabitants grappled with the commercial problems of a bitterly divided and fractured Anglophone Atlantic world, and how to resurrect their prosperous Atlantic trade in the face of new rules governing British commerce with the United States. British loyalism and imperial reconfiguration attempted to fill these economic voids in key ways. First, Loyalists from the Chesapeake, Lower South, and East Florida strove to remake the Bahamas into a plantation colony that employed their slaves in cash crop production. Second, exporting Bahamian staple crops to Britain would grow the islands' economy and increase imports of British manufactured goods. Finally, Loyalist political leaders imposed British loyalism on the predominately practical and pragmatic Bermudians and Bahamians by challenging their legal and contraband trades with American patriots and the United States. These economic and social changes transformed the British Atlantic Islands from maritime middle grounds dependent on the British North American mainland for their physical and commercial survival, strengthening social and economic

ties to the metropole, and initiated the western Atlantic's hardening into a fortified border-sea for the British Empire.

Beginning in the summer of 1783 the first organized mass migration of Loyalist refugees to the British Atlantic Islands began. From August to October 1783, about 1,500 New York loyalists made the journey to Abaco Island in several groups.¹⁹ The first "pioneer group" of 250 settlers and 95 "ostensibly free" blacks set sail on August 21st and 23rd, 1783, and was followed in September and October by at least two larger groups totaling "941 settlers," made up of "217 men, 118 women, 203 children...and 403 'servants'."²⁰ Further sporadic waves of Loyalist refugees poured into the Bahamas from the Canadian Maritimes, particularly Nova Scotia, and Spanish-controlled Florida. Of the 80,000 to 100,000 Loyalists who fled the United States after 1783, approximately 4,000 to 7,300 people settled in the Bahamas between 1783 and 1789. These refugees originally fled from New York, South Carolina, and Georgia to settle under British governance quickly and affordably in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and East Florida.²¹

American loyalists from the Carolinas, Georgia, and East Florida found themselves faced with the possibility of having to settle in Canada, where the climate was an antithesis to their warmer former homes, or the desolate Bahama Islands. The cold climate and rocky soil of the Canadian Maritimes made little sense to southern Loyalists, who regarded its climate as "not being calculated for Southern Constitutions, or for the

¹⁹ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 182-183, 421n5; Riley, *Homeward Bound*, Appendix E, 270-274.

²⁰ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 182-183.

²¹ Peters, "The Loyalist Migration from East Florida to the Bahama Islands," 131-132, 137-138; Wilbur H. Siebert, *Loyalists of East Florida, 1774-1785* (DeLand, FL: Florida State Historical Society, 1929), 150, 159; Peggs, *A Short History of the Bahamas*, 17; Kozy, "Tories Transplanted," 25.

employment of the Slaves.”²² The sparsely inhabited Bahamas were on a similar latitude to the Lower South and were far better suited slave-based agriculture than Canada. The soil, however, was “far too poor to establish sugar plantations...or to cultivate rice and tobacco” that southern Loyalists were accustomed too.²³ East Floridians and the other southern Loyalists regarded the Bahamas as being nothing more than “barren Rock[s],” which were “not initially appealing to [the] Florida-based refugees.”²⁴ In the summer of 1783, Dr. Lewis Johnston of St. Augustine journeyed to the archipelago on a mission to investigate the Bahamas’ suitability for relocating American loyalists and British East Floridians.²⁵ In his observations, Dr. Johnston commented that the Out Islands were only visited for “wrecking Turtling and cutting Timber.”²⁶ While the barren, rocky soil gave little hope of establishing prosperous staple-crop-producing plantations akin to those in Virginia’s Tidewater region, coastal South Carolina, Jamaica and Barbados, it did provide slave-owning, southern Loyalists with the opportunity to fulfill a principal objective: it was a “place where they could put their slaves to work” raking salt, harvesting native tropical fruits, and experimenting with cotton cultivation.²⁷

The British government’s purchase of the remaining Lords Proprietors’ claims brought about much needed land reforms in the Bahamas, which freed considerable

²² Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles*, 220-221.

²³ Patrick Tonyn to Sir Guy Carleton, 15 May 1783, Carleton Papers, Box 32, no. 7691, New York Public Library.

²⁴ Patrick Tonyn to Sir Guy Carleton, 15 May 1783, Carleton Papers, Box 32, no. 7691, New York Public Library.

²⁵ Lewis Johnson to unknown recipient, 14 July 1783, CO 5/560/928-933.

²⁶ CO 5/560/928-933.

²⁷ CO 5/560/928-933.

portions of the islands' territory to be parceled into inexpensive plots for Loyalist refugees and new settlers. Following the conclusion of the Revolution, the Crown bought out the three remaining Lords Proprietors' claims on the remaining uncultivated Bahamian lands between 1784 and 1787 for a "total payment of twenty-six thousand pounds."²⁸ The buyout enabled the British and Bahamian governments to sell land, conduct surveys, and maintain records of landownership on the islands. Loyalist refugees, "who on account of their loyalty to his Majesty," were awarded "forty acres of land...for every person, being master or mistress of a family" with an additional twenty acres for every "white and black man, woman, or child, of which such family shall consist."²⁹ Furthermore, Loyalists received lands "free of all expence [sic] whatever" at "his Majesty's Royal Will and Pleasure" for a duration of ten years, while long established, native Bahamians paid "an annual quit rent of two shillings per hundred acres."³⁰

The Crown's sale of newly acquired Bahamian lands significantly increased the amount of cultivated land. Calculations made by William Wylly, an ardent Loyalist and the Bahamas' solicitor general, illustrate the dramatic growth of Bahamian landownership by the end of the 1780s. Wylly's records show that by the conclusion of the American Revolution the total area of cultivated land was equal to 3,434 acres, but by 1788 the area had increased almost fivefold to 16,322 acres.³¹ While Wylly's tabulations

²⁸ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 191. The three remaining Lords Proprietors consisted of: Sir John Snell Colleton, Lord William Craven (6th Baron Craven), and Lord Anthony Ashley-Cooper (5th Earl of Shaftesbury).

²⁹ Proclamation of Lieutenant Governor Powell, *Bahama Gazette*, 10 September 1785.

³⁰ Proclamation of Lieutenant Governor Powell, *Bahama Gazette*, 10 September 1785; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 191.

of Bahamian development illustrate an era of grand expansion taking place, the extent of land purchases amounted to at least “43,000 acres” in “114 patents” for an “average of 382 acres.”³²

The growth in land sales following the post-war land reforms spurred the development of plantation agriculture, which led to the expansion of the islands’ cotton trade and slavery. Loyalist refugees settling on the islands after 1783 began to establish cotton plantations along the “south and southeastern islands...[of] Exuma, Long Island, Crooked Island, and Acklins.”³³ By the end of 1785, the Loyalists’ plantations produced “124 tons of cotton” on approximately 2,476 acres.³⁴ As demand for raw cotton increased dramatically with the rapid industrialization of British textile manufacturing, exports of cotton continued to increase steadily from 219 tons in 1787, to 442 tons in 1790, before finally peaking at approximately 602 tons in 1810.³⁵ Estimates of the average yield of cotton was roughly “112 pounds” per acre, with “exceptional plantations” harvesting up to “1,500 pounds...for each working slave.”³⁶

Although the Bahamas’ plantation system and cotton production proved modest, the islands’ development of a stable export commodity and sale of lands for Loyalist resettlement tightened the islanders’ bonds with Britain. For the seventeenth and

³¹ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 191-192; Wylly, *A Short Account of the Bahama Islands*, 7.

³² Arnold Talbot Bethell, *The Early Settlers of the Bahamas and Colonists of North America* (1937; reprint, Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, 2008), 99-109; Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 165.

³³ Howard Johnson, *The Bahamas from Slavery to Servitude* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 13.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁵ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 192.

³⁶ Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 191.

eighteenth centuries, Bahamian exports consisted of timber, local fruits, turtle meat and fish, and salt that islanders sold at neighboring North American and Caribbean ports. Bahamian cotton constituted the first major exportable good that British administrators and merchants found valuable to the domestic manufacturing industry and markets. New cash crop development and Loyalist settlements' transformative effects on Bahamian affinity to the metropole, the British administration's loosening of foreign trade restrictions across the British Atlantic and Caribbean island colonies expanded British American markets for Bahamian commerce.

With the passage of the Importation and Exportation Act of 1787, William Pitt the Younger's administration and Parliament's easing of imperial restrictions on foreign trade tried to push the Bahamians to diminish their commercial reliance on the North American mainland. Before departing to assume the Bahamas' governorship, Lord Dunmore lobbied Parliament to classify Nassau as a free port in 1787. In establishing Nassau as a free port, the Bahamas became a site of international and inter-imperial commerce as manufactured goods, raw materials, provisions, and sugars from the British, French, and Spanish empires intermingled, exchanged, and travelled onwards to new destinations. Nassau-based trading firms benefitted from an expansion of the legal international trade and the Bahamas' position as a commercial crossroads for Atlantic world empires in the Americas. Miller, Bonnamy, and Company, a Nassau firm owned by Bahamian councilmember John Miller and his business partner Broomfield Bonnamy, attempted to reclaim their West Florida trading posts lost with Britain's return of the

Floridas to Imperial Spain.³⁷ Bahamian merchants and mariners that plied the sugar and salt contraband trades connecting British America to St. Domingue, Cuba, and the Dutch Caribbean entrepôts in the 1760s and 1770s now operated with imperial consent. Exiled American loyalist trading firms, such as Panton, Leslie & Company, established themselves in Nassau to continue commerce with the Native American nations residing in Spanish Florida and the Alabama and Mississippi frontiers.³⁸

The Nassau free port and the presence of Panton, Leslie and other trading firms integrated the Bahamas further into the Atlantic world. The Atlantic integration reduced the islands' reliance on direct trade with the former thirteen colonies for provisions, commerce, and income. Parliament's language in the Importation and Exportation Act of 1787 explicitly excluded the United States' merchant vessels and goods from British America's free ports.³⁹ Imported French and Spanish goods caused Bahamians' reliance

³⁷ David, *Dunmore's New World*, 161-162; "Evidence of John Miller (and Others) before the Committee of Trade," 1 May 1787 in *British Colonial Developments, 1774-1834*, eds. Vincent Harlow and Frederick Madden (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 324-326; J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in North America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1971), 144; Lewis, *Final Campaign*, 52-55, 91-92; Parish, "Records of Some Southern Loyalists," 2:404-413; J. Leitch Wright, Jr., "The Queen's Redoubt Explosion in the Lives of William A. Bowles, John Miller, and William Panton," in *Anglo-Spanish Confrontation on the Gulf Coast during the American Revolution*, eds. William S. Coker and Richard R. Rea (Pensacola, FL: Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference, 1982), 177-193.

³⁸ Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands*, 45, 110, 114-115, 116, 126, 132-134, 214-215, 217, 247; Memorial of William Wylly on Behalf of Panton, Leslie and Company, 19 June 1789, CO 23/28/163-164; David, *Dunmore's New World*, 159-167.

³⁹ *Anno vicesimo septimo Georgii III. Regis. Cap. XXVII. An Act for allowing the importation and exportation of certain goods, wares, and merchandize, in thbe ports of Kingston, Savannah la Mar, Montego Bay and Santa Lucea in the island of Jamaica, in the port of Saint George in the island of Grenada, in the port of Roseau in the island of Dominica, and in the port of Nassau in the island of New Providence one of the Bahama Islands, under certain regulations and restrictions* (London: Charles Eyre and Andrew Strahan, 1787); David, *Dunmore's New World*, 230-231n84; George Chalmers to Assembly Committee, 18 November 1794, CO 23/31/63.

From this point onwards, the Act of Parliament cited will be abbreviated as: *Importation and Exportation Act of 1787* (27 Geo. III, cap. 27).

on the United States for food, supplies, and income to decrease between 1787 and 1794.⁴⁰ Following the American Revolution, Bahamians' reliance on the intra-American slave trade shifted exclusively to slave markets in Kingston and Montego Bay, Jamaica, as well as unspecified ports at the islands of St. Kitts and Dominica.⁴¹ Bahamians' development of cotton plantations and the rise in available wealth expanded the islanders' and American loyalists' importation of African slaves from British merchants, based

⁴⁰ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 192. In 1794, the signing and ratification of the Jay Treaty loosened British trade restrictions on the United States, and the British Empire recognized American merchant-mariners' rights to trade at ports in the British Caribbean and Atlantic island colonies under defined circumstances.

⁴¹ From 1700 to 1775, slave ships landing at the Bahamas from the North American mainland departed primarily from South Carolina and the port of Charleston. Of approximately 38 ships with itineraries showing slaves purchased in and embarking from mainland North America, 35 ships left from ports at South Carolina with the remaining five ships divided between Boston, Philadelphia, and tidewater Virginia. South Carolinian plantations and slave markets sold and shipped 168 slaves to the Bahamas, while only a combined total of seven slaves arrived from Boston, Philadelphia, and Virginia. While the North American ports shipped over 175 slaves to Bahamian buyers, they were still a minority supplier when compared with slave cargoes arriving from the British Caribbean sugar islands. During the same period, only 14 slave ships arrived from Jamaican ports, 11 of those ships landing between 1754 and 1774, but brought 496 slaves to the islands. The next two major disembarkation points in the British Caribbean were Barbados and St. Kitts, which sent seven ships with 186 slaves and seven ships with 60 slaves respectively. Of the 1,012 slaves that disembarked between 1700 and 1775, only about 17.8 percent came from North America and 78.5 percent from the British Caribbean—the Dutch Caribbean island of St. Eustatius shipped 38 slaves (or approximately 3.7 percent) to the Bahamas. See: Slave Voyages: Intra-American Slave Trade database, <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/lyPQPbH3>, accessed on 24 July 2019.

Between 1775 and 1804, Bahamian ports received 35 slave ships depart from Kingston, seven ships from Montego Bay, eight ships from ports at Dominica, five ships from ports at St. Kitts, and one ship each from Grenada and Barbados. The thirty-five slave voyages to the Bahamas from Jamaica accounted for 1,457 of 2,168 slaves (67.2 percent), while voyages from Dominica shipped 508 slaves (23.4 percent) and St. Kitts sent 143 slaves (6.6 percent) to the Bahamas. Only the slave ships *Hermosa* and *Creole*, both from Richmond, Virginia, landed in the Bahamas in 1840 and 1841 respectively. The *Hermosa* was shipwrecked in 1840 and the slaves rescued and liberated by British forces. On November 7th, 1841, the 135 captive slaves held on the *Creole* staged an uprising, taking control of the ship, and diverting the *Creole* from its New Orleans-bound course to the Bahamas in a bid to gain their freedom. See: Slave Voyages: Intra-American Slave Trade database, <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/PZE5M6GW>, accessed on 24 July 2019; Robert Phillimore, *The Case of the Creole Considered in a Second Letter to Lord Ashburton* (London: J. Hatchard and Son, 1842); Arthur T. Downey, *The Creole Affair: The Slave Rebellion that Led the U.S. and Great Britain to the Brink of War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014); Walter Johnson, "White Lies: Human Property and Domestic Slavery aboard the Slave Ship *Creole*," *Atlantic Studies* 5, no. 2 (Aug., 2008), 237-263; Jeffrey Kerr-Ritchie, *Rebellious Passages: The Creole Revolt and America's Coastal Slave Trade* (New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

primarily in Liverpool, between 1784 and 1807.⁴² The expansion and diversification of the Bahamian economy transformed the backwater archipelago into a waypoint for continued British-Native American trade and diplomatic relations.

The decade following the American Revolution was particularly kind to the Bahamas as they became more integrated into the reorganized British Atlantic economy. The emergence of cotton plantations that supplied British textile manufacturers, the establishment of Nassau as an economic free port in 1787, and the influx of displaced loyalists with expanded needs and refined tastes precipitated an importation boom. While Bahamian imports were limited in number during the 1760s and 1770s, the post-revolutionary era saw a forty-fold increase from roughly £3,400 to £136,359 in 1787.⁴³ The Loyalist émigrés and the influx of wealth made a marked influence on Nassau's style and appearance, as well as precipitated the development of public infrastructure on New Providence and its neighboring settled islands. The unpainted, weathered-grey wooden houses that typified Bahamian settlements prior to the Loyalist resettlement in the mid-1780s were supplanted by characteristic townhouses. Loyalist townhouses and plantation homes incorporated piazzas with galleries, elegantly-carved woodwork, glass windows,

⁴² Liverpoolian merchants and slave traders accounted for 27 of the 32 trans-Atlantic slave voyages, carrying a total of 7,264 slaves, from Africa to the Bahamas between 1784 and 1807. The five remaining slave voyages consisted of two ships from Rhode Island, one from Charleston, one from an unspecified port in France, and one departing from an unspecified British port. Prior to the American Revolution, only three trans-Atlantic slave voyages landed in the Bahamas: a London-based ship in 1730; a ship from Liverpool in 1755; and, a vessel from Newport, Rhode Island in 1763. After 1807, when Parliament's passage of the Slave Trade Act abolished the slave trade throughout the British Empire, African slaves came from French, Spanish, Portuguese, and American ships that landed in the Bahamas as a result of seizures by the Royal Navy and British privateers, shipwrecks, and slave revolts during the voyages. See: Slave Voyages: Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade database, <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/3311TKpQ>, 24 July 2019.

⁴³ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 192; Craton, *History of the Bahamas*, 156-157.

central stone staircases, upper galleries, plastered interior walls, and exterior walls painted in pastel blue, green, and yellow colors accented by white stone coigns.⁴⁴ From 1796 to 1812, the rise in commercial wealth enabled the Bahamian government to construct a new “House of Assembly, Council Chamber, Courthouse and Gaol,” as well as a 100-mile highway connecting the new plantations and settlements on Long Island.⁴⁵

With the United States’ formal departure from the British Empire in 1783, Bermuda lost access to its lucrative maritime trade, and the British government began repurposing the colony into a major naval station. This change altered Bermuda’s economy dramatically and elevated its position within the British Atlantic from being a neglected colony to the vanguard of Britain’s new Atlantic empire. The colony’s transformation challenged the Atlantic-centered commercial enterprise Colonel Tucker built and threatened the patrimonial wealth and influence he intended to pass on to his children. Although the Colonel expressed confidence for Bermuda’s commercial future, the British government viewed Bermuda’s imperial significance in a different light.

Immediately following the end of the American Revolution, Colonel Tucker and his fellow Bermudians hoped to re-establish their maritime commercial economy. An optimistic Colonel Tucker believed that designating Bermuda as an economic free port would remake the island into the “storehouse of the Western World,” and be worth more than a half-dozen Caribbean islands.⁴⁶ A Bermudian free port would relax customs duties

⁴⁴ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 214.

⁴⁵ Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 192, 194-195; Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 176-179, 185-186.

⁴⁶ Henry Tucker, Sr. to St. George Tucker, 2 August 1783, TCP; Robert Traill to Lord Shelburne, 19 September 1782, CO 37/38/164; Henry Tucker, Sr. to Lord North, 7 November 1783, CO 37/38/62.

and regulation on goods traded to and between Britain and the United States.⁴⁷ It also stood to benefit the Tuckers and their merchant associates financially, because they would be able to conduct business as they had prior to the war with Bermuda serving as a commercial hub and gateway in the Atlantic world. A continuation of the North American trade in peacetime also stood to recoup Colonel Tucker's financial losses, which heavy wartime insurance policies and the complete losses of several uninsured ships had brought about.⁴⁸

Post-war economic optimism transcended any persisting Loyalist-Patriot divisions within Bermudian society. Governor William Brown, who replaced George Bruere, Jr. in 1783, maintained an optimistic outlook for Bermudians' post-war commercial fortunes, but grounded his beliefs on decidedly loyalist and imperial conclusions. Glossing over Bermudians' propensity for illicit trading and support for the American patriots, Brown proffered reassurances to Whitehall and King George III that "different principles, opinions, and wishes now prevail" in the colony.⁴⁹ A spirit of loyalism and commercial optimism gripped the island as the inhabitants came to the realization that the United States' separation from the empire was "unalterably decided," and they saw "new means of employment and prospects of profit."⁵⁰

The British administration and Bermudian government challenged the commercial resurrection that Colonel Tucker envisioned. Despite Brown's optimism for the islands'

⁴⁷ "Speech of Governor Browne," *Ancient Journals of the House of Assembly of Bermuda*, 2:2110.

⁴⁸ Henry Tucker, Jr. to St. George Tucker, 4 February 1780, TCP; Henry Tucker, Jr. to St. George Tucker, 3 March 1780, TCP.

⁴⁹ "William Brown to Lord North, 15 October 1783," *Bermuda Historical Quarterly* 1 (1944), 74.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

economic prospects, he took a far more measured and cautious approach to maintaining the colony within the empire. The governor requested a contingent of the “King’s Troops” to be permanently stationed on the island in case the Bermudians’ decided to rekindle their affinity for their American kinsmen.⁵¹ The British government concurred with this position, since they believed that Bermuda had “become too vital to be left in the hands of mere Bermudians,” and embraced a colonial and military policy designed to make Bermuda the “Gibraltar of the western hemisphere.”⁵²

The reorganization of the British Atlantic world permanently broke apart Bermuda’s commercial trade network. The Bermudian commercial empire lost access to the forest commons in East Florida, where the islanders’ harvested timber for shipbuilding, and loyalist settlers pushed the islanders out of their traditional salt raking territory on the Turks and Caicos Islands.⁵³ High tonnage rates imposed by the United States government against British vessels also hurt Bermudian merchants and commercial shipping.⁵⁴ As a result, the colony’s expanding military complex came to displace

⁵¹ William Browne to Lord North, 30 April 1783, CO 37/38/44; William Browne to Lord North, 15 October 1783, CO 37/38/67.

⁵² Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 450; Henry Tucker, Sr. to Lord North, 25 June 1783, CO 37/38/54.

⁵³ Mary Draper, “Timbering and Turtling: The Maritime Hinterlands of Early Modern British Caribbean Cities,” *Early American Studies* 15, no. 4 (Fall, 2017), 771-772; O. Nigel Bolland, *The Formation of a Colonial Society: Belize from Conquest to Crown Colony* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 31-48; Wilbur H. Siebert, *The Legacy of the American Revolution to the British West Indies and Bahamas: A chapter out of the History of the American Loyalists* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1913), 8-9, 14-18, 21-22; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 179-195; Anthony Gregory, “The Turks Islands’ Salt Trade and Industry: An Historical Economic Geography” (M.A. thesis, University of California at Berkeley, 1972), 73-82; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 451.

⁵⁴ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 450; “Robert Milner to Anthony Atwood, 3 August 1783” in *Correspondence and Letters of a Bermuda Merchant, 1779-1799*, comp. A. T. Atwood (St. George’s, Bermuda: St. George’s Historical Society, 1930), n.p.; “Samuel Milner & Co. to Anthony Atwood, 7 February 1783” in *Correspondence and Letters of a Bermuda Merchant*, comp. A. T. Atwood, n.p.;

maritime commerce and seafaring as the primary elements of Bermuda's economy, and Bermudian families and businesses increasingly became dependent on the Royal Navy for income and employment.⁵⁵

The American loyalists' emigration significantly altered the British Atlantic Islands' economies and societies, which pushed the islands out of the former thirteen colonies' sphere of influence. Carolinian, Georgian, and East Floridian loyalists pushed the British government to provide compensation for their lost property, ease their settlement in the Bahamas, and enable them to establish new farms and plantations to employ their slaves. Loyalist immigrants also challenged the British Atlantic islanders' established political and economic situations by rejecting, sometimes violently, the colonies continued commercial intercourse with the United States, as well as assailing both local and imperial officials they perceived as sympathetic to their American enemies. The metropole's military entrenchment and reconfiguration of the British Atlantic Islands' functions within the post-revolutionary British Atlantic world pulled the Bermudians and Bahamians into Britain's sphere of influence.

Lord Dunmore's Loyalist Fortress

An influx of imperial and military treasure also accompanied the Loyalists' resettlement as part of a long overdue push to fortify the Bahamas and shore up the British Empire's maritime defences along its Caribbean trade routes and in the Straits of Florida. Colonial and imperial efforts to fortify the western Atlantic surrounding the

"Samuel Milner & Co. to Anthony Atwood, 15 March 1783" in *Correspondence and Letters of a Bermuda Merchant*, comp. A. T. Atwood, n.p.

⁵⁵ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 456-458.

Bahamas materialized in three stages. First, through American loyalists' rejection of traditional Bahamian political and economic practices, primarily in periods of crisis for the colony, and their push to gain greater political representation and control over the islands as part of a counter-revolutionary bulwark against the United States. Second, the imperial officials' re-evaluation of the Bahamas' significance for Britain's Atlantic empire, and the necessity of renewed imperial investment to fortifying Britain's position at the islands. Finally, the Bahama's newly constructed fortifications served to project Britain's strength in the western Atlantic, and the Bahamas' emergence as a bastion of British loyalism situated firmly within the metropole's imperial hold.

The American loyalists' exodus to the Bahamas from Georgia, the Carolinas, and East Florida between 1780 and 1785 overwhelmed the established Bahamian population with both their numbers and their fierce animosity towards the American patriots and the United States. In 1784, in a move to relieve an ongoing post-war famine, Governor John Maxwell approved American merchant vessels to import desperately needed cargos of grain and provisions.⁵⁶ The American vessels' arrival in Nassau harbor flying the flag of the United States enraged Loyalist settlers and refugees.⁵⁷ Much to the bewilderment of the native inhabitants, the Loyalist refugees rioted in the summer of 1784, attempted to strike down the American colors, and proceeded to smuggle desperately needed provisions out of the colony.⁵⁸ An act that challenged both the Bahamian colonial government's traditional actions and policies, and the United States and its citizens'

⁵⁶ CO 23/25/103-104; Riley, *Homeward Bound*, 160-161.

⁵⁷ CO 23/25/103-104.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

sovereignty aboard. The Loyalist refugees' contempt for American patriots and the flag of the United States stoked their internal fires of injustice, resentment, and personal loss into raging infernos. Consequently, American loyalists unleashed their rage on the British and Bahamian officials they perceived as being too sympathetic to the United States.

The Loyalists' anti-U.S. riots quickly gave way to "writing libels," "disloyalty, licentiousness, and anarchy," and the rise of the "Board of American Loyalists" as methods of anathematizing British and Bahamian officials who they perceived to lack sufficient loyalty—or, at least, were willing to compromise their allegiance—to Britain.⁵⁹ The colony's first newspaper, the *Bahama Gazette*, printed by John Wells, the publisher of the Loyalist-leaning *South-Carolina and American General Gazette* in Charleston, South Carolina, marshalled the Loyalists' outrage into the formation of the Board of American Loyalists to subvert Maxwell and the Bahamas' established officials.⁶⁰ Loyalist resentment towards the governor began to escalate rapidly, and by September 20th, 1784 the Board publicly petitioned King George III to have Maxwell removed, arguing that he "oppressed the Loyalists, [and] refused to seize American vessels" sailing near and docking at the colony.⁶¹

Loyalists' local political involvement and lobbying of the administration at Whitehall resulted in a redistribution of political power and authority in the Bahamian government. The Loyalists' growing political power and vociferous opposition to

⁵⁹ "Writing Libels," CO 23/25/108-112; Riley, *Homeward Bound*, 161; Handbill, CO 23/26/96; James Hepburn, Handbill, 26 July 1784, CO 23/25/148.

⁶⁰ CO 23/25/108-112; CO 23/26/96; CO 23/25/148.

⁶¹ Petition for Maxwell's Removal, CO 23/26/170-171.

established Bahamian political families and factions, who the displaced Loyalist elites disparaged as old “conchs” for their hardened spirit and diet of Conch marine snails, turned the colony into a contested space. Loyalist settlements altered the Bahamas’ century-long settlement and political organization by expanding the colony beyond the principal inhabited islands of New Providence, Eleuthera, and Harbour Island. The general election of 1784 expanded political representation to new Loyalist settlements divided into eleven constituencies across Abaco, Andros, Cat Island, Exuma, and Long Island.⁶² Distribution of new political representatives in the legislature’s Lower House did not, however, occur through expanding the total number of elected members across the colony. Instead, the legislature’s numbers remained fixed at approximately twenty-five representatives, and slashed New Providence, Eleuthera, and Harbour Island’s constituencies by ten members to fourteen. The established main islands’ loss of political dominance occurred despite the three islands’ population expanding to 2,750 individuals in 1782.⁶³

The Loyalists’ targeting of American-sympathizing Bahamian authorities upended the Bahamian political scene. The assembly’s new Loyalist faction challenged the Bahamas’ old guard political figures and attacked the legitimacy of their governing majority. Accusations of election fraud in favor of the colony’s political establishment emerged shortly after the 1784 election as a Loyalist tactic to undermine the elected native Bahamians. Loyalists accused John Baker, the colony’s provost marshal, of

⁶² Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 168; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 180; Lewis, *The Final Campaign of the American Revolution*, 43.

⁶³ Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 168.

declaring six establishment inhabitants the winners, seemingly arbitrarily, of their districts in Nassau and western New Providence despite the Loyalist opposition candidates reportedly receiving a majority of the votes.⁶⁴ Shortly after the new assembly session commenced, the old guard assemblymen began obstructing the new Loyalist faction's legislative activities and duties, such as refusing to read and consider petitions submitted by Loyalist settlers and refugees. John Hepburn and six fellow Loyalist representatives began abstaining from the legislature in a symbolic protest. Two protesting members, John Petty and Peter Dean, raised political tensions by publishing a scathing pamphlet in late April 1785 denouncing the Lower House's establishment members.⁶⁵ Petty and Dean's pamphlet incensed the sitting assembly members. The establishment members retaliated by censuring John Wells, the printer of both the pamphlet and Loyalist-leaning *Bahama Gazette*, and demanding the "Common Hangman" to publicly burn the pamphlet in front of Nassau's courthouse in an official rebuke and condemnation of the protesting Loyalist members.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the Loyalist refugees, settlers, and politicians' virulent hostility towards the established Bahamian government and Governor Maxwell's U.S.-Bahamian trade policy for famine relief forced the governor to resign and return to Britain in 1785.⁶⁷

American loyalists' anti-U.S. sentiments deepened the British Empire's border-sea division with the United States, but the political conflict between the Loyalists and

⁶⁴ Ibid., 168.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 168-169.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 169.

⁶⁷ David, *Dunmore's New World*, 140.

native Bahamians diminished the colony in the eyes of British authorities. The “constant opposition which was given to [Maxwell’s] administration” and “violent spirit of Party” gripping the Bahamas made the Crown apprehensive to supporting the governor’s return from exile.⁶⁸ Secretary of State Lord Sydney informed Maxwell that the administration concluded “it advisable and expedient that some Person entirely unconnected with the present Inhabitants of those Islands should be appointed” to take over the governorship.⁶⁹ The Bahamas’ present situation became so grave that Lord Sydney declared the arrangement “to be absolutely necessary.”⁷⁰ King George III and Whitehall fixated on John Murray, Earl of Dunmore, as the right person to navigate the colony’s political divide between the native Bahamians and American loyalists.

Whitehall’s appointment of Lord Dunmore as the Bahamas’ governor in 1787 bolstered the British government’s position at the Bahamas. While living in London between 1783 and 1787, Dunmore embraced the advocacy for American loyalists, being selected to represent Virginia on a select committee of delegates. Dunmore wrote letters of support, approved testimonies of good character, and personally testified on behalf of many Loyalists seeking compensation from the British government for their lost property.⁷¹ While Lord Sydney had informed Maxwell that the Crown desired a new governor “unconnected” to the native Bahamian and transplanted Loyalist inhabitants, Dunmore was far from independent or unbiased to the fighting Loyalist and Bahamian

⁶⁸ Lord Sydney to John Maxwell, 15 June 1786, CO 23/25/418-419.

⁶⁹ CO 23/25/418.

⁷⁰ CO 23/25/419.

⁷¹ David, *Dunmore’s New World*, 136-138.

factions.⁷² Whitehall's decision also inserted an ambitious royal official acutely aware of the Britain's western Atlantic island colonies to the Atlantic commerce that supported the empire.

The importance of securing Britain's commercial sea-lanes and imperial position neighboring the United States emerges in Lord Dunmore's meditations on Bermuda's strategic importance in the wake of American independence. On November 22nd, 1785, Dunmore penned a letter to an unknown author, speculated to be Lord Gower, on rumors of his possible appointment to Bermuda's governorship.⁷³ He asserted that Bermuda's position in the western Atlantic made it one of the most significant islands in the British dominions outside the British Isles. "There is not a sp[o]tt of Sand belonging to His Majesty," Dunmore confidently claimed, "of half the consequence to the welfare of the Trade of this Country, that that Island must be, were we at War with either France, Spain or the American States."⁷⁴ The Bahamas' position at a crossroads of Caribbean and North American trade routes made the colony vital to Great Britain's post-revolutionary Atlantic mercantilist network, which made it a vulnerable strategic point necessary to be fortified for repelling French, Spanish, and American attacks.

⁷² CO 23/25/418.

⁷³ David, *Dunmore's New World*, 139. Information cited by David as taken from: Lord Dunmore to [Lord Gower?], 22 November 1785, "Murray, John, 1732-1809," New York Public Library, box 75. James Corbett David postulates that the intended recipient of Dunmore's letter was Lord Gower, the Lord Privy Seal and member of the Privy Council. See: David, *Dunmore's New World*, 139.

⁷⁴ David, *Dunmore's New World*, 139. Quote cited by David as taken from: Lord Dunmore to [Lord Gower?], 22 November 1785, "Murray, John, 1732-1809," New York Public Library, box 75. Dunmore notes in a parenthetical aside about Bermuda's strategic defensive and trade position that he "almost said the very existence" of Great Britain and its empire depended on holding the island colony.

Despite the settled American loyalists' fervent support for British rule and disdain for the United States, their new Bahamian home was incapable of effectively repelling foreign attacks. Over the mid- to late eighteenth century, the islands' main fortifications on New Providence fell into severe disrepair due to limited maintenance funds from both the colonial and imperial treasuries, which enabled three successful attacks against the island by American and Spanish forces in March 1776, January 1778, and May 1782.⁷⁵ To bolster the Bahamas and defend the new Loyalist settlements, Lord Dunmore spared no expense in improving the colony's defenses following his appointment. Dunmore used his political capital and imperial strategic concerns to engage in substantial defensive undertakings, which resulted in the construction of Forts Charlotte and Fincastle, new barracks for additional regiments of troops, and two arrays of batteries during the 1780s and 1790s.⁷⁶ The construction of Fort Charlotte was estimated to cost £4,000 in 1787; however, by 1789 Lord Dunmore had spent over £7,000 and exhausted local resources for the fort's completion. Dunmore's extensive building projects required an additional

⁷⁵ Copy of the Testimony of Captain Thomas Hodgson, 30 December 1779, CO 23/24/135; A Narrative of the Transactions & on the Invasion of the Island of New Providence by the Rebels in 1776, 15 June 1779, CO 23/9/112-113; Copy of A Narrative of the Transactions & on the Invasion of the Island of New Providence by the Rebels in 1776, 15 June 1779, CO 23/24/113-116; Fort Nassau during March 3rd, 1776, CO 23/9/126-129; Letter from the Council to the Lords of Trade, 22 February 1779, CO 23/9/90-91; Letter from the Council to the Lords of Trade, 31 March 1779, CO 23/9/97; Letter from Governor Browne to Lord George Germain, 29 June 1779, CO 23/24/225-227; "Plan de Operaciones," Marqués de González de Castejón to José Solano, El Pardo, 8 April 1780, AGI, Santo Domingo, legajo 2086; "Artículos de capitulación estipulados en Nassau de Nueva Providencia el 8 de Mayo de 1782 entre el Exmo. Sor. Dn. Juan Manuel de Cagigal, Capitán General y Comandante en Jefe de la isla de Cuba, Gobernador de Havana, etc., etc., y el Exmo. Sor. Dn. Juan Maxwell, Esquire, Capitán General y Comandante en Jefe de las Islas Bahamas, Canciller, vice admiral y Primado de dichas islas y Teniente-Colonel del Ejército de S.M.B.," AGI, Santo Domingo, legajo 2085.

⁷⁶ Dunmore to Sydney, 31 August 1789, CO 23/29/167-168; Lord Dunmore to Lord Sydney, 15 December 1788, CO 23/29/2; Lord Dunmore to [Nepean], 23 December 1788, CO 23/29/48-50; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People, Volume One*, 203; Harcourt Malcom, *Historical Memoranda Relating to the Forts in Nassau* (Nassau, The Bahamas: n.p., 1913).

£17,846 from the War Office to finish Forts Charlotte and Fincastle, and a further £10,784 for additional barracks.⁷⁷ In total, Dunmore's defensive projects brought the expenditures to over £32,000.⁷⁸ Confident in the new fortifications' strength, Lieutenant-Governor John Forbes, who became the colony's acting governor in 1796 following Dunmore's departure, argued that 150 French planter families and their slaves could be resettled on the uninhabited southern Bahama Islands without serious threat to the colony.⁷⁹

Although the Bahamas' new fortifications and enlarged numbers of troops never engaged in an active military conflict, they embody both the British military and administration's post-revolutionary efforts to ensure the British colonists' loyalty in the border-sea regions separating the British Empire and the United States.⁸⁰ The two forts, particularly Fort Charlotte, served as important political and military symbols of the archipelago's importance to a new British Empire. They also represent the end of decades of administrative indifference and salutary neglect for the economically minor island colonies in the British Atlantic, and the British military's move to fortify its position in the region against a new threat. Replacing Fort Nassau's deteriorating walls and dangerous buildings with a new, whitewashed stronghold that dominated New Providence's western hillside projected an image of strength, impregnability, and security to British and foreign vessels approaching Nassau harbor. While New Providence's

⁷⁷ Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 176-177; Lord Sydney to Lord Dunmore, 4 March 1789, CO 23/29/54-56.

⁷⁸ David, *Dunmore's New World*, 158-159; CO 23/27/99.

⁷⁹ Forbes to Portland, 1797, CO 23/35/97-99; Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, 211.

⁸⁰ Craton, *A History of the Bahamas*, 176-177.

fortresses projected British strength and security locally and regionally, they also symbolized British power and Loyalist rebirth in the British Atlantic world through the proliferation of printed representations.

British efforts to cement the Bahamas within the loyal empire went beyond Loyalist resettlement and expansion of military fortifications to include reshaping the public imagination of the islands. Artists and printmakers produced etchings and colored lithographs depicting the Bahamas' loyalist renewal and displays of British power in the decades after the American Revolution. One such artist was John Irving. Irving, an early nineteenth-century print artist, published a series of panoramic views of Nassau and New Providence Island in 1802. Irving's prints emphasize Britain's fortification and militarization of the colonial capital by making the new forts, soldiers, cannon batteries, and the Union Jack prominent elements in the images' foregrounds and backgrounds. The Bahamian prints presented British audiences with visual testimonies to the British Empire's reassertion of its dominance and authority in a chaotic Atlantic world increasingly enthralled in revolutionary contests and upheavals.

The British military and Union Jack's prominence in Irving's prints conveyed to early nineteenth-century British audiences several crucial points. First, the British military and Royal Navy maintained an active and firm presence in the Bahamas. In Irving's *View of the Barracks Fort Charlotte and Part of the Island of New Providence to the Westward of the Town of Nassau taken from the Top of the Guard House* (see Plate 6 on page 262) and *View of the Fort Charlotte, the Town of Nassau...taken from Silver Key at the Entrance of the Harbor* (see Plate 8 on page 267), British military authority is displayed through views of Nassau's harbor, and the fort's cannons and flags overlooking



Plate 5: John Irving, *View of the Town of Nassau in the Island of New Providence taken from the Piazza of the Barracks*, 1802, aquatint, 43.1 cm x 53.5 cm, Maps 147.d.17, f.3, British Library, London, United Kingdom.



Plate 6: John Irving, *View of the Barracks Fort Charlotte and Part of the Island of New Providence to the Westward of the Town of Nassau taken from the Top of the Guard House*, 1802, aquatint, 41 cm x 61 cm, Maps 147.d.17, f.4, British Library, London, United Kingdom.

incoming, outgoing, and anchored merchant vessels. British power projected from the Bahamas could monitor commercial and naval threats traveling through the Windward and Mona passages, in addition to the Straits of Florida. Naval and commercial traffic sailing from the neighboring Spanish and French positions in Cuba and St. Domingue, which concerned imperial officials during the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution, could be intercepted by British warships and privateers based at and patrolling around the Bahamas.

Second, the Nassau prints portrayed the Bahamas in a positive light that highlighted New Providence's new defensive power and ability to project British military might against the United States and neighboring Spanish and French empires. In Irving's *View of the Town of Nassau, Fort Charlotte &c &c taken from the Terrace of Fort Fincastle in the Island of New Providence* (see Plate 7 on page 265), he intentionally obscures decrepit Fort Nassau from viewers with Fort Fincastle's battlements in the foreground, and the newly built houses and buildings beyond the fort's walls.⁸¹ Fort Nassau's crumbling dark stone walls would have been visible from Fort Fincastle at the top of Society Hill, as well as on the approach to Nassau harbor, but by removing the old fort from the landscape Irving prevents his audience from encountering a reminder of the Bahamas' defensive failures and symbol of the colony's powerlessness during the American Revolution. The newly constructed Forts Charlotte and Fincastle represented a

⁸¹ John Irving, *View of the Towne of Nassau, Fort Charlotte &c &c taken from the Terrace of Fort Fincastle in the Island of New Providence*, 1802, aquatint, 52.5 cm x 97.6 cm, Maps 147.d.17, f.1, BL, London, United Kingdom; John Irving, *View of Fort Charlotte, the Town of Nassau &c &c in the Island of New Providence taken from Silver Key at the entrance of the Harbour*, 1802, aquatint, 52.5 cm x 97.4 cm, Maps 147.d.17, f.5, BL, London, United Kingdom.



This View of the Town of Nassau, Fort Charlotte, &c taken from the Terrace of Fort Fincastle in the Island of New Providence is respectfully dedicated to Wm. Howland Esq. Governor General of the Bahama's, & the Colonies of these Islands by their most Obedient Servt. John Irving

Plate 7: John Irving, *View of the Town of Nassau, Fort Charlotte &c taken from the Terrace of Fort Fincastle in the Island of New Providence*, 1802, aquatint, 52.5 cm x 97.6 cm, Maps 147.d.17, f.1, British Library, London, United Kingdom.

new, stronger present, and served as projections of British imperial strength in the western Atlantic border-sea.

Third, Nassau's recent growth and development are noteworthy backdrops that display the archipelago's new-found commercial energy and social transformation in a reconfigured British Empire. In both *View of the Town of Nassau* prints (Plate 5 on page 263, and Plate 7 on page 265), Irving depicts Bahamian houses, shops, churches, and government buildings with freshly whitewashed or light-brown clapboard-siding and green-grey slate rooves. Irving's Nassau corresponded with independent travelers' accounts of the Bahamian capital between 1783 and 1813. John Melish, a Scottish mapmaker who immigrated to the United States, observed that "the streets are regular and well paved...the houses are mostly built of stone, and many of them are handsome."⁸² A far cry from the desolate skyline that lacked chimneys and was only broken by a few prominent buildings that greeted sailors, merchants, and Loyalist refugees in the mid-1780s.⁸³ The islands' pleasant climate rendered the green common spaces surrounding the town "beautiful, being diversified with shrubbery, fruit trees, and orange groves."⁸⁴ Printed images and new narrative descriptions of Nassau and the Bahamas exported the post-revolutionary transformation of the Bahamas through the wider Atlantic world.

Finally, the prints' use of British agricultural and pastoral elements displays the Bahamas' social and cultural civilization and gentrification. In his *View of Governor Dowdeswell Residence...and a Distant View of Fort Charlotte* (see Plate 9 on page 267),

⁸²Melish, *A Description of East and West Florida, and the Bahama Islands*, 8.

⁸³Whidden, "The Influences of the American Loyalists on Bahamian Architecture," 54.

⁸⁴Melish, *A Description of East and West Florida, and the Bahama Islands*, 9.



Plate 8: John Irving, *View of Fort Charlotte, the Town Of Nassau &c in the Island of New Providence taken from Silver Key at the Entrance of the Harbour*, 1802, aquatint, 52.5 cm x 97.4 cm, Maps 147.d.17, f.5, British Library, London, United Kingdom.



Plate 9: John Irving, *View of Governor Dowdeswell Residence (Now Intended for an Academy) and a Distant View of Fort Charlotte*, 1802, aquatint, 52.5 cm x 80.5 cm, Maps 147.d.17, f.2, British Library, London, United Kingdom.

Irving's incorporation of sheep constructed a bridge of familiarity that brought the Bahamas into a collective idea of British culture, and then transposed it onto a distant, tropical colony. The depiction of a family of deer on the governor's lawn is particularly noteworthy, because deer are not native to the Bahamas and are symbols associated with the British gentry and aristocracy's participation in hunting as leisure and sport activities.⁸⁵ By replacing the Bahamas' sandy shores and palm tree covered landscape with English pastoral imagery, Irving communicated to British audiences that the tropical Bahamas transformed following the American Revolution and subsequent Loyalist settlement.

British imperial authority and influence heralded a new colonial reality for the Bahamas. The Bahamas' situation as an economic backwater inclined its inhabitants to employ piracy and smuggling in peacetime, which undermined British maritime authority and threatened the empire's Atlantic commerce. The islands' closer commercial and military ties with the metropole gave the appearance of shedding its wicked past. On the surface to distant observers, eighteenth-century Bahamians' unruly and hardscrabble natures were being cast aside for the more genteel and stable nineteenth-century British imperial world. In the expanding revolutionary blaze ignited by the American Revolution, the Bahamas' military and social transformation embodied a bulwark of British imperial security in the western Atlantic. Lord Dunmore and the British military's overhaul and expansion of New Providence's forts and defensive infrastructure, coupled

⁸⁵ Ryan R. Judkins, "The Game of the Courtly Hunt: Chasing and Breaking Deer in Late Medieval English Literature," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 112, no. 1 (Jan., 2013), 70-93.

with printed accounts and depictions of the Bahamas, transformed the archipelago's image and function in the minds of Britons.

Bermuda's Naval Fortress

The United States' independence from the British Empire radically altered the Atlantic world's geographic, political, military, and commercial landscape. Britain's imperial ambitions turned eastward to colonizing Africa and India, as well as expanding its burgeoning trade network to southeast Asia and China. In the western Atlantic, the United States now bifurcated British America into two separate dominions in Canada and the Caribbean. While Bermudians entered the American Revolution surrounded by Britain's colonies, following the war's conclusion the islanders faced an isolated new reality. Bermudians and their island stood as a lone connection bridging British Canada and the British Caribbean.

Faced with the United States as a new potential threat to British authority and dominance in the western Atlantic, British officials began restoring Bermuda's garrison and fortifications to active service in 1789. Bermuda's military revival reversed a previous decision by the British government to disband the island's garrisoned forces in 1783.⁸⁶ Similar to the Bahamas, refurbishing existing and constructing new fortifications, barracks, and military facilities aimed to project Britain's authority and strength to both the previously Patriot-sympathizing populace and Britain's rivals in the western Atlantic.

But Britain's revival of a fortified Bermuda sought to fulfill other military needs beyond garrisoned troops, hospitals, and new forts and batteries. Surrounded by an

⁸⁶ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 454.

extensive and treacherous reef network, the Great Sound and sheltered inner harbors dividing Bermuda's close-knit islands made ideal places for armed privateers and the Royal Navy's warships. At least on paper that appeared to be the case. In reality, British warships stationed at Bermuda during the American Revolution anchored at Castle Harbour, the large inner harbor ringed by St. George's Island, St. David's Island, and Hamilton parish towards the colony's northeastern end. Yet, the harbor proved too shallow to afford safe anchorages for the Royal Navy's larger frigates and ships-of-the-line. Governor Alured Popple, who preceded George James Bruere, commented that Castle Harbour was "full of foul ground and in consequence such bad anchoring that vessels cannot ride there with any safety in bad weather."⁸⁷ Castle Harbour's entrance was too narrow for frigates of the fifth-rate and higher.⁸⁸ On February 21st, 1783, while departing Castle Harbour the HMS *Cerberus*—a fifth-rate, 32-gun frigate—struck the submerged rocks lining the entrance, breaking the ship's hull, and forcing the crew to abandon the sinking ship.⁸⁹ Following the *Cerberus*'s sinking, the admiralty forbade

⁸⁷ Alured Popple to the Board of Trade and Plantations, 8 April 1743, CO 37/14/129-130.

⁸⁸ Fifth-rate frigates in the Royal Navy typically carried a main battery of twenty-six 12-pound cannons, and an additional six 6-pound cannons mounted on the quarterdeck and forecastle. Some frigates in this class were fitted with an additional six 6-pound cannons. Fifth-rate frigates constructed in the 1770s mounted additional cannons with heavier firepower, usually batteries of twenty-six or twenty-eight 18-pound cannons augmented by additional smaller 6- or 9-pound guns on the quarterdeck and forecastle. These frigates weighed between 700 and 1,450 tons.

The Royal Navy's ships-of-the-line consisted of the larger first-, second-, and third-rate frigates. They ranged between 64-guns on two gundecks to 96-guns of increasing firepower on three gundecks, and displaced upwards of 2,000 tons by the end of the eighteenth century. The first-rate ships carried at least 100 cannons across three gundecks and weighed around 2,000 tons in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. Such large, heavy vessels would become caught in Bermuda's reefs and narrow channels, or strand themselves inadvertently in the shallow inner harbors around St. David's Island and St. George's Island.

See: Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail, 1714-1792*; Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail, 1793-1817*; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 454-456.

⁸⁹ H. G. Middleton, "The Loss of HMS *Cerberus*," *Bermuda Historical Quarterly* 24 (1967), 121-128.

naval ships from anchoring in Castle Harbour.⁹⁰ For the Royal Navy to use Bermuda effectively as an anchorage and waypoint for its warships in the western Atlantic, the island's harbors and surrounding waters needed to be charted in detail, channels dredged and widened, and docks constructed for the navy's use.

The Royal Navy commissioned Lieutenant Thomas Hurd, a hydrographer, to survey and chart Bermuda's waters, and engineer Captain Andrew Durnford to inspect and modernize the forts and coastal defenses.⁹¹ The project for sounding and charting Bermuda's reefs and channels took Hurd and a team of enslaved black pilots five years to complete.⁹² The Royal Navy placed great importance on understanding Bermuda's reefs and channels for naval use. Consequently, the Admiralty spared no expense for Hurd's survey, because he and his pilots produced the largest, most detailed depiction of the colony's underwater topography at the cost of £12,517.⁹³ Hurd's new charts of Bermuda's harbors, channels, and sounds revealed several deep-water channels that Britain's large ships-of-the-line could navigate. Furthermore, the sounding of the bays and harbors lining the Great and Little sounds on Bermuda's western end discovered a bay, called Grassy Bay, adjacent to Ireland Island capable of sheltering a naval fleet.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Middleton, "The Loss of HMS *Cerberus*," 121-128.

⁹¹ Henry Hamilton to Lord Sydney, 16 October 1788, CO 37/40/205-206; Henry Hamilton to Lord Sydney, 24 October 1788, CO 37/40/215.

⁹² Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 454.

⁹³ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 454, 647n12. Hurd's map measured 20 feet by 10 feet in size, and at the time was one of the most expensive charts ever produced for the Admiralty.

⁹⁴ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 454-455; Wilkinson, *Bermuda from Sail to Steam*, 1:99

With several locations that appeared promising, the Royal Navy tested Bermuda's newly identified deep-water channels and harbors in 1794. Captain Penrose's fifth-rate HMS *Cleopatra* carried out a cautious inspection of the channels and anchorage, which earned Penrose's approval, and gave an initial endorsement for the installation of large freshwater tanks and a catchment at Tobacco Bay on St. George's Island's northern point.⁹⁵ A year later, Vice-Admiral George Murray arrived at Bermuda onboard the 74-gun HMS *Resolution* and her escort of four smaller frigates, which then proceeded through the northern channel and dropped anchor off Fort St. Catherine by Tobacco Bay.

Hurd's charts and the successful anchorage of the *Resolution*, the first ship-of-the-line to anchor at Bermuda, Vice-Admiral Murray began formulating more expansive plans for Bermuda's naval development. At St. George's, the British military expanded its garrison of troops to the strength of a full regiment, and added buildings and warehouses for military stores, water tanks, and defensive batteries.⁹⁶ Setting his sights on Ireland Island at Bermuda's West End and adjacent to Grassy Bay, Murray saw a future site for a major, well-protected naval dockyard in the western Atlantic. Murray sought and gained the Bermudian assembly's support for developing Ireland Island, and in 1809 the Admiralty purchased the island to begin constructing a large complex of fortifications and dockyards over the next ten years.⁹⁷ The construction of the dockyards and identification of safe passages for the Royal Navy's ships-of-the-line signaled

⁹⁵ Wilkinson, *Bermuda from Sail to Steam*, 1:90.

⁹⁶ Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 455.

⁹⁷ Wilkinson, *Bermuda from Sail to Steam*, 101; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 454-455.

Bermuda's emergence as a direct threat to the United States in the event of another war with Great Britain.

Conclusion

Britain's continued hold on Bermuda and the Bahamas enabled a new era of fortification and rising loyalism to harden the western Atlantic into a border-sea separating the United States and a new, reconstituted British Empire. The Royal Navy's increasing investment in and development of Bermuda as an Atlantic naval base altered the colony's economic relationships in the Atlantic. The navy's activities divorced the islanders economically and socio-politically from the United States, and further shifted the islanders' dependency from the North American mainland to the metropole following the American Revolution. American loyalist refugees' subsuming of the native Bahamian population attempted to thwart the resumption of Bahamian-American patriot commercial relations. The construction of major military fortifications by Lord Dunmore in the Bahamas and the Royal Navy at Bermuda hardened the islands' defenses, while projecting power into the western Atlantic against Britain's commercial and imperial rivals.

The United States' failure to annex either Bermuda or the Bahamas during the American Revolution enabled Bermudians' and Bahamians' conversion from sympathetic allies connected by familial and economic bonds to a hostile vanguard for Britain's Atlantic naval and commercial power in the early nineteenth century. The post-war American loyalist settlement and Britain's new military fortifications on the islands turned a grey Atlantic border-sea into a redoubt from which British forces launched

campaigns to subvert American security and authority on the North American mainland. The Royal Navy's economic and military fortification of Bermuda hardened Britain's dominance of the central and western Atlantic, and enabled Britain to challenge the United States' sovereignty and the rights of Americans on the sea through privateering and naval impressment. Bermuda also positioned the British military to launch a devastating direct naval attack and invasion of the United States' coastal and political center at the Chesapeake Bay during the War of 1812. American loyalist and British military entrenchment in the Bahamas permitted British and Bahamian merchants and soldiers to take on roles as British agents who projected Britain's influence into Native American communities in the Mississippi Valley frontier and the U.S.-Spanish Florida borderlands. The British Atlantic Islands' hardening into fortified colonies for securing the British Empire's western Atlantic flank closed the net around the nascent United States, and forced Americans to grapple with a resurgent and intractable British Empire set on re-subjugating the eastern North American continent.

EPILOGUE

The Continental Congress considered the British Atlantic Islands as part of their post-war, independent country, and early in the rebellion they attempted to bring the Atlantic islands directly into the conflict on their side. The Continental Congress and American diplomatic officials, such as Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane, approached the Atlantic colonies as being part of a broader united North America in their plans for a post-revolutionary America. Prior to the formal outbreak of hostilities, the Continental Congress attempted to entice support from the Atlantic island colonists by exempting them from the Congress' trade embargo against the British Empire created by the non-importation and non-exportation agreements of 1774 and 1775. This exemption provided, the Congress hoped, an avenue for sympathetic Bermudians and Bahamians to secure and export munitions supplies to the rebellious colonies in exchange for American provisions that the islands' inhabitants were dependent upon for their survival. The Congress hoped that the exemption would encourage the Atlantic islands to join the mainland colonies in the rebellion against Britain. American negotiations with the British military and the French government also included the Atlantic islands, as well as Canada, within the boundaries of a new United States. Franklin proposed to Lord William Howe in September 1776 that the United States should encompass the entire British North American mainland and the Atlantic islands, which he believed would eliminate any border contentions caused by British and American settlers. Franklin did not limit his proposals to annex the British Atlantic Islands to British military and Patriot political

officials, he also made a similar proposal to French Foreign Minister Comte de Vergennes in March 1777.

The British Atlantic Islands underwent a significant shift over the course of the American Revolution from having strong patriot-sympathies to supporting the British military effort. Bermuda and the Bahamas actively engaged in supporting the American cause, with inhabitants leaving to the mainland to join the rebellious colonies. During the first half of the conflict, Patriot-sympathizing Bahamians requested documents from the Congress to settle in the rebellious colonies. Bermudians left the colony in the 1760s and 1770s to join the mainland colonies, and patriot-sympathizing Bermudians raided the island colony's gunpowder magazine at St. George on August 15th, 1775 and transported it to two American ships that delivered the munitions to the Continental Army in New England. In the Bahamas, the Continental Navy attacked Nassau on in early March 1776 to capture the colony's munitions to support the Continental Army. In the years following the American attack, the Bahamian political situation deteriorated as Bahamian colonists and officials supported and engaged in illicit trading with the American patriots, while the colony's governor Montfort Browne believed the inhabitants were in league with the Americans and attempted to solidify British authority over the Bahamas. Yet, by 1779, an important shift occurs in Atlantic colonists' sympathies towards the American revolutionaries, which is emphasized through an increase in Bermudian and Bahamian privateer attacks against American vessels. Privateering by the British Atlantic islanders contributed to the Continental Congress' implementation of a trade embargo against the Bahamas during the second half of the Revolution.

The American Revolution opened an important Atlantic border region along Bermuda and the Bahamas that divided the United States from the British Empire in the western Atlantic. The Atlantic border-sea and the loyal British Atlantic Islands formed a launching point for British military attacks and agitation against the United States following the Revolution. The division was political, social, cultural, commercial, and military, and firmly ensconced the island colonies within Britain's control. The American loyalist and British military entrenchment in the Atlantic islands created a military and cultural bulwark to resist the United States. These bulwarks attempted to rectify the islands' history of military neglect during the decades prior to the American Revolution and to deter Americans' influence in Britain's remaining Atlantic empire in the years immediately following the American Revolution.

The War of 1812 and the years immediately following its conclusion lay bare the consequences of the United States' loss of the British Atlantic Islands. Continental forces' and Patriot diplomats' inability to wrest Bermuda and the Bahamas away from Britain permitted the empire to turn a border-sea region bridging disconnected parts of British America into a strategic position for directly and indirectly assaulting the United States. The "Second American Revolution" saw the islands move from defensive positions to launching points from which British military forces and subversive actors could attack the United States and its citizens. Washington, Franklin, and Deane's strategic losses in 1783 became consequential threats to American security that Madison, Monroe, Adams, and Jackson fought from 1812 to 1819.

British military and Loyalist retrenchment at Bermuda and New Providence created points to counter-punch the United States directly. Bermudian and Bahamian

privateers prowled the western Atlantic's sea-lanes preying on American merchant ships and supporting British impressment operations. Privateers operating out of Bermuda stalked the sea-lanes heading to and from American ports since the beginning of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars in the 1790s, and they formed an important link in the Royal Navy's blockade of the United States. While the Washington and Adams administrations advanced a foreign policy position of neutrality towards France and Britain, the Royal Navy viewed this position through the lens of the American Revolution and the Franco-American alliance of 1778. The identification of deep-water channels and safe harbors for British ships-of-the-line and the Royal Navy's ongoing construction of naval defenses, dockyards, and supply depots gave British naval forces a point to consolidate operations, blockade Chesapeake Bay, target American ports and shipping, and even launch invasions of the United States.

The British Atlantic Islands, particularly the Bahamas, also served as places to threaten the United States indirectly through neutral territories and supporting Britain's Native American allies. While British army and settler forces encouraged and supported native allies in the Great Lakes borderlands to violently resist American settlers' westward march through their homelands, causing the Ohio country to be engulfed in brutal clashes attempting to drive the encroaching settlers back, similar activities took place in the Spanish Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi backcountries. British and Bahamian agents employed by Panton, Leslie and Company in the Bahamas and Spanish Florida sought to influence and lend aid to the black maroons, Creeks, and Seminole communities battling American settlers westward progress across the Alabama territory and into the U.S.-Spanish Florida borderlands.

British aid and military supports failure to materialize on the Gulf Coast and Mississippi region left Seminoles, Creeks, and black maroons in a precarious position. Ambrister and Arbuthnot's overturns of British support and supplying arms through Pantan, Leslie increasingly frustrated American settlers and the U.S. military under General Andrew Jackson. Jackson, operating under the impression that a military offensive to quell Native and black maroon attacks was privately supported by the Monroe administration, invaded the western territory of Spanish Florida. While the U.S. army invasion drove contingents of native and black resistance deeper into the Florida territory, as well as executing Arbuthnot and Ambrister after a military trial, bands of blacks and Seminoles sought safe havens outside the reach of the United States and the American settlers. These groups, like the Loyalists who fled the independent United States after the revolutionary war, turned to the Bahamas for refuge.

British military forces, privateers, and subversive actors exploited the British Atlantic Islands as bases to harass American merchant-mariners at sea and penetrate the United States' territory to wage counter-offensives and armed resistance efforts. The hardened British Atlantic border-sea guarded by Bermuda and the Bahamas back a location where British power was directed and projected back against the United States. The United States' loss of the British Atlantic Islands and limited ability to effectively counteract Britain's exploitation of the borderlands and territorial grey areas that surrounded it required the United States to contest additional wars and frontier battles to secure its sovereignty.

The seafaring Bermudians reliance on privateering and the ongoing development of Bermuda as a strategic naval base and supply depot midway between British Canada

and the Caribbean islands made the island colony a significant point during the War of 1812. On June 24th, 1814, a flotilla consisting of the 74-gun HMS *Royal Oak*, three frigates, three armed sloops, and ten support vessels carrying portions of the 4th, 21st, 44th, and 85th British Army regiments arrived in Bermuda. Led by Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane, this fleet would push out from Bermuda in a counter strike against the heart of the United States.

American forces actions in Upper Canada reverberated in Bermuda. On May 14th, 1814, 750 American army and militia men snuck across Lake Erie and the Niagara River to launch a surprise attack on Port Dover in Upper Canada. The American forces proceeded to destroy several flour mills, distilleries, and civilian private property. Admiral Cochrane planned to exact retribution for the American army's sneak attack in a bold strike that would "deter the enemy from a repetition of such outrages."¹ Cochrane's ambitious plan would take the fleet and army invasion force from Bermuda, through the British blockade around the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, and land the forces in a position to inflict coastal attacks on Maryland and Virginia. This strategy also intended to remove some of the pressure on British forces in the Great Lakes by opening another front on the Atlantic seaboard close to the United States' capital city and the port of Baltimore.

The *Royal Oak* and her invasion force entered the Chesapeake on August 17th, and preceded up the bay towards Washington, D.C. and Baltimore. The invasion force landed approximately 36 miles from the capital, and the armed force led by Sir George Cockburn progressed towards the city with the objective of burning it. While the invasion's landing occurred smoothly, the British force encountered resistance from well-

¹ Wilkinson, *Bermuda from Sail to Steam*, 335.

entrenched American militia forces near the village of Bladensburg only seven miles distance from the capital. In the ensuing skirmish, the British force lost 64 men and 185 wounded, while the opposing militia suffered only 26 men killed and 51 wounded. British forces then divided into two groups, with the larger main force making camp about a quarter-mile outside Washington, D.C. and a smaller contingent of 800 soldiers marched on the capital. The U.S. Secretary of the Navy, to prevent a new frigate under construction from falling into enemy hands, ordered the dockyards and the ships anchored there to be set on fire.² The British force burned the capital building, White House, and the Library of Congress.

The American Revolution and the War of 1812 caused an important shift in the Atlantic island colonies and the southeastern Native American nations' roles in the Atlantic world's political, commercial, and military exchanges. In the American Revolution and War of 1812, third parties occupied a position of contention that America patriot and British groups attempted to win over or, at least, prevent from entering the war on the opposing side. Bahamian and American loyalist efforts to establish trade relationships with the Native American nations living in the U.S.-Spanish Florida borderlands provided new opportunities to reassert Britain's political and economic influence in southern North America, albeit without direct administrative approval. Trading firms like the Panton, Leslie and Company and John Forbes and Company operated out of the Bahamas following American independence. Merchants from Panton, Leslie and Company and John Forbes and Company cultivated their commercial ties with the Seminole and Creek nations in Spanish Florida and the southeastern U.S. frontier.

² Ibid., 336-337.

The Bahamians, Creeks, and Seminoles became strategic players in Britain's broader counteroffensive operations, which endeavored to contain the nascent United States' commercial and political expansion in the Atlantic world. On the North American mainland, British military forces, agents, and traders who operated in the grey zones of the Great Lakes basin and Spanish Florida found fruitful ground in their appeals to Native American tribes by offering reassurances of British protection and security for their peoples and ancestral lands. Native communities saw themselves threatened by encroaching white American settlers and the erosion of their traditional homelands through dubious land purchases and treaty negotiations with the neighboring states and federal government.³

American loyalists and British soldiers' arrival in the Bahamas also attracted trading companies fleeing their headquarters in the southern mainland colonies and ports to the islands. William Panton, a Scottish merchant who immigrated to Charleston in 1765, and Thomas Forbes' merchant operations in the American southeast during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries formed the major vehicle for asserting and maintaining British influence with Native American groups.⁴ Panton established himself

³ *America's Hundred Years' War: U.S. Expansion to the Gulf Coast and the Fate of the Seminole, 1763-1858*, ed. William S. Belko (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011); David W. Miller, *The Forced Removal of American Indians from the Northeast: A History of Territorial Cessions and Relocations, 1620-1854* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011); J. A. Brown, "Panton, Leslie and Company Indian Traders of Pensacola and St. Augustine," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 37, no. 3-4 (Jan.-Apr., 1959), 328-336; Alan Taylor, "The Divided Ground: Upper Canada, New York, and the Iroquois Six Nations, 1783-1815," *Journal of the Early Republic* 22, no. 1 (Spring, 2002), 55-75.

⁴ Affidavits from William Panton, 5 June 1788, Miscellaneous Records, vol. ZZZ (1807-1809), 24-27, South Carolina Department of Archives and History; Miscellaneous Records, vol. KKK, 210-212, South Carolina Department of Archives and History; William S. Coker and Thomas D. Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands: Panton, Leslie & Company and John Forbes & Company, 1783-1847* (Pensacola: University of West Florida Press, 1986), 15, 17, 23.

as a principal merchant following his appointment as British East Florida's official trader to the Creeks by Governor Patrick Tonyn in December 1775, and British Indian agent Colonel Thomas Brown's authorization of Panton to oversee gift-giving diplomatic responsibilities necessary for maintaining Britain's alliances with the Creek and Cherokee nations in 1778.⁵ With the American Revolution's southern turn and the Loyalist evacuations to St. Augustine, Panton and Forbes reformed their company with John Leslie in an effort to continue the British-Native American trade—only to relocate to the Bahamas following the British cession of the Floridas to Spain in 1785.⁶ John Melish observed that the Bahamas were “at all times of importance to the United States.”⁷ With the War of 1812's outbreak, the conflict encouraged the Bahamians and Loyalist settlers to “form an extensive field for privateering,” and brought Americans and the islanders into an “unprofitable contest” to see “who can do each other the most harm.”⁸

Low-level traders and military officials played an instrumental role in encouraging black and native support for Britain. Bahamas-based merchants and military officers, such as Alexander George Arbuthnot and Lieutenant Robert C. Ambrister, who fostered commercial and political relationships with the Seminole and Creek nations, and

⁵ Patrick Tonyn to Lord Dartmouth, 18 December 1775, CO 5/556/71-73; *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, ed. Clarence Edwin Carter et al (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1934-1975), 4:297-298; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands*, 26-27, 27n69; Leslie Hall, *Land and Allegiance in Revolutionary Georgia* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 47.

⁶ Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands*, 216-217.

⁷ Melish, *A Description of East and West Florida, and the Bahama Islands*, 8.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

agitated them against the American settlers populating the U.S.-Spanish Florida borderlands.⁹ In addition to Arbuthnot and Ambrister was Captain George Woodbine, a filibusterer who also resided in Florida, and operated as a British officer and agent since 1817.¹⁰ The three men utilized their positions as British-Bahamian traders and diplomatic go-betweens to stir up maroons and runaway slaves, and Britain's former Native American allies with the promise of British support to reclaim their traditional lands from the United States. In August 1814, Woodbine and Ambrister landed at Pensacola as part of a British invasion force to capture the neutral Spanish territory and its strategic fort, and "invited, by public proclamation, all the runaway negroes, all the savage Indians...to join their standard, and wage an exterminating war against the portion of the United States."¹¹ Yet, British help did not materialize in any meaningful way to aid Britain's former native allies.

Even after the War of 1812's conclusion, Woodbine and Ambrister used the promise of British support as a motivator in their efforts to encourage the natives against the United States. Woodbine and Ambrister claimed they constituted part of a coming British force that would aid their Native American allies in regaining their ancestral lands, and Arbuthnot acted as a petitioner to American, British, and Spanish officials on behalf of the black and native peoples on the Florida frontier.¹² Acting as traders and

⁹ Frank L. Owsley, Jr., "Ambrister and Arbuthnot: Adventurers or Martyrs for British Honor?," *Journal of the Early Republic* 5, no. 3 (Autumn, 1985), 293, 308.

¹⁰ Owsley, "Ambrister and Arbuthnot," 308.

¹¹ John Quincy Adams to George W. Erving, 28 November 1818, 1, Papers of Panton, Leslie and Company.

agents for Panton, Leslie and Company, Woodbine and Ambrister supplied them with guns, powder, and ammunition with the primary purpose of maintaining the British-Native American trade in furs and deerskins. This also held the secondary purpose of simultaneously supplying the natives with the tools of active resistance to American frontiersmen and military forces. Woodbine and Ambrister actively encouraged armed parties of Seminoles, Creeks, and escaped blacks to resist the United States, which further destabilized an already lawless U.S.-Spanish Florida border zone.¹³ Consequently, the threats posed by black and native insurgents supported by British-Bahamian agents precipitated an invasion by the U.S. Army under General Andrew Jackson.

Seminole raids against American settlers hoped to unseat them from occupying native lands. The Seminole's hostile actions, however, resulted in General Andrew Jackson and the U.S. Army's invasion of Spanish Florida in 1818. Upon Jackson's forces reaching Fort San Marcos de Apalache on the St. Mark's River, Arbuthnot and Ambrister put on trial in a court-martial. Twelve American army officers formed the jury, and Major General Edmund P. Gaines presided over the trial.¹⁴ Jackson and American officials charged the two men with a litany of offenses, which included: encouraging the native

¹² Alexander Arbuthnot to Commanding Officer at Fort Gaines, 3 March 1817, 1, Papers of Panton, Leslie and Company; Alexander Arbuthnot to Charles Cameron [Governor of Bahamas], 1817, 1, Papers of Panton, Leslie and Company; Alexander Arbuthnot to Charles Bagot, 1817, 1, Papers of Panton, Leslie and Company; Alexander Arbuthnot to Chiefs of the Upper Creeks, 11 March 1817, 1, Papers of Panton, Leslie and Company.

¹³ Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands*, 300-301. As Coker and Watson demonstrate, this continued practices Woodbine did during the War of 1812, see: Woodbine to Kindelán, 30 December 1814, East Florida Papers, legajo 198C16, Library of Congress; Juan José Estrade to Bowlegs, 5 July 1815, East Florida Papers, legajo 115K9, Library of Congress; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands*, 300-301.

¹⁴ *The Trials of A. Arbuthnot and R. C. Ambrister: charged with exciting the Seminole Indians to war against the United States of America: from the official documents which were laid by the President before Congress* (London: James Ridgway, 1819), 3.

populations to not abide by the Treaty of Fort Jackson; spying for the British; aiding, abetting, comforting, and providing arms and supplies to enemy forces.¹⁵ A key charge against Arbuthnot and Ambrister was that of inciting the native tribes to attempt to kill Edmund Doyle and William Hambly, who had been actively working to maintain the peace between the United States, Spain, and the Seminole and Creek nations.¹⁶ Ambrister was charged specifically with giving aid, comfort, and the means to make war to enemies of the United States, and commanding hostile Native forces against the United States.¹⁷ Jackson's invasion captured, court-martialed, and executed Arbuthnot and Ambrister on April 29th, 1818.¹⁸

Jackson's intervention against Ambrister and Arbuthnot's actions ultimately led to the annexation of Spanish Florida by the United States in 1819 to establish order and security in the southeastern border regions. U.S. intervention sought to deter foreign agents from continuing to instigate the region's Native American and black populations against the United States.¹⁹ American intervention in Spanish Florida brought an end to

¹⁵ *The Trials of A. Arbuthnot and R. C. Ambrister*, 3-5, 60-61; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands*, 321.

¹⁶ *The Trials of A. Arbuthnot and R. C. Ambrister*, 60-61; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands*, 321.

¹⁷ *The Trials of A. Arbuthnot and R. C. Ambrister*, 3-5, 60-61; Coker and Watson, *Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands*, 321-322.

¹⁸ "Correspondence relating to the case of Arbuthnot and Ambrister (1817-1818)," Correspondence and Documents relating to Richard Rush: English Mission, Rush Family Papers, AM 18510, Box 35, Folder 17, Rare Books and Special Collections: Princeton University Libraries; "Documents and notes relating to the case of Arbuthnot and Ambrister (1813-1819)," Correspondence and Documents relating to Richard Rush: English Mission, Rush Family Papers, AM 18510, Box 35, Folder 18, Rare Books and Special Collections: Princeton University Libraries.

British attempts to assert control over the United States, and began the development of an American foreign policy intended to resist European interference in the western hemisphere.

British and Bahamian meddling in Spanish Florida and encouraging Native-maroon resistance to American westward settlement compelled the General Andrew Jackson to take decisive action in the region. With American military intervention into Spanish Florida—and its subsequent territorial annexation through the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819—endeavoring to eliminate the soft borderland that subversive British and Bahamian agents capitalized on to rile southeastern native and black maroon communities against the United States and its citizens. With American military and diplomatic interventions erasing the grey areas separating the United States from the European colonial powers in North America, Britain’s black and native allies found themselves abandoned.

Facing the prospects of a coming onslaught of land-hungry American settlers, the Black Seminole tribes in Florida turned to the Bahamas for refuge. One Black Seminole leader, Chief Kenadgie, arrived in Nassau on September 29th, 1819 to negotiate support for his tribe, but Bahamian officials rebuffed his request and sent him back to Florida—not wishing to violate the recent Treaty of Ghent between Britain and the United States by giving refuge and support to the Seminoles.²⁰ Beginning in 1821, despite not receiving

¹⁹ John Missall and Mary Lou Missall, *The Seminole Wars: America’s Longest Indian Conflict* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 46-47; *Adams-Onís Treaty* (1819); Alexander Deconde, *A History of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1963), 127.

²⁰ W. V. Munnings, “Governor’s dispatches, 1818-1825” in *A Guide to the Selected Sources for the History of the Seminole Settlements at Red Bays, Andros, 1817-1980*, ed. D. E. Wood (Nassau: Bahamas Department of Archives, 1980), 5-6; Rosalyn Howard, “The ‘Wild Indians’ of Andros Island: Black

official recognition and protection from the Bahamian government, the Black Seminole communities took action to protect themselves from the United States. In late 1821, two separate contingents of Black Seminoles journeyed to the Bahamas seeking sanctuary: the first, a small ten-man group that landed at New Providence, but were forced to return to Florida by Bahamian authorities; and, the second, a larger group Black Seminoles on dug-out canoes departed from Cape Florida.²¹ Conscious of the previous unsuccessful journeys, the large contingent of Black Seminole refugees determined to avoid further encounters with the Bahamian government, and instead choose to land and establish permanent settlements on the Bahamas' uninhabited Andros Island where they remained unnoticed until the late 1820s.²²

Britain's control of the western Atlantic border-sea posed a consequential, direct threat to the United States. Britain's development of Bermuda as a naval and the island's location as a mid-point between Britain's Canadian and Caribbean colonies made the former Patriot-sympathizing island a critical position for harassing, containing, and counterattacking the United States. President Madison's declaration of war against Great Britain on 1812 gave British military commanders the opportunity to make those realities manifest in a devastating strike on the nation's political center. Sailing from Bermuda, Admiral Warren's squadron and army invasion force's penetration of the Chesapeake Bay, bombardment of Baltimore, and burning of the United States' capital struck a deep,

Seminole Legacy in the Bahamas," *Journal of Black Studies* 37, no. 2 (November, 2006), 280; "Article the Ninth," *Treaty of Ghent* (1815).

²¹ Howard, "The 'Wild Indians' of Andros Island," 280.

²² Howard, "The 'Wild Indians' of Andros Island," 275, 279, 280-281.

symbolic blow against the United States in retaliation for Americans' destruction in Upper Canada.

British- and Bahamian-Native American interactions following the American Revolution and the War of 1812 attempted to undermine the United States, while offering promises of support and a safe-haven from American territorial expansion. The strengthening of the Britain's military presence and fortifications in the Bahamas worked to brace the British Empire's new Atlantic border with the United States. For Britain and the Bahamas, maintaining trade relations with the southeastern Native American nations in the decades following the American Revolution continued established alliances, undermined stability for Americans living near the Spanish Florida borderlands, and fostered the belief that the British Empire stood as a haven for southeastern natives to retreat in the face of American frontier settlement. In the application of borderland/border-sea, Atlantic world, and security interpretations stands to further scholars' understanding of the connections that shaped early American foreign policy, British policy to bolster its position within the western Atlantic against the United States, and southeastern Native Americans' relationships with neighboring colonial societies and European powers.

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PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

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- Review of “*Realm between Empires: The Second Dutch Atlantic, 1680-1815*” by Wim Klooster and Gert Oostindie” in *XVIII: New Perspectives on the Eighteenth Century* 16, no. 1 (May, 2019): 134-136.

- Paper Presentation, "Securing the Borderlands/seas in the American Revolution: The Spanish-American Alliance and Regional Security against the British Empire," The Sons of the American Revolution Ninth Annual Conference on the American Revolution ("Spain and the American Revolution") at The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD (8 June 2018).
- Paper Presentation, "Geopolitical Security, Spheres of Influence, and the Border-sea in the American Revolution," Consortium on the Revolutionary Era, 1750-1850 annual meeting, Philadelphia, PA (24 February 2018).
- Paper Presentation, "Securing the Empire of Liberty or the Power of Rule Britannia: The British Atlantic Islands, Spheres of Influence, and the Border-sea in the Age of Revolutions," Negotiating Waters: Seas, Oceans and Passageways in the Colonial and Postcolonial Anglophone World conference at the Université Grenoble Alpes, Grenoble, France (16 February 2018).
- "Loyalty, Lies, and Subterfuge: Portraying the American War for Independence as a History from the Shadows," review of *Turn: Washington's Spies* (Seasons 1-3) on AMC in *Criticks* (2017). Accessed on 17 July 2019.
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- Paper Presentation, "Subverting the United States' Authority from the Imperial Edge: Bahamian-Native American Interactions in the U.S.-Spanish Florida Borderlands," Southern Historical Association annual meeting, Dallas, TX (11 November 2017).
- Paper Presentation, "The British Atlantic Islands and Re-establishing British Security in the Western Atlantic," British Group of Early American Historians annual meeting at the University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth, United Kingdom (2 September 2017).
- Paper Presentation, "The Border-seas of a New British Empire: The British Atlantic Islands in the Age of the American Revolution," Library Company of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA (27 June 2017).
- "Barbara Christian," "Roosevelt Douglas," and "Gail Saunders," in *Dictionary of Caribbean and Afro-Latin American Biography*, eds. Henry Lewis Gates Jr. and Franklin W. Knight, 6 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2:155-157, 2:390-391, 6:16-17.
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