



Atlantic Studies

Global Currents

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjas20>

“An unlawful and contemptible adventure”: the Ducoudray-Holstein expedition and US foreign policy in the early 1820s Caribbean

Thomas Mareite

To cite this article: Thomas Mareite (2021): “An unlawful and contemptible adventure”: the Ducoudray-Holstein expedition and US foreign policy in the early 1820s Caribbean, *Atlantic Studies*, DOI: [10.1080/14788810.2021.1948283](https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810.2021.1948283)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810.2021.1948283>



© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 07 Jul 2021.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 70



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

“An unlawful and contemptible adventure”: the Ducoudray-Holstein expedition and US foreign policy in the early 1820s Caribbean

Thomas Mareite 

Historical Institute, University of Duisburg-Essen, Essen, Germany

ABSTRACT

This article explores how the involvement of US citizens in projects of political revolution across the Caribbean threatened the geostrategic and economic interests of the United States in the region. In 1822, a revolutionary expedition led by a veteran of the Napoleonic wars, Henri Louis Villaume de Ducoudray-Holstein, departed from the Atlantic seaboard to overthrow Spanish rule in Puerto Rico and to establish the so-called Republic of Boricua. The republican utopia nonetheless collapsed after Curaçao’s Dutch authorities arrested the expedition’s leaders. This article assesses the expedition’s geopolitical ramifications, highlighting how it exacerbated tensions between the US and the Spanish Empire. It also underscores the predicament of US officials, both in Washington and across the Caribbean, who sought to defend US geostrategic goals and the Union’s maritime trade, even while policing US participation to illicit activities in the Revolutionary Caribbean.

KEYWORDS

US foreign policy; revolutionary Caribbean; Ducoudray-Holstein expedition; consular network

Introduction

In August 1822, a handful of ships departed from New York and Philadelphia under the command of Henri Louis Villaume de Ducoudray-Holstein, an exiled French revolutionary born in present-day Germany who had formerly served as an officer in both the Bonapartist and Bolivarian armies. Sailing under the pretense of lawful trade, the expedition’s secret target was Puerto Rico, one of the Spanish Empire’s sugar gems in the Caribbean alongside Cuba. At the head of a force composed by exiled liberals and former Bonapartists from Europe, US citizens and creoles from all across the Caribbean, Ducoudray’s objective was to land on Puerto Rico’s weakly defended western coast, to overthrow the local Spanish government, and to establish an independent republican government. Following internal conflicts and serious damages at sea, the revolutionary expedition was however compelled to call at the Dutch colony of Curaçao, where the conspiracy was thwarted after local authorities seized two of the expedition’s vessels and jailed its main leaders.

In March 1822, the US federal government had officially recognized the independence of several former Spanish colonies across the Americas (Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Chile and

CONTACT Thomas Mareite  thomas.mareite@uni-due.de

© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

Buenos Aires), which predictably infuriated Spanish officials, starting with Spain's minister in the US, Joaquín de Anduaga.¹ Against the backdrop of tense transatlantic relations – during which the president James Monroe's administration anxiously kept an eye on European reactions to this new policy of recognition – the involvement of US citizens and merchants in Ducoudray's failed expedition, as well as Spanish suspicions about its backing by the US federal government, proved to be diplomatically explosive. The arrest of Ducoudray and his fellow revolutionaries in Curaçao sparked heated debates across the Caribbean and the Atlantic world, adding yet another bone of contention between the US and the Spanish Empire.²

Looking at the 1822 Ducoudray-Holstein expedition against Puerto Rico sheds new light on US foreign policy in an early 1820s Caribbean shaped by the gradual yet incomplete demise of the Spanish Empire, the emergence of independent states across Spanish America, and competition for political and commercial hegemony between the US and European empires (especially Great Britain, France and Spain). Although in the early 1820s the Union "lacked the capacity to determine outcomes," as historian Paul Kramer pointed out, the United States' 1822 formal recognition of the independence of five former Spanish colonies represented one of the first expressions of an assertive foreign policy over the Western Hemisphere on its part.³ While the dissolution of the Spanish Empire in the Americas had proved to be crucial to the geographical and political constitution of the US nation-state since at least the Louisiana Purchase (1803), the Spanish American revolutions reshaped the Union's position in the Western Hemisphere and challenged its commitment to liberalism and republicanism. The War of 1812 confirmed the status of the US as a growing Caribbean power, paving the way to its territorial expansion over the Gulf Coast region, and strengthening its image as a would-be champion of republicanism, constitutionalism and liberalism in the Americas.

At the same time, the Union's still fragile standing among the imperial powers of the Atlantic world led most US statesmen to endorse a foreign policy of non-entanglement during most of the Monroe presidency (1817–1825). The US foreign policy in the post-1815 Caribbean space sought to respond to the uncertain and ambiguous dissolution of the Spanish Empire, to check the progress of European influence in the Caribbean and northern South America, as well as to protect emerging US political and commercial interests against the threats of revolutionary enterprises, privateering and piracy. From the onset of the Early Republic, US statesmen had striven hard to disentangle the Union from European politics and influence and by 1822, to support the Union's geostrategic objectives in the Caribbean, they now cautiously moved away from ostensible involvement in the armed struggle between independent republicans and the Spanish Empire across Spanish America by embracing an official policy of neutrality. The Ducoudray-Holstein expedition, however, generated precisely the kind of transatlantic entanglements that the US Department of State and its expanding consular network in the Caribbean sought to distance itself from.⁴

The study of such imperial entanglements in the Caribbean during the 1820s – a decade whose transformative impact on the Atlantic world has long been underestimated – now constitutes a vibrant historiographical field. Scholars have emphasized how ascendant imperial powers such as Great Britain and the US expanded their influence over the region through a mix of private commercial initiative and public diplomacy that *de facto* reshaped the balance of (imperial) power in the Caribbean. They have shed light on how,

guided by their own geopolitical and economic interests, both nations sought to either contain, or capitalize on the effects of revolutionary projects that challenged established imperial powers. Both dynamics were felt especially acutely during the Spanish American wars for independence, whose long-term outcome (the emergence of a multiplicity of new American states separated from Spain) was far from settled or irreversible by the early 1820s.

Against the backdrop of revolutionary upheavals, studies have also pointed out the resilience and transformation of long-established imperial structures, with a focus on how new transatlantic imperial regimes were forged, including short-lived attempts at constitutional monarchism. In the case of the Spanish Empire's transatlantic reform, scholars have shown how colonial subjecthood and governance were reshaped by the tension between the politics of integration between metropolis and colonies (the Cádiz Constitution of 1812 being a case in point) and separation (an opposite entrenchment of legal regimes of exception for colonial territories). Over the last two decades, this variegated historiography on Empires in the Caribbean has shown that such intra-imperial developments and metropolis-colonies relations cannot be studied in isolation within discrete imperial spaces matching national boundaries, but rather should be understood as constitutive of – and shaped by – a larger transimperial space. Within the academic literature on Caribbean imperial entanglements, however, the relevance of the Ducoudray expedition for US foreign policy in the early 1820s Caribbean remains largely unexplored.

The historiography on the roots of the Monroe Doctrine, for instance, seldom mentions the Ducoudray-Holstein expedition as an episode worthy of attention. Yet, as this article suggests, the expedition and its aftermath illustrate how influential the concern to police and pacify the Caribbean was in the making of US foreign policy, culminating in the Monroe Doctrine in the early 1820s. It epitomizes the precarious balance of neutrality, caution and forming interest that characterized US foreign policy in the region, underpinned by an embryonic though clearly growing consular service.⁵

By contrast with the short-lived privateer polities of Galveston in Texas and Amelia Island in Florida, Ducoudray's aborted conspiracy against Puerto Rico has drawn limited attention from scholars on the early nineteenth-century "masterless Caribbean" with the recent exception of Vanessa Mongey's *Rogue Revolutionaries*.⁶ The expedition had ramifications for political revolution and insurgency in the Caribbean in the 1820s that have long remained unexplored. The expedition provides a prism from which to observe how US, Spanish, and even Dutch geostrategic interests clashed in the region and how their respective diplomatic corps were set in motion by the illicit actions of the actors who composed the Revolutionary Caribbean such as Ducoudray and his men.

The Revolutionary Caribbean of the early 1820s was a motley constellation of political actors that *de facto* subverted – politically and economically – the prevailing imperial structures of the Caribbean. Its secretive web of political upheaval, economic ascent and social mobility constituted an alternative and radical geography of power that challenged imperial claims to sovereignty and the hegemony of established polities. At its prime, the post-1815 Revolutionary Caribbean connected Scandinavian and Dutch free ports across the Caribbean, the state of Haiti, privateering outposts such as Amelia Island, Galveston and Margarita Island, South American coastal cities such as Cartagena and La Guayra, as well as remote geographical locations such as Cozumel and Isla Mujeres in Mexico, and the Mosquito Coast in Central America, among other locations.

It was forged not only by Spanish American privateers and exiled people, smugglers, free people of color, self-emancipated slaves, political radicals and adventurers, exiled European liberals, a multifaceted US and Caribbean mercantile class, but also occasionally by colonial authorities themselves.

These diverse actors coalesced into fluid alliances based on shared values or pecuniary interests that challenged the dominant imperial Caribbean. As recently emphasized by Jeppe Mulich, many of these actors tacitly engaged in this transimperial subversive web, such as when complicit colonial administrators took bribes in exchange for turning a blind eye to the sale of unlawfully captured prizes by privateers, the introduction of smuggled merchandises, or the illegal arrival of enslaved captives in their jurisdiction. As a result, while it differed from the politico-legal structures of power that sought to carve a sovereign and well-demarcated imperial geography into the Caribbean space, the Revolutionary Caribbean at least partly overlapped with the established imperial Caribbean.⁷ Yet the projects of political revolution and personal enrichment of these actors undermined the United States' position in the post-1815 global order in several ways. Besides putting US maritime trade in the Caribbean at risk, the participation of US nationals in the Revolutionary Caribbean jeopardized the Union's fragile relations with its neighboring imperial powers in the Caribbean and threatened to tarnish its reputation as a treaty-worthy state in the Atlantic world.

This article uses the Ducoudray-Holstein expedition as case in point to illustrate the intersection of US foreign policy and the Revolutionary Caribbean during the early 1820s. It relies upon US congressional records and consular archives, diplomatic correspondence from the US and Spain, Dutch judicial records, as well as newspaper articles from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. It begins by examining the preparation and thwarted execution of the expedition, framing it within a wider revolutionary process that challenged imperial power in the Caribbean. It then explores the geopolitical ramifications of the Ducoudray-Holstein expedition, with a focus on how its fallout exacerbated tensions between Spanish Empire and the US. Finally, it focuses on the trials of the main leaders, the vessels and their cargoes in Curaçao, as well as on how the US consul in Curaçao sought to defend emerging US political and mercantile interests from the threat of the Revolutionary Caribbean.

“A chimera of the wildest nature”: the failed Republic of Boricua

Ducoudray-Holstein's expedition took place in 1822, during the heyday of Spanish American privateering against Spanish imperial maritime trade, and was part of this longer history that deeply shaped the Atlantic world during the Age of Revolution. By outfitting the expedition's vessels in New York and Philadelphia, Ducoudray and his fellow revolutionaries stood among many other Atlantic rebels who used the United States as a base for their privateering and insurgent activities in the Caribbean.

In the long sequence of revolutionary operations against the Spanish Empire, Francisco de Miranda's 1806 expedition to Venezuela, Gutiérrez de Lara's forays into Spanish Texas, Francisco Xavier Mina and Louis-Michel Aury's expeditions along the coasts of New Spain, all originated and departed from US territory. Letters of marque for privateering were issued on behalf of the independent governments of Spanish America in the port cities of Baltimore, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Norfolk, Savannah as well as New Orleans,

and local merchants financed privateering and revolutionary expeditions under the flags of the independent nations of Spanish America.⁸

The personal backgrounds of the leaders of the Ducoudray-Holstein expedition further embedded it within a longer trajectory of revolution, as recently stressed by Vanessa Mongey. The Brandenburg-born Henri Louis Villaume de Ducoudray, who operated under the moniker Ducoudray-Holstein, had served in the French Republican Army from 1793 onwards. He reached Philadelphia in 1813, retreating from conflicts within the Bonapartist army into exile. Ducoudray later joined Louis-Michel Aury's privateering crew in its defense of the insurgent city of Cartagena de Indias, during the siege led by Spanish field marshal Pablo Morillo (August–December 1815). Following the fall of Cartagena, the revolutionary fled to Haiti alongside Neogranadan and Venezuelan refugees. Residing in Les Cayes until 1820, Ducoudray made a living as a music teacher and a bookstore keeper, only leaving for short periods to take part in Simón Bolívar's expeditions from Haiti to Venezuela. Ducoudray later settled in the Dutch colony of Curaçao in 1820, home to many exiled republicans, especially those seeking refuge from northern South America.

While residing in Curaçao, Ducoudray met French settlers with radical tendencies who resided in western Puerto Rico. In late 1821, he received a visit "from some rich foreigners who were well settled in the island of Puerto Rico" according to his own narrative of the episode. He had previously rejected privateering commissions from Mexico and Buenos Aires, intending to retreat from insurgent enterprises, and initially refused the offer to lead a revolution against Spanish rule in Puerto Rico. But when the "rich foreigners" came back with new guarantees a month later, including \$18,000 to pay for the chartering of vessels, Ducoudray changed his mind and sprung into action. In March 1822, he personally journeyed from Curaçao to the Danish colony of Saint Thomas in order to recruit more revolutionaries across the Caribbean.⁹

Another ringleader of the Puerto Rico expedition was a certain Baptist Irvine. Irvine was a former journalist, who had served as editor of various publications. These included the *Baltimore Whig* (the city's main Democratic newspaper) during the first decade of the nineteenth century, the *New York Columbian* in the mid-1810s, and the *Washington City Gazette* during the early 1820s. Irvine had been closely involved in the wars of independence. During the late 1810s, he had been sent on a mission as US representative in Venezuela to assess the military breakthrough of the Spanish American patriots in the Spanish Main, and to seek compensation in the case of US vessels irregularly seized by Colombian privateers. In the US, Irvine was also personally acquainted with agents dispatched by the new Spanish American governments, such as Manuel Torres from Colombia, as well as with exiled revolutionaries, such as José Miguel Carrera from Chile.¹⁰

The third leading figure in the Ducoudray-Holstein expedition was Nicolas-George Jeannet-Oudin. As Vanessa Mongey has noted, Jeannet-Oudin's political roots likewise lay firmly in the Revolutionary Caribbean. As a former Commissioner for the National Convention in French Guyana (1793), Commissioner for Guadeloupe (1798), as well as participant in the short-lived Champ d'Asile settlement in Spanish Texas (1818), Jeannet-Oudin was an old hand of the Revolutionary Atlantic. Together, these men's experiences of and ties to the Revolutionary Caribbean profoundly shaped the expedition of 1822.¹¹

Puerto Rico in 1822 constituted the ideal target for a revolutionary enterprise. The island was militarily depleted by the wars of independence in Spanish America, with

both local soldiers and resources primarily directed to the fight against the patriots in *Tierra Firme*. The western coast of Puerto Rico, in particular, was left loosely defended due to structural neglect and a military drain caused by the conflict between Spain and her former colonies in the Americas. In addition, local revolutionary instigators of the conspiracy planned to use the island's enslaved population as a fifth column (about 22,000 by 1820, which was admittedly less than 10 percent of the total population), by creating conditions for a slave revolt that would break out simultaneously with arrival of the maritime expedition.

As David Geggus has argued, the growth of sugar and coffee production based on enslaved labor in Spanish Puerto Rico, second only to that of Cuba, spoke volumes about the resilience of colonialism and plantation slavery in parts of the Americas in the Age of Revolution.¹² Puerto Rico was profoundly reshaped by the "Second Slavery" and Spanish imperial rule over the island tightened in the midst of the revolutionary Atlantic. In an attempt to both crush the independence movement and develop the colony, a *Real Cédula* (royal decree) issued in 1815 laid out liberal conditions of settlement for foreigners.¹³

The underlying aim of the expedition to Puerto Rico was to overthrow imperial rule and establish the *República de Boricua*, renaming the island with its Taíno name (*Boriken*), taking inspiration from the precedent set by Haiti. Ducoudray had prepared a series of proclamations and official documents in support to the planned revolution, including a solemn declaration of independence of the Republic of Boricua, partly modeled on the 1776 Declaration of Independence of the US, a constitution, instructions to foreign officers serving in the army of the new republic, an appeal to foreign settlers for the colonization of the island, as well as blank forms of merit.¹⁴ The project – an hybrid "political bricolage" as Vanessa Mongey puts it – was decidedly liberal, but just as with the freebooters of Amelia Island half a decade before them, the leaders' commitment to racial equality was ambiguous at best, favoring the social emancipation of free blacks while simultaneously preserving slavery as an institution, as stated in the third article of Boricua's provisional constitution.¹⁵

Beneath the disguise of a commercial venture destined for the Scandinavian colonies of the Caribbean, the outfitting of the expedition's vessels in Philadelphia and New York left little doubt about the revolutionary nature of the expedition. The *Mary*, insured by the Patapsco Insurance Company (Baltimore), was loaded in Philadelphia "with a quantity of muskets, sabres, pistols, cartridges, gunpowder, and other munitions of war," alongside more mundane goods such as flour bread, beef, pork, rum, wine, soap, hats, medicine, candles as well as saddles.¹⁶ The *Mary's* captain, Aaron Burns, left a narrative of the maritime expedition in his correspondence with the vessel's owner, merchant Thomas Watson.

On 11 August 1822, the *Mary* left the Atlantic seaboard. It cruised off Barnegat two days later, where it was supposed to meet two other vessels, the *Selina* and the *Andrew Jackson*, the property of New York merchants William Gold and William Agnew. The three vessels did not meet off Barnegat, however, presumably on account of the fact that the *Selina* and the *Andrew Jackson* had by then barely left New York. After their missed rendezvous along the US coasts, the *Mary*, *Andrew Jackson* and *Selina* sailed to Saint Barthélemy, a Swedish colony since 1783, their first place of call. As a free port in a neutral colony, Saint Barthélemy was a natural stopover for a journey of this kind. It

was one of a handful of harbors, including Saint Eustatius (Dutch) and Saint Thomas (Danish), where radical free blacks, exiled revolutionaries, and merchants trading in contraband or illegally-acquired goods, could freely circulate, seek refuge, and do business. Johan Norderling, the Swedish governor of Saint Barthélemy since 1819, was for instance notoriously lenient with privateers unloading unlawful prizes, as well as being complicit in the illicit activities of smugglers and slave traders. Local residents provided both financial and political support to the independent republics formed across Spanish America. In Saint Barthélemy, the expedition's leaders therefore expected a modicum of protection from the colonial authorities.¹⁷

According to Burns, the *Mary* reached the port of Gustavia on 8 September 1822. While calling at Saint Barthélemy on their way to the second planned stopover of Saint Thomas, the insurgents recruited new volunteers (mostly Afro-Caribbean men) and – with the intermediation of US-born Spanish American privateer captain James Chaytor – acquired the *Eendracht*, a brig sailing under Dutch colors. Under pressure from local residents skeptical about the alleged commercial character of the expedition, which seemed inconsistent with the fact that the original two brigs and schooner were clearly loaded with arms, ammunition and provisions, Norderling eventually ordered off the vessels and began informing his imperial counterparts across the Caribbean, especially those in Puerto Rico and Guadeloupe. The Swedish authorities also proceeded to arrest a prominent free creole named Philippe “Titus” Bigard, a Guadeloupean acquaintance of Jeannet-Oudin, on charges of inciting black people from Saint Eustatius, Saint Martin and Saint Kitts to join the expedition. At this stage, the maritime conspiracy had given rise to several rumors. While the revolutionary expedition's presumed targets also included the French Caribbean, especially the island of Guadeloupe, as many of the Afro-Caribbean conspirators originally came from the island, Haiti's involvement was suspected after a free black from Saint Martin made the curious allegation that “twenty four vessels [had been] fitted out from the Haitian Government” for the insurgents.¹⁸

Such rumors, although unfounded, are however understandable given the context, and considering the involvement of numerous Afro-Caribbean men. In February 1822, the Republic of Haiti, unified under the leadership of Jean-Pierre Boyer since 1820 after a long internal conflict, had invaded the eastern part of Hispaniola in support of a pro-independence movement led by José Núñez de Cáceres. To Spanish and French colonial administrators, the recent takeover of Santo Domingo made the theory of Haitian support to a revolutionary expedition and its instigation of a “race war” in Puerto Rico or Guadeloupe entirely plausible. Such concerns were by no means new: rumors of Haiti's revolutionary influence had surfaced in Cuba during the 1812 Aponte Rebellion, and on many earlier occasions.¹⁹

While the *Andrew Jackson* eventually parted ways with the expedition, the three other vessels sailed northward just a few miles off Gustavia to the island to La Fourchue (also known as Five islands) as a short stopover on their way to western Puerto Rico. La Fourchue was a jurisdictional limbo of sort: while the island was nominally under Swedish sovereignty, colonial authorities on Saint Barthélemy refrained from exerting authority on it. The island was left, *de facto*, to privateers, smugglers and slave traders. Should any trouble break out because of their activities, Swedish colonial authorities could always claim plausible deniability: when found politically convenient they simply did not rule over La Fourchue.²⁰ Yet when news that a French navy squadron recently

dispatched to Saint Barthélemy threatened to thwart their plans, Ducoudray and his men left. Meanwhile, internal conflicts started heating up. According to captain Aaron Burns, “after being at sea about six to eight hours,” Ducoudray and Irvine decided to proceed to La Guayra in the Republic of Colombia, a formally independent state since December 1819, in the hope of securing the Colombian commission that Ducoudray had falsely pledged to be carrying, much to the anger of part of the crew.

While sailing south to La Guayra, the *Eendracht* underwent serious damages, and “made so much water” that evading the Spanish blockade of *Tierra Firme* was unconceivable. In a kind of internal putsch – a frequent occurrence in revolutionary and privateering expeditions across the post-1815 Caribbean – led by the “French” faction, “mostly black and of the lowest class” in Burns’s words, the *Mary* forcibly welcomed 26 of the insurgents who had sailed aboard the *Eendracht*. Both vessels sailed to the Dutch colony of Curaçao, thereby parting ways with the *Selina*. But by that time, it became clear that Ducoudray’s expedition was doomed to remain a “chimera of the wildest nature,” as Burns put it.²¹

Due to recruitment from all across the Caribbean, by the time of its arrival in Curaçao on 20 September 1822, the expedition had grown from about 60 men – a North Carolina-born eyewitness account saw the vessels calling at Gustavia, with “each having about twenty passengers” – to about 100, not counting unarmed co-conspirators. At the request of Spanish admiral Ángel Laborde of the *Ligera*, calling at Curaçao as part of its maritime operations against the South American patriots, Ducoudray and his officers were officially detained in Fort Amsterdam on 23 September 1822.²² The official motive for the arrest was that, upon inquiry, the *Eendracht* had turned out to have been sailing under forged Dutch papers. Although the expedition did not target the Dutch Caribbean as such, Curaçao’s governor Paul R. Cantzlaar furthermore had little interest in turning a blind eye on an expedition that would rely on a slave insurrection: the looming threat of revolutionary contagion across the Caribbean was simply too present.

The response of the Dutch colonial government in Willemstad to Ducoudray’s expedition reflects its peculiar predicament in the Caribbean imperial concert of nation. On the one hand, Curaçao was a site of free trade, and its governors had to show a corresponding commitment to the free movement of people and ideas. On the other hand, they had to contend with the recurrent threats posed by the myriad actors who might imperil Dutch geopolitical interests – in this case, the maintenance of peaceful Dutch-Spanish relations. The fact that the expedition was thwarted in Curaçao, a longtime hub for inter-imperial smuggling and refuge for political radicals, is ironic given the island’s prominent place in the Revolutionary Caribbean during the early modern period and the Age of Revolution. By the time of the Boricua conspiracy, while the island was home to many exiled republicans from the Spanish Main, traded with South American merchants, Curaçao also maintained some commercial relations with Haiti based on its regime of free trade and political neutrality.²³

Meanwhile, a crackdown on the insurgents was already under way in Puerto Rico. Ten days before Ducoudray’s detention in Curaçao, three residents of Fajardo had accused a free black native from Guadeloupe and resident of Naguabo named Pierre Dubois of involvement with the revolutionary conspiracy. Dubois’ forces were to meet Ducoudray’s, which Dubois reportedly fantasized would be composed by about 27 vessels, 600 men and 10,000 rifles, after the expedition’s landing near Añasco, in western Puerto Rico.

Disembarking near Añasco would have been a prelude to their march on Mayagüez, the envisioned capital of Boricua, where many refugees from Saint-Domingue and the French Caribbean had settled from the 1790s onwards. Dubois was publicly executed on 12 October 1822.

Across the island, tensions rose: in Guayama, rumors of a slave conspiracy in support of the revolutionaries led by a certain “Carlos Romano,” a free black of Dutch origin, began spreading and led to the execution of two enslaved men.²⁴ When Joel Poinsett, the US representative sent to Mexico, called at Puerto Rico on his way to Veracruz to protest on the detrimental impact of the recent increase of Spanish privateering on US maritime trade, he noted in his diary how the Spanish colonial authorities had received news of the intended expedition and slave insurrection a few days before his arrival.²⁵

Beyond Puerto Rico, the inter-imperial web of the Caribbean sprang into action, with a high degree of cooperation across national lines between high-ranking imperial officers, as previously suggested by Norderling’s communication with his Caribbean counterparts, which reached Puerto Rico two days after Dubois’ denunciation on 13 September 1822. A few weeks after Ducoudray’s arrest, for instance, the Danish governor of Saint Thomas, Peter Carl Frederick von Scholten, informed Puerto Rico’s military governor and Captain General, Miguel de la Torre (a veteran of the Venezuelan wars), about the suspected involvement of two free blacks, Pierre Binet (Dubois’s nephew) and Louis Pinau, in the conspiracy.²⁶

The revolutionary Caribbean and the fragility of the US-Spanish diplomatic equilibrium

By the end of 1822, news of the expedition reached metropolitan Spain. It further strained US-Spanish relations in the wake of the US recognition of independence of the Spanish American States in March 1822. The fiery state of contemporary Spanish politics made such news all the more sensitive when they reached the Iberian Peninsula. In January 1820, in Cádiz, a mutiny led Colonel Rafael del Riego y Nuñez broke out within the Spanish expeditionary corps bound to the Americas. The liberal government that was formed in its wake soon reestablished the Cádiz Constitution and drastically restricted the prerogatives held by Ferdinand VII. In 1822, the general elections or *Cortes Generales*, paved the way to the formation of a government led by the more radical faction of the liberals or *exaltados*.

The entrenchment of constitutional liberalism, however, sparked a spectacular conservative backlash and rising support to the restoration of Ferdinand VII’s absolutism. A regency government, led by Ferdinand’s partisans, was set up in Urgell and pockets of civil war blossomed across Spain. Outside of the peninsula, during the Congress of Verona (October-December 1822), the Holy Alliance, a reactionary league uniting Russia, Austria and Prussia, began contemplating a monarchist intervention into Spain to restore absolute powers to Ferdinand VII. This conflation of domestic and foreign threats to the Spanish liberal government made Spanish officials on both sides of the Atlantic extremely wary of potentially hostile developments such as the Ducoudray expedition against Puerto Rico.

For all they knew at this stage, the expedition could very well be interpreted as an attempt by the US to take advantage of Spain’s domestic turmoil during this particularly

tense phase of the *Trienio Liberal* (1820–1823).²⁷ The Spanish press published reports – originally published in Puerto Rico (*El Noticioso*) as well as in Cuba – on the Boricua affair alongside official condemnations of the plot from Puerto Rico’s authorities made at the time of Dubois’s execution. They especially stressed the involvement of US citizens in the revolutionary expedition. The press in the Dutch Caribbean and the Netherlands simultaneously singled out the US as a breeding ground for revolutionaries and “desperate persons” (“*wanhopige personen*”), as the *Curaçaosche Courant* put it.²⁸

Diplomatic reactions followed. Joaquín de Anduaga, Spain’s minister to the US, soon protested against the expedition. In his correspondence with US Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, Anduaga sought to obtain responses on an incident that, according to him, had “fixed the attention of all Europe,” and requested an explicit condemnation from the US government. The minister viewed the public nature of the expedition’s departure from New York and Philadelphia as evidence of “the criminality or negligence, which has appeared in the officers of the United States.” Anduaga also urged the US government to disavow the conduct of the US ship *Cyane* which, after following the tracks of the *Mary* and the *Eendracht* on their way to Curaçao, had pressed for the delivery of the incarcerated Baptist Irvine. In an ironic twist, the Dutch authorities had rejected the demand on the grounds that Irvine had relinquished his rights as a US citizen by becoming citizen of the so-called Republic of Boricua. But the request by the *Cyane*’s officers suggested – in the mind of the Spanish minister – a degree of connivance with the revolutionaries. Were the latter not to be officially disavowed, he feared it would “give rise to consequences which it is impossible to admit.”

Escalation was not so far off. Three months later, Anduaga’s patience with the US executive branch’s silence had fully run out. The tone of a new dispatch to Adams suggests how indignant the Spanish minister had now become. In this letter, Anduaga essentially challenged the US government’s honesty regarding the incident, and suggested that his superiors in metropolitan Spain had begun to feel the same way. Tying the affair back to its US roots, Anduaga underscored how it “appeared to [them] extraordinary that the President should have been ignorant of preparations made with so little secrecy, and that a collection of men, and of ships, laden with munitions of war, in the ports nearest to the capital, should have been able to be concealed from him.” To Anduaga, the expedition constituted a breach of US neutrality and the laws of nations which “stain[ed] the good faith and reputation of this republic.” Peace between the US and Spain was at stake: Anduaga saw the US government’s suspected tacit complicity at best, active support at worst, to the plot as an “hostile measure” not far short of a genuine *casus belli*. His reasoning was as follows: if conversely, ships had departed from Spanish ports to attack US possessions with outright indifference on the part of Spain to US protests, the US government would legitimately consider the whole enterprise an “hostile measure.”²⁹

Anduaga’s strong reaction stemmed from his awareness of how economically and politically vital the sugar colonies of Cuba and Puerto Rico had become for the Spanish Empire by the early nineteenth-century. Moreover, at least some of the minister’s suspicions that the Monroe administration was turning a blind eye to revolutionaries and privateers sailing under the flags of the new independent states of Spanish America were well founded.³⁰ The US government professed neutrality during the conflict that pitted the Spanish Empire against its (former) American colonies, yet in practice this neutral

policy mostly played in favor of the South American insurgents. From the mid-1810s on, US merchants openly traded with port cities in the new states of Spanish America, and signed contracts with Spanish American patriots for arms, ammunitions and other military equipment, while Spanish American privateers fitted out in US ports, especially Baltimore and New Orleans.³¹

US official non-involvement in the conflict was reaffirmed through a couple of Neutrality Acts passed in 1817 and 1818. In 1819, while several legal cases were underway in Baltimore against insurgent privateers that had violated US laws, an “Act to protect the commerce of the United States and punish the crime of piracy” was passed. Legislation that banned foreign armed vessels from US ports as a way to actively curtail their use by foreign privateers, especially Baltimore’s, was also passed, although yielding mixed results. In addition, prior to the 1822 recognition, unofficial agents from the yet unrecognized new states such as Aguirre and Gómez from Buenos Aires and Manuel Torres from Colombia roamed US cities looking for loans as well as arms shipments to use against the Spanish Empire. Meanwhile, many US citizens professed notions of (pan-)American solidarity and joined revolutionary enterprises across the Americas, for instance in the filibustering-privateering enclaves of Galveston and Amelia Island during the second half of the 1810s.

Assaults on Spanish sovereignty by US nationals and officials were a particularly sore spot in the relationship between the Union and Spain. Only over the four years preceding the Puerto Rico expedition, such bones of contention included General Andrew Jackson’s expedition against Amelia Island, his pursuit of the Seminoles into Florida and unauthorized capture of Pensacola during the first part of 1818, as well as James Long’s expeditions into Spanish Texas between 1819 and 1821. The strained negotiations of the Transcontinental Treaty over Florida and the western boundary between the US and the Spanish Empire, with the treaty’s provisions eventually taking effect in February 1821, only added to the grievances Spain felt towards the US.³²

Since the first decade of the century, newspaper articles, pamphlets and travel accounts published in the US informed an incipient public opinion about the birth of the new republics across Spanish America. US public opinion was divided: popular enthusiasm for republicanism, liberalism and free trade as enticing horizons arising from the revolutions was often tempered by skepticism about the new states’ capacity for self-government, political and social stability, and abidance to republican and liberal institutions.³³ It was in this particular context, marked by lingering uncertainties regarding future military and political developments across Spanish America, that news of the Ducoudray expedition reached the US in October 1822.³⁴

Despite their overall support for the Spanish American patriots, and their critique of the US federal administration’s policy of neutrality, newspapers across the Eastern seaboard explicitly condemned the Boricua expedition (the *Baltimore Federal Gazette* was an exception to the rule). Most editors focused their critique on the plot’s geostrategic repercussions for the Union itself, and stressed the US government’s denial of prior knowledge and connivance, thereby contributing to a larger effort to detach the revolutionary enterprise from its US roots by casting it as the endeavor of exalted and lawless freebooters.³⁵ The *National Intelligencer*, although deliberately withholding compromising information on some of the “persons engaged” in the affair “deluded into it by false representations,” viewed the expedition as “another Amelia Island affair” since the revolutionaries had “no

commission from any power whatever.”³⁶ By contrast, other newspapers acknowledged the US origins of the expedition as a matter of grave concern, at a time when the US navy was busy fighting a boom in piracy in the Spanish Caribbean. The *Niles’ Weekly Register* for example considered that:

There is something wrong in this business, something apparently disgraceful to our country, and on which it would be well to excite attention and enquiry at Washington. The piracies *abroad* give us trouble enough; let us have no *domestic* expeditions that have any resemblance to piracy.³⁷

As stressed by the Boricua controversy, the US federal government had to navigate in-between conflicting pressures that trumped its own sympathy for the spread of republican ideals and institutions across the Americas. First, it had to take into account the prevalent sympathy across the Union for the Spanish American patriots, translated into a principle of continental solidarity based on republican and liberal values. Second, it sought to defend and promote emerging US commercial and political interests in spaces where Spanish imperial rule was slowly and ambiguously disintegrating, while maintaining friendly relations with the European monarchies. Specifically, it was keen to avoid war with Spain and her British ally, which implied distancing itself from revolutionary enterprises against the Spanish Caribbean. The importance of US-Cuban trade for the economy of the Atlantic seaboard made war against Spain all the more unappealing.³⁸

In addition, although after the War of 1812 the Union experienced an unusual period of peace at home, the so-called “Era of Good Feelings,” and *vis-à-vis* foreign perils, it remained an unfinished and fragile institutional project. By 1822, domestic politics in the US were still fraught with conflicts regarding states’ rights versus federal prerogatives (with a risk of breakup in multiple confederacies), debates over slavery as manifested in the Missouri crisis, as well as by the financial and budgetary crisis inherited from the Panic of 1819.³⁹ Besides these internal divides, the Union remained in a position of relative weakness in relation to European powers, politically, militarily, and commercially speaking. In the minds of US statesmen, such weakness could pave the way to a “Europeanisation” of the Western Hemisphere. First, even though the War of 1812 had consolidated the position of the US as an incipient hemispheric power, the Union’s power in the Caribbean paled in comparison with Britain’s regional influence. US statesmen had a pervasive fear of British interference, not least because of Britain’s sway on independent nations across Spanish America that arose from its military, commercial and financial hegemony.

Any war or revolution would likely result in British intervention, likely resulting in British territorial aggrandizement over foreign possessions, – the most dreaded of which, for US statesmen, was Cuba. Second, in Europe, the Holy Alliance, regained strength in the wake of the 1822 Congress of Verona, – it would eventually back France’s monarchist invasion of liberal Spain during the spring of 1823. To many US statesmen, the revival of such European antiliberal coalition seemed an alarming prelude to the establishment of new monarchies in Spanish America, by force or otherwise, as the foundation of the Mexican Empire in September 1821 further suggested. Led by the Holy Alliance, a larger “crusade against revolutionary principles,” as the US agent in Colombia put it, would likely break out across Spanish America.⁴⁰

With these internal and external variables in mind, by the time of the Ducoudray expedition, US statesmen were still deeply divided on the policy to adopt regarding the protracted and uncertain American collapse of the Spanish Empire. What they all agreed on, however, was how crucial developments in the American empire of Spain and the larger “problem of neighborhood,” as James E. Lewis puts it, had become for the Union’s own sovereignty, unity and prosperity. While Speaker of the House Henry Clay advocated an enthusiastic Pan-American stance, which called for providing political and even material support to the former colonies of Spain, Adams stuck to non-interference and limited entanglement in the so-called “South American” question, following the lines of Washington’s Farewell Address in 1796.⁴¹ The federal government followed what a scholar has termed a policy of “watchful waiting.” Before March 1822, the administration had resisted pressure for official recognition from public opinion and Congress, the most serious of which came when Clay introduced a motion for recognition in the House of Representatives that was eventually rejected in March 1818.⁴²

In order to sustain and, if necessary, adapt, its policy of “watchful waiting,” the Monroe administration commissioned agents across the Caribbean and South America, to keep track of the latest developments of the wars of independence in Spanish America. While Baptist Irvine traveled to Venezuela during the spring of 1818, Caesar Rodney and John Graham sailed aboard the corvette *Congress* to Brazil, Buenos Aires, the Banda Oriental – present-day Uruguay – as well as, on their way back to the US, the Spanish Main. Their main missions were to ascertain the nature and “probable durability” of local governments, the strength and structure of military forces, port locations and the availability of saleable goods, as well as political and commercial dispositions towards the United States. In their meetings with South American patriots, Rodney and Graham were also instructed to call out the participation of US citizens in privateering ventures, the armament of privateers in US ports, and the fact that admiralty courts determining the adjudication of prizes frequently connived with privateers, to the recurrent detriment of US property.⁴³

Charles Todd’s mission as confidential agent to Colombia from 1820 on similarly sought to “promote and maintain relations of friendship and reciprocal good will,” to “obtain indemnity for certain individual claims of citizens of the United States” in the cases of the *Paloma*, *Tiger* and *Liberty* (all these US vessels captured by Colombian privateers), and to provide intelligence on political and military developments (most importantly, the Congress of Cucuta in early 1821). Such early fact-finding missions were crucial in paving the way to the expansion of the US consular service in the early 1820s, which in turn would prove essential in defending the emergence of US interests in the Western Hemisphere.⁴⁴

Most US citizens and statesmen considered Puerto Rico and Cuba as “natural appendages to the North American continent,” as John Quincy Adams once put it, bound in the long term to integrate the Union. From 1822 on, the dispatch of a large US navy squadron to suppress an increase in piracy stemming from both islands seemed to signal the Union’s emerging local influence. Although targeting Spain as a contending power in the Caribbean, the Ducoudray expedition was not as amicable to US foreign goals as it seemed at first glance. Prospects of a war, a potential European intervention in the Caribbean, and even a British takeover of Puerto Rico, all made projects of revolution in

Puerto Rico a potential threat for the Union. In this context, the controversial claim made by Ducoudray, first to his men, and second to the general public, that he had received the explicit backing of the federal government turned out to be particularly sensitive to handle for the Monroe administration.⁴⁵

At a time when the outcome of the wars for independence between Spain and her former colonies remained difficult to ascertain, US agents across the Caribbean seemed wary of the Holy Alliance's reaction to the Ducoudray incident, and the involvement of US citizens was particularly embarrassing. For instance, Robert Monroe Harrison, US consul in Saint Barthélemy, regretted the involvement of Americans "not only of *splendid talents*, but who have heretofore held honorable and confidential situations under our Government, and who, I fear, will be forever lost to the country."⁴⁶ As soon as the incident broke out in Curaçao, the local US consul Cortland L. Parker, from New Jersey, sprang into action.⁴⁷

The Dutch government did not officially recognize his consulship, which somewhat complicated his mission on the island. By mid-October 1822, however, Parker reported his success in providing passports for the return of thirteen "young Americans, who have been shamefully deceived into an expedition which could bring on them nothing but disgrace and destruction," but he seemed anxious that the plot might be "the forerunner of others against the West India islands of every power in Europe."⁴⁸ Apart from representing the interest of these "several young men from the United States, mostly citizens, and of considerable respectability" on board the *Mary*, who he managed to repatriate, the consul strived to get the cargo of the *Eendracht* released on behalf of the American merchants who had a share in the expedition.⁴⁹

Parker's defense of US interests in Curaçao took place at a time of considerable expansion of the US consular network. Between March 1823 and July 1824, for instance, US consuls were appointed across the Republic of Colombia to several cities such as Cartagena, Panama, Maracaibo, Angostura, Guayaquil and Puerto Cabello, in addition to the preexisting US consulate in La Guayra. Such deployment was not trivial, given the Republic of Colombia's strategic position at the crossroad between the Caribbean and South America, a region upon which much remained to be discovered for US officials, including policy positions and trade logistics. US consuls across the Caribbean and South America turned out to be crucial in taking the pulse of the Americas, to check on European actions in the continent and assess the viability of revolutionary projects as well as their abidance to republican principles of government. This network of intelligence proved essential in handling the Ducoudray-Holstein incident in a way that would protect incipient US interests in the region.⁵⁰

Understanding that the stakes were high, on 12 December 1822, the House of Representatives approved with a large majority Federalist representative for New York Cadwallader David Colden's resolution requesting the federal government to provide detailed information regarding the expedition. The administration complied. In February 1823, President James Monroe delivered the executive's report on what he qualified an "unlawful and contemptible adventure." Dispatches from US consuls composed a significant part of this report. The secretaries of State and Treasury also submitted their own inquiries to the US District Attorney for Pennsylvania, in which both collectors in New York and Philadelphia testified that preparations for the expedition had eluded their attention.⁵¹ On the basis of this report, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams

anxiously sought to reassure Spanish officials of his government's official stance of neutrality in this conflict that pitted Spain against her former American colonies.

The federal government sought to avoid giving the impression of openly siding with revolutionaries targeting Spanish colonies, at a time when the US government cautiously waited for European reactions to its official recognition of the independent states across the Americas in March 1822. The Secretary of State's instructions to John Forsyth, US minister to Spain, in early January 1823 reflect this concern. Adams sought to exonerate the federal government from responsibility by stressing that the US administration had no prior knowledge of the expedition before receiving information from Saint Barthélemy. Furthermore, Adams underlined how the masters of the vessels and the "misguided citizens of the United States" who had taken part in the adventure had been deceived by Ducoudray. With the foreign general cast as unique ringleader, US citizens were therefore not to blame. In sum, Forsyth's mission to Spain was clear: to "assure [the Spanish Government] that this Government knew nothing of this expedition before the departure of the vessels from the United States." Adams further stressed this argument by pointing out that the expedition had also escaped the vigilance of the numerous Spanish agents residing in the US. Anduaga remained unimpressed by such denials, however, compelling Adams to forward similar instructions to Forsyth's successor in Madrid, Hugh Nelson, four months later:

While disclaiming all disposition of our part either to obtain possession of Cuba or of Porto Rico ourselves you will declare that the American Government had no knowledge of the lawless expedition undertaken against the latter of those Islands last summer.⁵²

While Anduaga openly expressed his frustration, John Quincy Adams also resented Anduaga's "loud complaint" against the US government. The Spanish minister's virulent tone, he claimed, pushed him to delay his reply, in the hope of later finding him in a "more calm and temperate" disposition. Rumors that the Spanish minister had prior knowledge of the expedition – from intelligence provided by a handful of early defectors in Boston – but had let the expedition depart from the US in order to crush it after further accomplices could be rounded up, only added to the mutual distrust. Anduaga was not the only statesman Adams needed to appease.

At a meeting held in late November 1822, Adams found the British minister to the US Stratford Canning "very inquisitive" about the Puerto Rico affair, which "he seemed to fear was not yet entirely broken up." According to Adams's account of the encounter, Canning suspected that the US government had secretly sanctioned the plot. The British minister seemed only slightly reassured by Adams's claims that his administration had first heard about the expedition through reports from Saint Barthélemy. Canning "intimated a wish that [the US executive] should give orders to [their] public vessels in the West Indies" against expeditions of this kind. Canning's involvement is a reminder of how closely Britain observed military and political developments across Spanish America, keen on reaping potential benefits by assuming the strategic role of referee in the Caribbean.⁵³

Meanwhile, rumors spread by Ducoudray of a commission provided to him by the Colombian government, and apparently supported by the testimony of some of the *Eendracht's* passengers, proved equally delicate to handle for Colombian representatives, especially when they started spreading in US newspapers.⁵⁴ In Philadelphia, Richard Worsam Meade, the executor of Manuel Torres as former representative of Colombia in

the US and his successor at this office, staunchly denied Colombian backing as “a fabrication of some sinister purpose.” According to Meade, Colombia was neither acquainted with nor provided support to the expedition. As the recently established Republic was seeking to slowly dissociate itself from its privateering roots to figure in the international concert of nation as a legitimate state, Meade denounced the “set of adventurers [which] existed in this country, holding their rendezvous in this city [Philadelphia], Baltimore, and New York, watching their opportunity to undertake any adventure which could furnish them the means of living at the expense of their neighbors.”⁵⁵

Yet, even if Colombia’s association with this revolutionary enterprise was fictitious in this instance, the allegations were entirely credible in light of historical precedents. Colombian patriots had used maritime privateering as a convenient way to defend their strongholds and strike Spanish loyalists since the early days of independent Cartagena de Indias (1811–1815). Years later, within the US, Manuel Torres strived to obtain armament and munitions for the patriot cause: in 1820, he secured a deal with the Rotterdam tobacco company Mees, Boer & Moens via the Philadelphia broker Jacob Ilder for the shipment of about 4,000 rifles in exchange for tobacco from the Barinas region. This particular contract eventually failed, but some triangular trade in firearms between the Netherlands, the US and Colombia continued over the following years.⁵⁶

None of the aforementioned tensions escalated into open conflict, however. The plot revived US-Spanish hostility, which statesmen in both countries anxiously sought to de-escalate. The US Department of State, in particular, making use of its expanding consular network across the Caribbean, strove to de-escalate tensions by distancing the federal government from allegations of complicity in the revolutionary adventure.

The pacification of the revolutionary Caribbean

While these diplomatic intrigues played out across the Caribbean and the Atlantic, Ducoudray and Irvine faced trial before Curaçao’s tribunal of justice. Ducoudray claimed that Colombian representatives in the US Manuel de Torres and William Duane had agreed to the expedition as a prelude to the integration of Boricua into the Republic of Colombia. In 1829, Ducoudray issued his own retrospective defense in his famous *Memoirs of Simón Bolívar*, reasserting most of the arguments that he had laid out during his trial. According to him, the expedition should have been protected by the Laws of Nations on account of Dutch neutrality. Furthermore, Ducoudray argued that the expedition was simply a “project” when it reached Curaçao, and did not threaten Dutch sovereignty in any way. As a result, the leader saw the judicial proceedings against him and the expedition as a whole as “abusive, fraudulent and base.”⁵⁷

Ducoudray accused Dutch officials and “their accomplices,” including US consul Parker, to be “a gang of villains, to whom nothing is sacred, but gold,” alleging that they intended to speculate on the sale of the vessels and their cargoes.⁵⁸ Daniel Serurier, the tribunal’s president judge, charged the leaders as “disturbers of the public order” and “pirates” (“*openbare rustverstoorders en zeerovers*” in Dutch).⁵⁹ In February 1823, Ducoudray was condemned in first instance to death (“*onder de galg*”) for “high treason” (“*hoogverraad*”) on account of crimes of piracy and private invasion of a sovereign kingdom. All of Ducoudray’s revolutionary proclamations and blank papers were to be publicly burned as well.

Irvine was sentenced to thirty years in jail, after being defended unsuccessfully by lawyer Mordechai Ricardo (both of them shared an acquaintance with Simón Bolívar).⁶⁰

Baptist Irvine immediately fought back in US newspapers. In March 1823, the *Niles' Register* published one of his letters to a member of Congress. Seeking to legitimize the expedition, and directly responding to the investigation launched in Congress by Colden, Irvine played on widespread fears that Great Britain might take over Puerto Rico as they had done with Dutch, French and Spanish islands during the Napoleonic wars, should Spanish colonial rule further disintegrate without any proactive action taken by the US to step in. In an effort to distance himself from the stigma of piracy, Irvine invoked the spirit of the American Revolution by framing the expedition in a "popular movement against despotism" in Puerto Rico, whose separatists pressed for assistance in overthrowing Spanish rule. Irvine framed the conflict between Spain and her colonies as a civil war, in which voluntary soldiers from other nations could lawfully participate without violating the laws of nations, citing mercenaries helping the cause of Greek independence and French nationals having taken part in the American Revolution as legitimate precedents.

Finally, Irvine pointed out the ambiguities of US non-entanglement policy: why were the members of the Puerto Rico expedition treated as criminal while simultaneously "American seamen in the Colombian service, besides officers and vessels," were fighting against the Spanish Empire, seemingly to the federal government's indifference? To Irvine, the same held true for the Dutch authorities, as he pointed out that from Curaçao "50 or 60 sailors were lately sent out to the Colombian squadron, by permission of those who govern Curracoa." Bitterly, he concluded: "money sanctifies, or success consecrates, every thing!"⁶¹

The Dutch colonial authorities bore most of the brunt of Irvine's indignant defense. Ducoudray himself vehemently denounced the Dutch government's alleged corruption, and in a short pamphlet published in 1824, Irvine argued that the venality of Dutch colonial authorities accounted for his arrest.⁶² Irvine's *Traits of Colonial Jurisprudence* built upon letters he had previously addressed to Henry Clay, hoping to reach Monroe himself. In this correspondence, Irvine accused governor Cantzlaar of having fabricated a "fiction" to justify his arrest, in order to extort a large bribe from him. Irvine drew strong analogies between the Dutch colonial authorities and pirates in the Spanish Caribbean and even in the Mediterranean Sea, underlining the sheer arbitrariness of the piracy label. Irvine directly appealed to Monroe, drawing upon the historical precedent of the capture of US merchant vessels by North African pirates in exchange for a ransom during the late eighteenth century: "will he suffer *an Algiers* to exist in the shape of a *petty* Dutch colony, whose coinage of illicit sea-papers has robbed so many honest Americans of vessels & cargoes?" In addition, Irvine sharpened his personal attacks against consul Parker, for his "false representations of Ducoudray's project" and his alleged complicity with the Dutch authorities in abusing him.⁶³

Between siding with the revolutionary leaders and the US traders involved in the operation, US consul Cortland L. Parker had indeed made a clear choice as he soon became the official representative of the New York and Philadelphia merchants who had an interest in the expedition. Himself a merchant with close ties to the Dutch colonial administration – in 1823 and 1824, for instance, Parker had secured several state contracts for the local supply of brazil wood from Bonaire – the consul defended their commercial investments

within the bounds of his own limited influence. In September 1822, the consul successfully lobbied for the release of the *Mary*: the ship went through the customhouse and sold its cargo before sailing back to the US. The following month, merchant William Gold also appointed Parker as his representative in the civil case of the *Eendracht*. A few weeks later, William Agnew likewise commissioned Parker as his attorney to support him claiming the cargo seized aboard the *Eendracht* by the Dutch authorities, apart from dispatching an agent to Curaçao, John Adams, officially on a visit “with a view of improving his health.”⁶⁴

At the time of the arrest of the *Eendracht*, Parker “thought with [his] counsel it would be useless to appeal” on account of its forged Dutch papers, but he subsequently sought to defend Gold and Agnew’s interests, especially by arguing their “ignorance of the object of the expedition.” Parker’s strategy, overall, was to dissociate the merchants and owners of the vessels from the leaders of the revolutionary expedition, in order to secure their property (vessels and cargo). Beyond his helplessness in the trial of the *Eendracht*, for which he thought official appeal should be made directly to the Dutch government in the Netherlands, Parker stressed in September 1824 how “it was with much difficulty that [he] got the vessel and cargo libeled separately; the trial of the latter [had] not yet come on and [he had] not pushed it, hoping some favorable event might take place.”⁶⁵

A couple of months later, a certain Read, the former supercargo of the *Mary*, reached out to Parker. Rumors circulated that Read was supposed to take the office of collector at San Juan, Puerto Rico, should the revolution have been successful. In his letter to Parker, Read introduced captain Richard Spence of the *Cyane* as his consignee. Read hoped that Parker would claim the “arms, ammunitions, and various military stores, taken from on board the abovementioned *Mary* in St Barts, or rather at the Five Islands, and laden on board the Dutch brig *Eendracht*.” In agreement with Parker, however, Spence emphasized that the civil Government of Curaçao had no power over the tribunal in charge of judging the *Eendracht*’s cargo, and deemed the consul’s interference unwarranted. Furthermore, to an agent of the Union like Parker, his official involvement in claiming the incriminating evidence would have seemed distinctly incompatible with efforts to dissociate both the federal government and US merchants from projects of armed revolution against the Spanish Empire in the Caribbean. There were limits to what Parker was willing to do to assist his fellow Americans, and he kept his door shut to those among them who acted as revolutionary entrepreneurs exporting unrest across the Caribbean.⁶⁶

Conclusion

Following an abortive escape attempt by Irvine in late March 1823 (according to an American observer, “in less than two hours the unfortunate man was found secreted in the house of Fr. Merida, the agent for Colombia”) and the rejection of two appeals to the Supreme Court in The Hague, a third one was eventually granted. But while the detainees were soon to embark aboard the brig *Swallow* to the Netherlands to attend the appeal, the Dutch authorities in Curaçao received instructions to stop the transfer of Ducoudray and Irvine across the Atlantic.

In February 1824, Ducoudray and Irvine were freed, partly to respond to the embarrassment created by their unverified allegations of corruption among Dutch officials, and ordered to never set foot on Dutch territory again. Irvine sailed in late February 1824

to La Guayra on the *Juliana*. Ducoudray reached New York in March 1824 and soon resumed teaching the piano.⁶⁷ By mid-November 1824, a cabinet meeting was held in Washington D.C. between William H. Crawford, John C. Calhoun, Samuel L. Southard and John Quincy Adams. On the agenda stood the confidential question of whether the District Attorney at New York should be instructed to prosecute Ducoudray for the Boricua expedition. The first three favored prosecution, but Adams held back, essentially on the grounds that the revolutionary leader had already been charged in Curaçao and that the expedition “was a mere undertaking never carried into execution” – echoing Ducoudray’s own arguments. Crawford dissented, deeming that the prosecution at Curaçao did not concern the violation of US laws, which “the fitting out and preparing of it in our ports” clearly was. Although prosecution was given a green light, it never came to fruition.⁶⁸

Several insights can be gained from the Boricua expedition. The Ducoudray expedition sheds light on the heyday and decline of the post-1815 Revolutionary Caribbean. While this article builds upon recent scholarship on the maritime side of the struggle between the Spanish Empire and insurgent patriots, the Boricua expedition constitutes further evidence of the extent to which the wars for independence were waged as much across continental Spanish America as on the seas of the Caribbean. Furthermore, the Ducoudray expedition also illustrates the resilience of Spanish influence in the Caribbean through a mix of diplomacy, military action, spying and inter-imperial cooperation, with the support of a cross-imperial community that shared intelligence on revolutionaries and those labeled as pirates. The agents of the Spanish Empire across the Caribbean could rely on occasional allies, such as US diplomats and the Dutch authorities in Curaçao, to preserve their imperial rule, and the fallout of Ducoudray’s conspiracy epitomized the entrenchment of Spanish imperial rule in the Caribbean.⁶⁹

While shedding light on the entanglement of US, Spanish and Dutch imperial relations in the early 1820s Caribbean, the incident provides a prime vantage point from which to explore the nature of the US foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere. With the Ducoudray expedition’s preparation, execution and a good part of its intricate fallout taking place between the US policy shift on recognition (March 1822) and Monroe’s message to Congress in December 1823, the Boricua affair broke out at a pivotal moment in the making of US foreign policy towards the Americas in the build up to the Monroe Doctrine. Although the War of 1812 had boosted the Union’s standing on the international scene, the affair illustrates the relative cautiousness that characterized its foreign policy in the Caribbean in the early 1820s, at a time when the Spanish Empire’s definitive surrender of its continental American colonies was not yet set in stone. The geopolitical intrigues unfolding after the Puerto Rico expedition exemplify Jay Sexton’s argument on US foreign policy towards the Americas during the early 1820s, namely that “the great paradox of the United States’ response to the dissolution of Spain’s American empire is that it embodied both the insecurity and the confidence of the young republic.”⁷⁰

The expedition’s aftermath especially underlines how US diplomats sought to preserve a precarious balance in their strained relationship with Spain, and how they strived to maintain the Union’s reputation as a treaty-worthy nation (jeopardized by the participation of US nationals in revolutionary projects such as Ducoudray’s) while keeping at bay the prospect of British interference. Although it can be argued that the early 1820s saw “the dawn of US interventionism” in the Caribbean, in practice the federal

government primarily reacted to the inconvenient actions of revolutionaries, privateers, pirates and illicit traders – such as Ducoudray’s co-conspirators – that threatened its pro-status quo foreign policy of non-entanglement. This defensive, reactive stance was especially on display in the Spanish Caribbean, before attempts were made to proactively shape an “American Mediterranean.” The success of this US policy was incomplete, if only because of federal administration’s limited control over the illicit activities of US nationals in foreign territories. The reach of federal authorities into international maritime spaces was even more limited, as illustrated by the uninterrupted departures of the *Mary*, *Andrew Jackson* and *Selina* from Philadelphia and New York.

Lastly, the Boricua expedition sheds light on the often-underappreciated role of US consuls such as Cortland L. Parker and Robert Monroe Harrison within the expanding US diplomatic network across the Americas. These agents served as both essential brokers for geostrategic intelligence, as well as crucial defenders of the emerging trade interests of American investors and merchants in the Caribbean. The heated disagreement in Curaçao between Ducoudray, Irvine and Parker perfectly captures how hybrid projects of political revolution and personal enrichment clashed with the expanding diplomatic corps of the US. Federal government agents were specifically charged with policing troublemakers – especially those whose ties to the US might embarrass Washington – while making way for “peaceful” American citizens and free trade.⁷¹

Notes

1. On Anduaga’s reaction: Mensaje del Presidente de los EE.UU., 12 March 1822. Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI), Estado, 90, n°18; Gobierno de EE.UU. reconoce independencia, 12 April 1822. AGI, Estado, 93, n°49; John Quincy Adams to Albert Gallatin, 3 April 1822. National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), Record Group (hereafter RG) 59, M77 Diplomatic Instructions from Department of State to Ministers. On the 1822 policy of recognition: Whitaker, *The United States and the Independence of Latin America*, 370–395.
2. The involvement of US citizens can be judged – among other sources – from the trial records of the Eendracht, one of the expedition’s vessels. Muster Roll of the Eendracht, Gustavia, 7 September 1822. Nationaal Archief (hereafter NA), Curaçao, Bonaire, Aruba tot 1828, Raad van Civiele en Criminele Justitie, Raad Fiscaal x. William Gold; Depositions of Leonard Sistare (23 and 30 September 1822), William Henry (28 October 1822) and Peter Marten (28 October 1822). NA, Curaçao, Bonaire, Aruba tot 1828, Raad van Civiele en Criminele Justitie, Raad Fiscaal x. William Gold. Among others, Leonard Sistare was a 24-year-old captain from New London, Connecticut, of Catalan origin. 31-year-old mate William Henry was originally from Portsmouth, New Hampshire.
3. Kramer, “Power and Connection,” 1372–1373.
4. Gould, *Among the Powers on Earth*. On the US consular network in the Early Republic: Kennedy, *The American Consul*; De Goey, *Consuls and the Institutions of Global Capitalism*, 22–27, 85–124.
5. For recent works on imperial entanglements during the 1820s, see among others: Barcia, “Un Coloso Sobre la Arena”; Brown and Paquette, *Connections after Colonialism*; Cañizares-Esguerra, *Entangled Empires*; Ferrer, *Freedom’s Mirror*; Fradera, *The Imperial Nation*; Luengo and Dalmau, “Writing Spanish History in the Global Age.” On imperial reform and Atlantic constitutionalism in the Spanish Empire: Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution*; Portillo Valdés, *Crisis Atlántica*; Eastman, “America has escaped from our Hands.” Within the historiography on US connections to the 1820s Caribbean and the Monroe Doctrine, the expedition is conspicuously absent from early classic works such as Perkins, *The Monroe Doctrine, 1823–1826*; and Alvarez, *The Monroe Doctrine*. For a recent reinterpretation of the Monroe Doctrine

- from a Caribbean perspective, which argues that Monroe's statement of opposition to interference and colonization by European powers in the Western Hemisphere was designed first and foremost to protect US slave trading interests in Cuba: Chambers, *No God but Gain*.
6. The concept of "masterless Caribbean" has recently been used by Edgardo Pérez Morales to refer to an "underground world of maroons (runaway slaves), deserters, and free people of color trying to elude masters and officials by keeping on the move." Pérez Morales, *No Limits to their Sway*, 9. On Amelia Island: Head, *Privateers of the Americas*, 92–148. The most extensive treatment of the expedition to date is Mongey, *Rogue Revolutionaries*, 83–108.
 7. Mulich, *In a Sea of Empires*.
 8. Head, "A Different Kind of Maritime Predation"; Brown, *Latin American Rebels*.
 9. Santana, "The United States and Puerto Rico," 221–224, 230–232; Cedo Alzamora, *Mayagüez*, 10–25; Bassi, *An Acqueous Territory*, 142–171. Drawing upon his experience in the Bolivarian army, Ducoudray wrote a biography of Bolívar: Ducoudray, *Histoire de Bolivar*.
 10. Department of State (hereafter DOS) to Baptis Irvine, 31 January 1818. NARA, RG59, M78, Consular instructions of the Department of State, 1801–1834, vol. 2; Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore*, 89; Hanke, "Baptis Irvine's Reports on Simon Bolivar," 360–373; Santana, "The United States and Puerto Rico," 224–230.
 11. Mongey, "Les Vagabonds de la République," 67–82; Terrien, "A Motley Collection of all Nations," 89–108; Blaufarb, *Bonapartists in the Borderlands*, 170.
 12. Geggus, "The Caribbean in the Age of Revolution."
 13. *Real Cédula de S.M.* (1815). On the Second Slavery, consult especially: Tomich, *Slavery and Historical Capitalism*.
 14. *American State Papers* (hereafter ASP), *Documents, Legislative and Executive of the Congress of the United States*, 1028–1040 (n°540: Expedition against the island of Porto Rico); Gibson, "There is no doubt that we are under threat by the Negroes of Santo Domingo," 228. According to Gibson, Puerto Rico's sugar production skyrocketed from 3.905 to 14.126 metrics tons between 1812 and 1830. For an extensive discussion of the expedition's revolutionary proclamations: Santana, "The United States and Puerto Rico," 250–254; Mongey, *Rogue Revolutionaries*, 92–96.
 15. Pålsson, "Smugglers before the Swedish Throne," 328; Mongey, *Rogue Revolutionaries*, 95.
 16. Ingersoll to John Quincy Adams, 8 January 1823. ASP, 1028.
 17. Pålsson, "Smugglers before the Swedish Throne," 318–335; Espersen, "Fifty Shades of Trade," 41–68; Vidales, "Corsarios y Piratas," 3–18; Wilson, *Commerce in Disguise*; Reeder, "'Sovereign Lords' and 'Dependent Administrators,'" 330–331; Mongey, *Rogue Revolutionaries*, 88–89.
 18. Certificate of the Eendracht, St Eustatius, 10 March 1822. NA, Curaçao, Bonaire, Aruba tot 1828, Raad van Civiele en Criminele Justitie, Raad Fiscaal x. William Gold; John Rusk to James Chaytor and William Gold, Bill of Sale of the Eendracht, St. Barthélemy, 3 September 1822. NA, Curaçao, Bonaire, Aruba tot 1828, Raad van Civiele en Criminele Justitie, Raad Fiscaal x. William Gold; Burns to Watson, 26 September 1822. ASP, 1030–1031; Tillotson to John Quincy Adams, 23 January 1823. ASP, 1032–1033; Santana, "The United States and Puerto Rico," 237–242, Pålsson, "Smugglers before the Swedish Throne," 327; De Gaay Fortman, "Een Wonderlijke Onderneming," 394. In her recent book, Mongey has emphasized the importance of Bigard's Caribbean network in the making of the Boricua expedition. Mongey, *Rogue Revolutionaries*, 89–91.
 19. Gibson, "There is no doubt that we are under threat by the Negroes of Santo Domingo," 223–235; Walker, "All Spirits are Roused," 583–605; Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba*; Mongey, *Rogue Revolutionaries*, 97–98.
 20. Vidales, "Corsarios y Piratas," 12.
 21. Burns to Watson, 26 September 1822 and 12 October 1822. ASP, 1030–1031; Tillotson to John Quincy Adams, 23 January 1823. ASP 1032–1033.
 22. *De Curaçaosche Courant*, 7 December 1822; Santana, "The United States and Puerto Rico," 247–248.
 23. Elsevier contra Gold, 6 February 1823. NA, Curaçao, Bonaire, Aruba tot 1828, Raad van Civiele en Criminele Justitie, Raad Fiscaal x. William Gold; Personal communication, Gert Oostindie,

- 16 November 2020; Klooster and Oostindie, *Curaçao in the Age of Revolutions*; Rupert, *Creolization and Contraband*; Gaffield, *Haitian Connections*; Bassi, *An Acqueous Territory*, 23–54.
24. Córdova, *Memorias Geográficas*, vol. 3, 473–479; *ibid.*, vol. 4, 13–19; Ramírez de Arellano, *Lecturas de Historia de Puerto Rico*, vol. 2, 99–107, 110–113; Santana, “The United States and Puerto Rico,” 255–265; Mongey, *Rogue Revolutionaries*, 99.
 25. Poinsett, *Notes on Mexico*, 185–189.
 26. Reports n°16 (3 November 1822) and n°17 (27 November 1822). Rigsarkivet [Danish National Archives], Danish West Indies, Government-General, Books of letters sent to the King, 1816–1826.
 27. Alonso, “Cádiz Reprised.”
 28. *El Universal* (Madrid), 28 February 1823; *De Curaçaosche Courant*, 4 January 1823; *Opregte Haarlemsche Courant*, 23 November 1822; *'s Gravenhaagsche Courant*, 25 November 1822; *Nederlandsche Staatscourant*, 23 January 1823.
 29. Joaquín de Anduaga to John Quincy Adams, 14 December 1822 and 6 March 1823. *Message from the President of the United States* (1823), 213–214, 223–224; De Gaay Fortman, “Een Wonderlijke Onderneming,” 393–394.
 30. John Quincy Adams to John Forsyth, 3 January 1823. NARA, RG59, M77 Diplomatic Instructions from Department of State to Ministers; Gutiérrez Ardila, *Un Nuevo Reino*; Gutiérrez Ardila, *El Reconocimiento de Colombia*; Bassi, “The ‘Franklins of Colombia,’” 673–701.
 31. Head, *Privateers of the Americas*, 122–148; Gutiérrez Ardila, *Un Nuevo Reino*; Gutiérrez Ardila, *El Reconocimiento de Colombia*, 53–59.
 32. Brown, *Latin American Rebels*, 115–171; Blaufarb, “The Western Question,” 742–763; Reeder, “‘Sovereign Lords’ and ‘Dependent Administrators,’” 323–346; Clavin, *The Battle of Negro Fort*.
 33. Whitaker, *The United States and the Independence of Latin America*, 141–188. Between roughly 1805 and 1825, a growing number of books familiarized the US public with Spanish America, such as James Biggs, *The History of Don Francisco de Miranda’s Attempt to Effect a Revolution in South America* (1806); John N. Sherman, *A General Account of Miranda’s Expedition* (1808); William Walton, *Present State of the Spanish Colonies* (1810) and *Exposé of the Dissensions in Spanish America* (1814); William Robinson, *Cursory View of Spanish America* (1815) and *Memoirs of the Mexican Revolution* (1820); Manuel Torres, *An Exposition of the Commerce of South America* (1816) and *An Exposition of South America, with some Observations upon its Importance to the United States* (1819); Vicente Pazos, *Letters on the United Provinces of South America* (1819); H.M. Brackenridge, *South America: a Letter on the Present State of that Country to James Monroe* (1817) and *A Voyage to South America* (1820) as well as John Niles, *A View of South America and Mexico* (1825). Among the newspapers that expressed the aforementioned skepticism, one can single out the *New York Evening Post* and the *National Enquirer*, both of which routinely backed the US government’s neutrality in the conflict between Spain and her former colonies for that motive.
 34. *New York Evening Post*, 21 October 1822; Mongey, *Rogue Revolutionaries*, 102–103.
 35. See the controversy between the *Baltimore Federal Gazette* and the *New York Evening Post* on the Boricua expedition in *New York Evening Post*, 26 November 1822. Santana, “The United States and Puerto Rico,” 265–267.
 36. “Porto Rico Expeditie,” *De Curaçaosche Courant*, 7 December 1822 (original article from *National Intelligencer*, 25 October 1822); *The Freeman’s Journal*, 11 November 1822.
 37. *Alexandria Gazette and Advertiser*, 12 December 1822 (cursive from original); Mongey, *Rogue Revolutionaries*, 103.
 38. Fitz, *Our Sister Republics*; Chambers, *No God but Gain*.
 39. Lewis, *The American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood*, 126–187.
 40. Charles S. Todd to John Quincy Adams, 17 April 1823. Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, vol. 2, 1249–1251; Sexton, “An American System,” 139–160. US fears of British preeminence in the Western Hemisphere were present since the outset of the wars of independence in Spanish America. Some independent leaders actively appealed to become part of the British orbit, such as the independent Republic of Cartagena (established in November

- 1811) that sought to become a protectorate of the British Empire during the siege of 1815, an offer that Great Britain declined due to its neutrality in the conflict. Bassi, *An Aqueous Territory*, 1–2.
41. Lewis, *The American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood*, 126–187. Following Monroe’s message to Congress in 1823, John Quincy Adams would eventually get somewhat closer to Clay’s position, as evidenced by his actions in the build up to the Congress of Panama. Malanson, “The Congressional Debate over U.S. Participation in the Congress of Panama,” 813–838.
 42. Whitaker, *The United States and the Independence of Latin America*, 189–247; Brown, *Latin American Rebels*, 130–142.
 43. DOS to Rodney and Graham, 18 July 1817 and 21 November 1817. NARA, RG59, M78, Consular instructions of the Department of State, 1801–1834, vol. 2; Brown, *Latin American Rebels*, 143–158.
 44. Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, vol. 2, 1190–1200, 1202–1206, 1210–1211; DOS to Todd, 22 February 1820, 5 June 1820 and 1 August 1820. NARA, RG59, M78, Consular instructions of the Department of State, 1801–1834, vol. 2; Gutiérrez Ardila, “Los Estados Unidos,” 231–260; Vivian, “The Paloma Claim,” 57–72.
 45. John Quincy Adams to Hugh Nelson, 28 April 1823. NARA, RG59, M77, Diplomatic Instructions from Department of State to Ministers; John Quincy Adams to Thomas Randall, 21 April 1823 and 29 April 1823. NARA, RG59, M78, Consular instructions of the Department of State, 1801–1834, vol. 2.
 46. Robert Monroe Harrison to John Quincy Adams, 16 September 1822. ASP, 1033 (italics in the original).
 47. *Niles’ Weekly Register*, 13 March 1819; *Niles’ Weekly Register*, 24 March 1827. Parker was appointed as US consul in Curaçao by the Monroe administration in March 1819, where he remained until the South Carolinian Philip Robinson took over his office eight years later. In Curaçao, Parker proactively represented US commercial and political interests. In July 1823, while the controversy around the Ducoudray-Holstein expedition was still raging, Parker provided assistance to several US seamen from the US brig *Enterprise* which had been “cast away” near Curaçao (*Alexandria Gazette and Advertiser*, 31 July 1823). Parker’s other duties were to protect US maritime trade from the effects of privateering and piracy, to observe political developments on the Spanish Main, keeping an eye on the Republic of Gran Colombia (1819–1830) both as potential continental rival (in an alliance with Mexico) and as institutional laboratory for a multiracial federation. See especially: Parker to John Quincy Adams, 4 August 1821, 17 September 1821, 10 October 1821 and 25 October 1821. NARA, RG59, T-197, Despatches from US consuls in Curaçao, 1793–1906.
 48. Parker to John Quincy Adams, 18 October 1822. ASP, 1038. The narrative of US seamen as the innocent victims of foreign freebooters extended well beyond Parker and the Ducoudray expedition. Robert K. Lowry, US consul at La Guayra, for instance argued that many other US seamen suffered from the “most odious & oppressive servitude” to Colombian privateers after having been “seduced” under a state of intoxication and seeing their certificates of US citizenship violently confiscated. Lowry to John Quincy Adams, 16 April 1822 and 22 September 1822. Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, vol. 2, 1219–1223. On unauthorized consulship: Simeonov, “With what right are they sending a consul.”
 49. Parker to John Quincy Adams, 27 September 1822. ASP, 1034–1038.
 50. DOS to John M. McPherson, 8 March 1823 and 7 May 1824. NARA, RG59, M78, Consular Instructions of the Department of State, 1801–1834, vol. 2; DOS to David S. Craig, 3 April 1823. NARA, RG59, M78, Consular Instructions of the Department of State, 1801–1834, vol. 2; DOS to Robert K. Lowry, 11 April 1823. NARA, RG59, M78, Consular Instructions of the Department of State, 1801–1834, vol. 2; DOS to Alfred Seaton, 14 June 1824. NARA, RG59, M78, Consular Instructions of the Department of State, 1801–1834, vol. 2; DOS to William Wheelwright, 16 June 1824. NARA, RG59, M78, Consular Instructions of the Department of State, 1801–1834, vol. 2; DOS to Franklin Litchfield, 12 July 1824. NARA, RG59, M78, Consular Instructions of the Department of State, 1801–1834, vol. 2. Consular dispatches from the Greater Caribbean and northern South America crucially provided timely information on

the conflicts between Spanish loyalists and American revolutionaries in the Spanish Main, assessed the viability of the new republics in South America after their independence, and sought to anticipate European actions in the region.

51. ASP, 1028–1040; *Alexandria Gazette and Advertiser*, 17 December 1822.
52. John Quincy Adams to John Forsyth, 3 Jan. 1823. NARA, RG59, M77 Diplomatic Instructions from Department of State to Ministers; John Quincy Adams to Hugh Nelson, 28 April 1823. NARA, RG59, M77 Diplomatic Instructions from Department of State to Ministers; Santana, “The United States and Puerto Rico,” 270–272.
53. John Quincy Adams to Hugh Nelson, 28 April 1823. NARA, RG59, M77 Diplomatic Instructions from Department of State to Ministers; Adams and Adams, ed. *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, vol. 6, 105; Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution*.
54. De Gaay Fortman, “Een Wonderlijke Onderneming,” 390.
55. Meade to John Quincy Adams, 17 December 1822. ASP, 1038–1039,.
56. Torres to John Quincy Adams, 18 March 1820. Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, vol. 2, 1185–1189; *Rotterdamsche Courant*, 23 September 1823; Brown, *Latin American Rebels*, 165; Van der Veen, *Groot-Nederland en Groot-Colombia*, 54–55; Pérez Morales, *No Limits to their Sway*; Gutiérrez Ardila, *Un Nuevo Reino*; Gutiérrez Ardila, *El Reconocimiento de Colombia*.
57. Raad fiscal x L.V. du Coudray Holstein, 7 February 1823. NA, Curaçao, Bonaire, Aruba tot 1828, Raad van Civiele en Criminele Justitie; Ducoudray Holstein, *Memoirs of Simon Bolivar*, 297–302; Mongey, *Rogue Revolutionaries*, 101 and 107.
58. Ducoudray Holstein, *Memoirs of Simon Bolivar*, 299.
59. Santana, “The United States and Puerto Rico,” 272–274; De Gaay Fortman, “Een Wonderlijke Onderneming,” 392–393; Cedo Alzamora, *Mayagüez*, 36.
60. Raad fiscal x L.V. du Coudray Holstein, 7 February 1823. NA, Curaçao, Bonaire, Aruba tot 1828, Raad van Civiele en Criminele Justitie; Van der Veen, *Groot-Nederland en Groot-Colombia*, 73; Brüggemann, “Westindisch Crimineel Appel Op ‘s-Gravenhage,” 152–154.
61. *Niles’ Register*, 22 March 1823; *The Norwich Journal* (Norwich, NY), 2 April 1823; Mongey, *Rogue Revolutionaries*, 101. Irvine sought to distance himself from Ducoudray, by arguing that he was deceived by the general’s capacities and by presenting him as destitute of leadership qualities and careless as suggested by his premature drafting of the revolutionary proclamations.
62. Irvine, *Traits of Colonial Jurisprudence*; Ducoudray Holstein, *Memoirs of Simon Bolivar*, 297–302.
63. Clay, Hopkins and Massey Hargreaves, ed. *The Papers of Henry Clay*, vol. 3, 594–596, 600, 618–619 (cursive from original).
64. Elsevier contra Parker, on behalf of Gold, 21 July 1823. NA, Curaçao, Bonaire, Aruba tot 1828, Raad van Civiele en Criminele Justitie, Raad fiscaal x. William Gold; Gouverneur (gouverneur-general), 1816–1827, Contracten betreffende de leverantie van goederen en materialen ten behoeve van het government, 1815–1818, 1822–1827. NA, Curaçao, Bonaire, Aruba tot 1828, Raad van Civiele en Criminele Justitie, Raad fiscaal x. William Gold; DOS to Parker, 15 July 1824. NARA, RG59, M78, Consular instructions of the Department of State, 1801–1834, vol. 2; Agnew to Parker, 17 January 1823 and 18 April 1823. NARA, RG59, T-197, Despatches from US consuls in Curaçao, 1793–1906.
65. Parker to John Quincy Adams, 2 September 1824. NARA, RG59, T-197, Despatches from US consuls in Curaçao, 1793–1906.
66. Spence to Parker, 13 November 1824. NARA, RG59, T-197, Despatches from US consuls in Curaçao, 1793–1906.
67. Ducoudray Holstein, *Memoirs of Simon Bolivar*, 301–302; *New York Evening Post*, 23 March 1825; De Gaay Fortman, “Een Wonderlijke Onderneming,” 395–398; Van der Veen, *Groot-Nederland en Groot-Colombia*, 72.
68. Consult the sympathetic narrative of Irvine’s escape attempt by the *National Advocate’s* correspondent in Curaçao in *Geneva Palladium* (Geneva, NY), 30 April 1823. Interestingly, the American observer regretted the lack of a recognized US representative to counter what he viewed as routine abuses against US citizens in the colony. Adams and Adams, ed. *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, vol. 6, 430–431.

69. On this scholarship, consult for instance: Pérez Morales, *No Limits to their Sway*; Reeder, "'Sovereign Lords' and 'Dependent Administrators'"; Bassi, *An Acqueous Territory*, 142–171; Von Grafenstein, "Corso y Piratería," 269–282; Terrien, "Des Patriotes sans Patrie."
70. Sexton, "An American System," 143.
71. Gould, *Among the Powers on Earth*, 3, 12–13; Mongey, *Rogue Revolutionaries*, 101; Guterl, *American Mediterranean*.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Gert Oostindie, Girija Joshi, Anne Heyer, and the anonymous reviewers for their comments on earlier versions of this article, as well as the staff of the Roosevelt Institute for American Studies (Middelburg, The Netherlands) for their warmth and support while conducting the research for this article. Thanks as well to Manuel Barcia for his guidance through the final edits.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

The Roosevelt Institute for American Studies (RIAS) has supported research for this article through a Short-Term Research Fellowship (fall 2019).

Notes on contributor

Thomas Mareite is postdoctoral researcher at the University of Duisburg-Essen (Germany), as part of the project "Atlantic Exiles: Refugees and Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1770s–1820s" (ERC). He has recently published peer-reviewed articles in *Slavery & Abolition* and the *Journal of Global Slavery*. His PhD dissertation, "Conditional Freedom: Free-Soil and Fugitive Slaves from the U.S. South in Mexico's Northeast, 1803–1861" (Leiden University, 2020), is a social and political history of the contests over Free Soil and fugitive slaves from the US South who settled in Mexico's Northeast during the nineteenth century. It explores the development of southern routes of escape from slavery in the US South, and how self-emancipated bondspeople in the US-Mexico borderlands struggled to secure freedom.

ORCID

Thomas Mareite  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5077-5731>

References

- Adams, John Quincy and Charles Francis Adams, ed. *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, comprising portions of his diary from 1795 to 1848*. Vol. 6. Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott, 1875.
- Adelman, Jeremy. *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Alonso, Gregorio. "Cádiz Reprised: The Liberal Triennium in Spain and Spanish America, 1820–1823." In *The Rise of Constitutional Government in the Iberian Atlantic World: the Impact of the Cadiz Constitution of 1812*, edited by Scott Eastman and Natalia Sobrevilla Perea, 245–263. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015.

- Alvarez, Alejandro. *The Monroe Doctrine: its Importance in the International Life of the States of the New World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1924.
- American State Papers. Documents, Legislative and Executive of the Congress of the United States, from the First Session of the Eleventh to the Second Session of the Seventeenth Congress, Inclusive: Commencing May 22, 1809, and Ending March 3, 1823. Class X, Miscellaneous*. Washington, DC: Gales and Seaton, 1834.
- Barcia, Manuel. "Un Coloso Sobre la Arena: Definiendo el Camino hacia la Plantación Esclavista en Cuba, 1792–1825." *Revista de Indias* 71, no. 251 (2011): 53–76.
- Bassi, Ernesto. *An Acqueous Territory: Sailor Geographies and New Granada's Transimperial Greater Caribbean World*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Bassi, Ernesto. "The 'Franklins of Colombia': Immigration Schemes and Hemispheric Solidarity in the Making of a Civilized Colombia Nation." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 50, no. 3 (2018): 673–701.
- Blaufarb, Rafe. *Bonapartists in the Borderlands: French Exiles and Refugees on the Gulf Coast, 1815–1835*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006.
- Blaufarb, Rafe. "The Western Question: The Geopolitics of Latin American Independence." *American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (June 2007): 742–763.
- Brown, Gordon S. *Latin American Rebels and the United States, 1806–1822*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015.
- Brown, Matthew and Gabriel Paquette, eds. *Connections after Colonialism: Europe and Latin America in the 1820s*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2013.
- Brüggemann, G.W.F. "Westindisch Crimineel Appel Op 's-Gravenhage (1802–1838)." *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis/Revue d'Histoire du Droit/The Legal History Review* 56, no. 1–2 (Jan. 1988): 135–183.
- Cañizares-Esguerra, Jorge, ed. *Entangled Empires: the Anglo-Iberian Atlantic, 1500–1830*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.
- Cedo Alzamora, Federico. *Mayagüez, Capital de la República Boricua*. Mayagüez: Gobierno Municipal, 2010.
- Chambers, Stephen M. *No God but Gain: the Untold Story of Cuban Slavery, the Monroe Doctrine and the Making of the United States*. London: Verso, 2015.
- Childs, Matt D. *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle against Atlantic Slavery*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.
- Clavin, Matthew J. *The Battle of Negro Fort: The Rise and Fall of a Fugitive Slave Community*. New York: New York University Press, 2019.
- Clay, Henry, James F. Hopkins, and Mary Wilma Massey Hargreaves, eds. *The Papers of Henry Clay, volume 3, Presidential Candidate, 1821–1824*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1963.
- Córdova, Pedro Tomás de. *Memorias Geográficas, Históricas, Económicas y Estadísticas de la Isla de Puerto Rico*. San Juan: Oficina del Gobierno, a cargo de D. Valeriano de Sanmillan, 1832.
- De Gaay Fortman, B. "Een Wonderlijke Onderneming tegen Porto-Rico." *New West Indian Guide/Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 8, no.1 (1927): 389–398.
- De Goey, Ferry. *Consuls and the Institutions of Global Capitalism, 1783–1914*. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014.
- Ducoudray-Holstein, Henri L.V. *Histoire de Bolivar, par le Général Ducoudray Holstein, continuée jusqu'à sa mort par Alphonse Viollet*. Paris: Alphonse Levasseur, 1831.
- Ducoudray Holstein, Henri L.V. *Memoirs of Simon Bolivar, President Liberator of the Republic of Colombia; and of his Principal Generals; Secret History of the Revolution, and the Events which preceded it, from 1807 to the Present Time*. Boston: S.G. Goodrich, 1829.
- Eastman, Scott. "'America has Escaped from our Hands': Rethinking Empire, Identity and Independence during the Trienio Liberal in Spain, 1820–1823." *European History Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (2011): 428–443.
- Espersen, Ryan. "Fifty Shades of Trade: Privateering, Piracy, and Illegal Slave Trading in St. Thomas, Early Nineteenth Century." *New West Indian Guide* 93, nos. 1–2 (2019): 41–68.
- Ferrer, Ada. *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolutions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

- Fitz, Caitlin. *Our Sister Republics: the United States in an Age of American Revolutions*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2016.
- Fradera, Josep M. *The Imperial Nation: Citizens and Subjects in the British, French, Spanish and American Empires*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018.
- Kennedy, Charles Stuart. *The American Consul: a History of the United States Consular Service, 1776–1914*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990.
- Klooster, Wim and Gert Oostindie, eds., *Curaçao in the Age of Revolutions, 1795–1800*. Leiden: KITLV Press, 2011.
- Kramer, Paul A. "Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World." *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 5 (Dec. 2011): 1348–1391.
- Gaffield, Julia. *Haitian Connections in the Atlantic World: Recognition after Revolution in the Atlantic World*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015.
- Geggus, David. "The Caribbean in the Age of Revolution." In *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760–1840*, edited by David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 83–100. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Gibson, Carrie. "There is no doubt that we are under threat by the Negroes of Santo Domingo': the Spectre of Haiti in the Spanish Caribbean in the 1820s." In *Connections after Colonialism: Europe and Latin America in the 1820s*, edited by Matthew Brown and Gabriel Paquette, 223–235. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2013.
- Gould, Eliga. *Among the Powers on Earth: the American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Guterl, Matthew Pratt. *American Mediterranean: Southern Slaveholders in the Age of Emancipation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Gutiérrez Ardila, Daniel. *Un Nuevo Reino: Geografía Política, Pactismo y Diplomacia durante el Interregno en la Nueva Granada (1808–1816)*. Bogotá: Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2010.
- Gutiérrez Ardila, Daniel. *El Reconocimiento de Colombia: Diplomacia y Propaganda en al Coyuntura de las Restauraciones (1819–1831)*. Bogotá: Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2012.
- Gutiérrez Ardila, Daniel. "Los Estados Unidos como Aliado Natural y como Aliado Peligroso de la Nueva Granada (1810–1865)." *Co-Herencia* 13, no. 25 (2016): 231–260.
- Hanke, Lewis. "Baptis Irvine's Reports on Simon Bolivar." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 16, no. 3 (1936): 360–373.
- Haynes, Sam W. *Unfinished Revolution: the Early American Republic in a British World*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010.
- Head, David. "A Different Kind of Maritime Predation: South American Privateering from Baltimore, 1816–1820." *International Journal of Naval History* 7, no. 2 (2008). Accessed 10 June 2021. <https://www.ijnhonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Head.pdf>
- Head, David. *Privateers of the Americas: Spanish American Privateering from the United States in the Early Republic*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015.
- Irvine, Baptist. *Traits of Colonial Jurisprudence; or, a Peep at the Trading Inquisition of Curaçao*. Baltimore, MD, 1824.
- Lewis, James E. *The American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood: the United States and the Collapse of the Spanish Empire, 1783–1829*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.
- Luengo, Jorge and Pol Dalmau, "Writing Spanish History in the Global Age: Connections and Entanglements in the Nineteenth Century." *Journal of Global History* 13, no. 3 (Nov. 2018): 425–445.
- Malanson, Jeffrey J. "The Congressional Debate over U.S. participation in the Congress of Panama, 1825–1826: Washington's Farewell Address, Monroe's Doctrine and the Fundamental Principles of U.S. Foreign Policy." *Diplomatic History* 30, no. 5 (Nov. 2006): 813–838.
- Manning, William R., ed. *Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States concerning the Independence of Latin-American Nations*. Vol. 2. New York: Oxford University Press, 1925.
- Message from the President of the United States, to both Houses of Congress, at the Commencement of the First Session of the Eighteenth Congress. December 2, 1823, Read, and Referred to a Committee of the whole House on the State of the Union*. Washington: Gales & Seaton, 1823.

- Mongey, Vanessa. "Les Vagabonds de la République : les Révolutionnaires Européens aux Amériques, 1780–1820." In *Les Empires Atlantiques des Lumières au Libéralisme (1763–1865)*, edited by Federica Morelli, Clément Thibaud and Geneviève Verdo, 67–82. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2009.
- Mongey, Vanessa. *Rogue Revolutionaries: The Fight of Legitimacy in the Greater Caribbean*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020.
- Mulich, Jeppe. *In a Sea of Empires: Networks and Crossings in the Revolutionary Caribbean*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- Pålsson, Ale. "Smugglers before the Swedish Throne: Political Activity of Free People of Color in Early Nineteenth-Century St Barthélemy." *Atlantic Studies* 14, no. 3 (2017): 318–335.
- Pérez Morales, Edgardo. *No Limits to their Sway: Cartagena's Privateers and the Masterless Caribbean in the Age of Revolutions*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2018.
- Perkins, Dexter. *The Monroe Doctrine, 1823–1826*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927.
- Poinsett, Joel Roberts. *Notes on Mexico, Made in the Autumn of 1822*. London: John Miller, 1825.
- Portillo Valdés, José María. *Crisis Atlántica: Autonomía e Independencia en la Crisis de la Monarquía Hispana*. Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2006.
- Ramírez de Arellano, Rafael W. *Lecturas de Historia de Puerto Rico, 1813–1837*. San Juan: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1946.
- Real Cédula de S.M., que contiene el reglamento para la población y fomento del comercio, industria y agricultura de la isla de Puertorico. Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1815.
- Reeder, Tyson. "'Sovereign Lords' and 'Dependent Administrators': Artigan Privateers, Atlantic Borderwaters, and State Building in the Early Nineteenth Century." *The Journal of American History* 103, no. 2 (2016): 323–346.
- Rupert, Linda M. *Creolization and Contraband: Curaçao in the Early Modern Atlantic World*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012.
- Santana, Arturo F. "The United States and Puerto Rico, 1797–1830." PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1953.
- Scharf, John Thomas. *The Chronicles of Baltimore: being a Complete History of "Baltimore Town" and Baltimore City from the Earliest Period to the Present Time*. Baltimore, MD: Turnbull Bros., 1874.
- Sexton, Jay. "An American System: the North American Union and Latin America in the 1820s." In *Connections after Colonialism: Europe and Latin America in the 1820s*, edited by Matthew Brown and Gabriel Paquette, 139–160. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2013.
- Simeonov, Simeon. "'With what right are they sending a Consul': Unauthorized Consulship, U.S. Expansion and the Transformation of the Spanish American Empire, 1795–1808." *Journal of the Early Republic* 40, no. 1 (2020): 19–44.
- Terrien, Nicolas. *"Des Patriotes sans Patrie": Histoire des Corsaires Insurgés de l'Amérique Espagnole (1810–1825)*. Mordelles: Les Perséides, 2015.
- Terrien, Yevan Erwan. "'A Motley Collection of all Nations': the Napoleonic Soldiers of Champ d'Asile as Citizens of the World." *Atlantic Studies* 10, no. 1 (2013): 89–108.
- Tomich, Dale. *Slavery and Historical Capitalism during the Nineteenth Century*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017.
- Vidales, Carlos. "Corsarios y Piratas de la Revolución Francesa en las Aguas de la Emancipación Hispanoamericana." *Ibero-Americana, Nordic Journal of Latin American Studies* 19, no. 2 (1989): 3–18.
- Van der Veen, Sytze. *Groot-Nederland en Groot-Colombia, 1815–1830: de Droom van Willem I*. Hilversum: Verloren, 2015.
- Vivian, James F. "The Paloma Claim in United States and Venezuelan-Colombian Relations, 1818–1826." *Caribbean Studies* 14 (Jan. 1975): 57–72.
- Von Grafenstein, Johanna. "Corso y Piratería en el Golfo-Caribe durante las Guerras de Independencia Hispanoamericanas." In *La Violence et la Mer dans l'Espace Atlantique*, edited by Mickaël Augeron and Mathias Tranchant, 269–282. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2004.

- Walker, Andrew. "All Spirits are Roused: the 1822 Antislavery Revolution in Haitian Santo Domingo." *Slavery & Abolition* 40, no. 3 (2019): 583–605.
- Whitaker, Arthur Preston. *The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 1800–1830*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1962.
- Wilson, Victor. *Commerce in Disguise: War and Trade in the Caribbean Free Port of Gustavia, 1793–1815*. Turku: Abo Akademi University Press, 2015.