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 Mid-Atlantic Conference on British Studies

**Title:**

“The Empire of your Virtues Reacheth Far”<sup>1</sup>: Oliver Cromwell and the Imperial Protectorship

**Abstract:**

This paper looks at the ways in which the Cromwellian Protectorate sought novel extensions of executive power through the canny use of the office of the Lord Protector. I argue that the Protectorate sought to rekindle previous efforts to develop an English imperium with the capturing of Jamaica which, far from being a consolation prize of the Western Design scheme, provided an opportunity to develop both merchant commercial interests and religio-political hegemony. I draw these threads together with a discussion of the kingship debates and an assessment of the Protectorate’s developing ideology. I argue that Cromwell functioned less as a “king in all but name” and more as an “emperor” in all but name seeking the powers of the Roman dictator along the way. For the Protectorate, the legal limits, defined through tradition and the precedent of the trial against Charles I, made it a less expansive and therefore less attractive office than that of the Lord Protector. Cromwell, while debating the offer of the crown understood these limits and the refusal of the office may have been a strategic mechanism for enhanced power in the office of Lord Protector that was not available to a king. To contextualize this period, I analyse the court poetry of Edmund Waller and Payne Fisher, the radicalism of Anna Trapnell, and the cultural impact of the 1652 solar eclipse amongst other works of political and legal importance.

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<sup>1</sup> Payne Fisher, *Veni; Vidi; Vici. The Triumphs of the Most Excellent & Illustrious Oliver Cromwell, &c. Set forth in a Panegyricke. Written Originally in Latine, and Faithfully done into English heroicall Verse by T.M. Jun. Esq.* Printed for John Tey at the White Lion, 1652. Wing/ F1044 (EEBO, Huntingdon unstructured), 72. The full quotation reads: “But YOU Great sir, Greater than Caesar are,/ The Empire of your Virtues Reacheth Far”.

## **Preface and framework**

This work stems from my Ph.D. thesis which looked at the Cromwellian Protectorate from the perspective of its wider goals in becoming not only the head of England, Ireland, Scotland and the Dominions, but also as the head of a global Reformed Protestant alliance which I am currently in the process of reworking for publication. This presentation, while overpromised in the abstract and I fear I may run out of time, but I am hoping to draw together two of my chapters in which I make the case for a wider and more expansive understanding of the Protectorate within this general framework. In particular, I will be talking about the ways the Protectorate sought to rekindle previous efforts to develop an English imperium with the capturing of Jamaica which, far from being a consolation prize of the Western Design scheme, provided an opportunity to develop both merchant commercial interests and religio-political hegemony. I draw these threads together with a discussion of the kingship debates and an assessment of the Protectorate's developing ideology. For the Protectorate, the legal limits, defined through tradition and the precedent of the trial against Charles I, made the office of the monarch a less expansive and therefore a less attractive office than that of the Lord Protector. Cromwell, while debating the offer of the crown understood these limits and the refusal of the office may have been a strategic mechanism for enhanced power in the office of Lord Protector that was not available to a king.

**Slide 2:** The context in which I am situating this argument stems from my work on the Protectorate's support of the Piedmont Protestants, the Vaudois, Valdesi, or Waldensian protestant population of the Piedmont valleys in the territory of the Duke of Savoy. In 1655, aligned with support from Louis XIV and inclusive of Irish mercenary troops, the Duke of Savoy mounted an indiscriminate attack on this civilian population.

**Slide 3:** Envoys of the Protectorate, most notably John Pell and Samuel Morland, petitioned the courts of Europe against the powerful house of Savoy which, through multiple

publication efforts, including the evocative Sonnet 18 from John Milton which recounts and narrativizes the massacre, garnered an international reputation for the Protectorate as a Protector of the Reformed populations of Europe. The view that Cromwell sought to harness the political utility of the massacre was shared by both his critics and his allies.

**Slide 4:** For example, John Pell wrote to Samuel Hartlib about the benefits of the massacre being that represented a “dore” into a justified war with the House of Savoy and likely other aligned powers. Hartlib responded noting that it was increasingly clear to him and others in Europe that Cromwell would extend his power beyond the British Isles to become a Protector to all the Reformed populations.

**Slide 5:** Additionally, Cromwell’s critics in exile too understood the Protectorate gesturing towards larger moves noting that Cromwell intended to make “himself protector of the Protestant party of Europe.” Likely sarcastic, but also with a likely ring of truth. Only a year prior, however, Cromwell had committed military forces and expenditures to attack and capture Hispaniola, the Spanish stronghold in the West Indies, but failed to do so. As a concession prize, Protectorate troops captured, through a hard-won campaign, the island of Jamaica. This mission, the so-called Western Design tested Cromwell’s sense of divine providence which had, until this point, driven his successes.

### **Kingship debates and conclusion**

**Slide 6:** While there are many documents that work towards positioning the Protectorate and understanding its posturing in the early-to-mid-1650s, the 1655 *Manifesto of the Lord Protector* is an excellent illustration of the developing party ideology. This manifesto functions primarily a justification of the military action against the Spanish in 1654, but, critically, links the protection of the Piedmont Protestants, the global Protestant interest, the interests of English trade, and the actions in the West Indies to the primacy of the

Spanish threat in both the Atlantic and in Europe.<sup>2</sup> The document begins with a evocative passage describing the “killing, murdering, nay butchering in cold blood” of English settlers and merchants, “seizing their goods and fortunes, destroying their plantations and houses, capturing any of their vessels they may meet on those seas, and treating their crews as enemies and even pirates.”<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the document extends this description of the Spanish cruelty to the native populations played to the notions the Black Legend. That this illustration featured prominently speaks to the idea that the cruelty of Spanish conquest functioned as justification for the confiscation of their lands and abdication of the Spanish rights to the dominions they claimed based on the “ridiculous donation of the Pope.”<sup>4</sup> The document makes the case that the Spanish reputation for cruelty, especially against Protestant settlers and native populations, would become increasingly evident throughout both the Spanish Empire and Europe. The document continues, “We should have good grounds for expecting that on us first [the English], but eventually on all Protestants wheresoever, there would be wreaked the residue of that most brutal massacre suffered lately by our brothers in the Alpine valleys”.<sup>5</sup> While temporally, the inclusion of the Piedmont Protestants as a *post-hoc* justification for the actions in the West Indies, it indicates many of the central factors of the Protectorate ideology as later advanced in the opening of the Second Protectorate Parliament. This *Manifesto* makes the position of the Protectorate in the Atlantic clear. The Spanish were a threat to trade and to the freedom of the merchants involved. By capturing land in the West Indies, the Protectorate could lay further claim to the waters surrounding and could further develop a colonial merchant empire and a system of imperial dominion. In one

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<sup>2</sup> The Latin title of the work is *Scriptum dom protectoris reipublicae angliae, scotiae, hiberniae, &c., ex consensus atque sententia concilii sui editum, in quo hujus reipublicae cause contra hispanos justa esse demonstrator*, 1655, Wing / C7165.

<sup>3</sup> English translation by Masson. Masson, *The Life of John Milton: Narrated in Connexion with the Political, Ecclesiastical, and Literary History of His Time*, 241.

<sup>4</sup> Masson, 241.

<sup>5</sup> Masson, 242.

tidy pamphlet, the Protectorate was able to counter the claims of both Iberian papal sanction and Dutch free sea trade claims, the latter established through the prevailing arguments of Hugo Grotius. The Protectorate trade network had its own legitimizing philosophies.

**Slide 7:** In 1652, the Council of State commissioned Marchamont Nedham in 1652, to translate John Selden's 1635 work *Mare Clausum*.<sup>6</sup> As a good editor would, Nedham reworked the for clarity to *Of the Dominion, or, Ownership of the Sea*. Selden's work is divided into two books. The first established his argument that the sea, like land, can be captured and claimed under sovereign authority, that it is "not common to all men, but capable of private dominion".<sup>7</sup> Book two argues that the waters around England, and by extension colonial holdings create a dominion of ownership and rights —namely fishing rights and its argument sat at the centre of European conceptions of the temporal and spiritual right of expansion and dominion.

The frontispiece to Selden's translated work features a stunning engraving that echoes the prefatory poem "Neptune to the Common-wealth of England" and features Neptune, God of the sea bestowing his empire, supplicating himself to Britannia's throne and imploring her to seek "sea-Dominion" as a rightful endeavour of a powerful state.<sup>8</sup>

These ideas are transfigured again into Edmund Waller's cloying *Panegyrick to my Lord Protector* noting that Cromwell's "power extends as farre as windes can blow" and that his rule would "balance Europe and her States to awe" in recognition of "the greatest leader, and the greatest isle"<sup>9</sup> and referring to his victories as proof of his role as the "Worlds

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<sup>6</sup> Selden, *Of the Dominion, or, Ownership of the Sea*, Title page. Between 1640-1659, the phrase printed by "special command" appears 202 times in pamphlets and other texts available via EEBO. Importantly, the other texts which use this phrase are similarly important texts to the information mission of the Commonwealth and Protectorate. Additionally, outside of this date range, royal decrees and other similar texts are printed with this notation.

<sup>7</sup> Selden, Title page.

<sup>8</sup> Armitage, 'The Cromwellian Protectorate and the Languages of Empire', 534.

<sup>9</sup> Waller, 2.

Protector”.<sup>10</sup> Waller wrote in the context both of Cromwell’s conquest of parliament and the conquest of dominions noting “preferr’d by conquest happily overthrown,/ Falling you rise to be with us made one:/ So kinde dictators made, when they came home,/ Their vanquisht foes, free Citizens of Rome.”<sup>11</sup> This is a vital point denoting the difference between dominion, that is to say ownership and imperium which, through conquest brought new territories and peoples under the control of a central imperial power. Waller extends this inheritance, by rights, from imperial Rome to the Protectorate. That this positioning came in 1655, too, is crucial. As seen with the Protector’s intervention in the affairs of the Piedmont Protestants and the campaign first on their behalf throughout the courts of Europe, then on the behalf of the beleaguered Protestants of central Europe and the funds collected for each group, Cromwell was at his apogee of power and seeing how far this could be extended. In this context, too, Cromwell’s reign is justified by his greatness and power attained through peace and protection.<sup>12</sup>

It was not only those who praised the Lord Protector who understood his imperial ambitions. As David Armitage has pointed out, In a 1655 letter from the earl of Norwich to Sir Edward Nicholas, both in exile, he wrote that “Cromwell...resolves to make himself Emperor of the West Indies...”<sup>13</sup> This sits remarkably close to the sentiment Lord Christopher Hatton communicated to Nicholas later that same month in which he noted that Cromwell was seeking to make himself “Protector of the Protestant Party of Europe...”<sup>14</sup> It

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<sup>10</sup> Waller, 3.

<sup>11</sup> Waller, 6. Importantly, there is shared imagery between Waller and Andrew Marvell’s “Horatian Ode” in which a similar device of the conquered acknowledging their conqueror is used. Both instances relate to Horace’s use of *prophetikon* or the celebration of a conquering hero’s return. Cromwell for Marvell and Waller, Nero’s defeat of Hannibal for Horace. See Nigel Smith, *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*, 268.

<sup>12</sup> Gilbert, *Edmund Waller*, 77.

<sup>13</sup> Earl of Norwich to Sir Edward Nicholas, 4 June 1655, *NP* II, 324. Cited in Armitage, ‘The Cromwellian Protectorate and the Languages of Empire’.

<sup>14</sup> Lord Christopher Hatton to Sir Edward Nicholas, Paris, 18 June, 1655, *NP*, II, 343-344. Cited in Vola, *Oliver Cromwell e la causa valdese e altri saggi sul nonconformismo religioso nell’Inghilterra del XVII secolo*.

was clear to the exiled Royalists that Cromwell sought ambitious gains in power and dominion.

**Slide 8:** It is reasonable to question why, if Cromwell had lofty pretensions towards power, did he decline the offer of the crown in 1657? Cromwell himself long debated this issue before his eventual refusal of the Humble Petition. In a post hoc and possibly invented recounting of a conversation between himself and Cromwell, Bulstrode Whitelocke highlighted a 1652 conversation in which the two discussed the implications of his accepting the crown, in which Whitelocke dissuades Cromwell from these notions by indicating that there would be no reason for Cromwell to take the crown as he possessed “the full kingly power in you already.”<sup>15</sup> Whitelocke indicated to Cromwell that he already held martial command, felt little resistance to nominations of civil officers, and enjoyed privilege of the pulpit in the shaping of laws. Critically, Whitelocke noted to Cromwell that were he to take the crown “the question [would] not more whether our government shall be by a monarch or by a free state, but whether Cromwell or Stuart shall be our king and monarch.”<sup>16</sup>

From 3 April 1657 until his final decision on 8 May 1657, Cromwell spoke with Parliament, and then a select committee, to decide the relative value of accepting the crown.<sup>17</sup> On 13 April, he noted that through the ancient constitution, kingship was to be understood not as a title, but as an office and that therefore “though King bee a name of office that runs through the law yet it is not the Name but from that it signifies, its name or office plainly implying the supreme authority the signification goes to the thing not to the name.”<sup>18</sup> In other words, Cromwell understood that the power of a centralised executive authority was not

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<sup>15</sup> Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs from the Beginning of the Reign of Charles the First to the Happy Restoration of King Charles the Second*, 3:468-475.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Firth, *The Last Years of the Protectorate 1656-1658*, 170-173.

<sup>18</sup> “Speech of Oliver Cromwell to the Committee of Parliament in Whitehall”, 13 April 1657, in Morrill, et. al., *LWSOC*, 3: 379-380.

limited to that of a king, but to that executive authority itself. Cromwell furthered this argument by stating that his role should be that of a constable rather than king to maintain order and peace.<sup>19</sup> ~~This was not, of course a novel reading of the monarch as many had, in the post-Civil War period, stated their opposition to King Charles I, not the entire system of monarchy. John Milton, in his *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649) made such a point clear. We cannot know from whom Cromwell heard these arguments, but he wrestled with these definitional points. Critically, in a 16 April 1657 meeting of the kingship committee, the objection to Cromwell's rule as Lord Protector fit along similar lines of definitional boundaries.<sup>20</sup> William Lenthall, Speaker of the House of Commons and supporter of Cromwell's kingship noted that a Lord Protector "lacked the well-defined powers of a king" and that, contrary to Cromwell's understanding, these powers were inextricably linked to the that of a king.<sup>21</sup> Such definitions strike two ways as power is both granted and curtailed.<sup>22</sup> Sir Richard Onslow similarly objected to Cromwell's use of the office of Lord Protector arguing that a king, as had been defined by the Long Parliament, was more accountable to the people than the novel use of another office.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, Sir Richard and John Jones noted their objection to Cromwell's insistence on his providential rule with Sir Richard noting that "the reason, the causes [,] are hidden in the secret council of Gods will and are not a rule to walk by."<sup>24</sup> Jones additionally states that the use of providential justifications obfuscates and makes redundant the role of parliament as a Protector need not consult with both God and MPs.<sup>25</sup>~~

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<sup>19</sup> "Speech of Oliver Cromwell to the Committee of Parliament in Whitehall", 13 April 1657, in Morrill, et. al., *LWSOC*, 3: 381.

<sup>20</sup> Roy Sherwood briefly discusses these notions in an appendix in Sherwood, *The Court of Oliver Cromwell*, pp. 158-159.

<sup>21</sup> "Speech of Oliver Cromwell to the Committee of Parliament in Whitehall", 20 April 1657, this quote is from the proceedings of the committee on 16 April which was adjourned due to Cromwell having a cold but contained in one document in Morrill, et. al., *LWSOC*, 3: 384.

<sup>22</sup> Roberts, 'Lenthall, William, Appointed Lord Lenthall Under the Protectorate', *ODNB*.

<sup>23</sup> Gurney, 'Onslow, Sir Richard (Bap. 1601, d. 1664)'; Pocock, 'Civil War and Interregnum'.

<sup>24</sup> "Speech of Oliver Cromwell to the Committee of Parliament in Whitehall", 20 April 1657, in Morrill, et. al., *LWSOC*, 3: 384.; Roberts, 'Jones, John (c. 1597-1660)'.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*.

With the novel use of the office of Lord Protector, such limitations, boundaries, and removal of ambiguities of prerogative powers were open to new interpretations and extensions of power.<sup>26</sup>

When Cromwell spoke to the Second Protectorate Parliament on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May to refuse the offer of the Crown, he did so not swathed in the careful and legalistic framework under which he debated this possibility, but under the guise of humility and a fear of striking God's retribution for the avaricious acceptance of a providentially stripped English kingship. This public face of humility projects an avoidance of the temptations of power, though one of the major influencing factors of his reputation for humility and honesty, is undercut by the debates around the power he held as Lord Protector in comparison with that of a king. ~~Additionally important, too, are the records of Cromwell more seriously considering accepting the office of king with his councillors.<sup>27</sup> Cromwell's political acuity around this issue is evident in the signal balloon being sent up days before his refusal of the crown indicating his potential acceptance and the furore it caused as even his political allies, army supporters, and even religious comrades such as John Owen scrambled to stop it.<sup>28</sup> It is possible, too, that the limitations of the crown were an additional or possibly contrary reason for the refusal as argued by the objections of Lenthall Onslow, and Jones in the kingship debates.~~ In fact, it was noted, third hand, that Cromwell understood full well that title of Lord Protector provided more authority than that of king by not being the embodiment of the state, but its master.<sup>29</sup> The powers that Cromwell wished to extend can be better understood within

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<sup>26</sup> Burgess, 'The English Constitution in the Seventeenth Century', 171.; See also, Pocock, 'Civil War and Interregnum'.

<sup>27</sup> Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs*, 3:374.

<sup>28</sup> Hutton, *The British Republic 1649-1660*, 73-74 ; Hutton, *Debates in Stuart History.*, 124-125.

<sup>29</sup> Smith, 'The Monarchical Republic of Oliver Cromwell'. Smith cites Venetian ambassador in Paris Francesco Giustiniani who reportedly wrote about Oliver Cromwell's ambitions to another ambassador. This note is captured in a letter from Thurloe to Henry Cromwell, but should be approached with caution and skepticism, *TSP*, 6:281, "John Thurloe to Henry Cromwell", 12 May 1657. See also "Speech of Oliver Cromwell to the Committee of Parliament in Whitehall", 11April-1657, Morrill, et. al. *LWSOC* 3:363.

the classical Roman framework of emergency dictatorial powers and that of imperial authority. A king in all but name? Possibly, but also perhaps more accurately an emperor in all but name.

### **Imperium (Approx 10 pgs)**

Oliver Cromwell inherited an imperial mission that had begun under his predecessors.<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth and James had styled their reign on the tradition of imperium and sought the economic strength this would allow with the cultivation of material goods and the extension of their power over peoples outside of the British Isles.<sup>31</sup> Charles I, whose imperial ambition was perhaps enhanced by his purposeful self-fashioning with imperial iconography also developed the first large-scale practice of transportation built partly on classical precedents inherent in the development of imperium and praised by jurists and scholars such as Jean Bodin whose theories of sovereignty found purchase in the Stuart court.<sup>32</sup> For Cromwell, as the leader of the Commonwealth in the early period of his reign, empire was a complicating factor as notions of democratic inclusion extended into colonial settlements. As Cromwell moved towards his eventual status of Lord Protector, legal arguments and desires towards dominion and imperium became increasingly evident and foundational.<sup>33</sup> Through the power of imperium, Cromwell could develop religious, political, and economic hegemony.

Cromwell's outlook on the nature of the economy was based on the Elizabethan "quasi-piratical" practices of plunder and reliance on merchant needs to dictate trade policy.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Dandeleit, *The Renaissance of Empire in Early Modern Europe*, 267-268.

<sup>31</sup> Dandeleit, 267-268.

<sup>32</sup> Dandeleit, 269. Charles I's court artist, Anthony van Dyck understood his ambitions to be seen as a powerful imperial ruler and reflected this desire in his royal portraits. Additionally, Charles collected art from Europe on a grand scale in an effort to hold a royal collection of comparable importance to the courts of Europe. See, Brown, *Kings and Connoisseurs: Collecting Art in Seventeenth-Century Europe*; Grosvenor, 'Showtime: The Stuarts and van Dyck, 1603-1630s'; Miller, 'Van Dyck in London'; Rogers, 'Van Dyck in England'; Shawe-Taylor, 'The "Act and Power of a Face": Van Dyck's Royal Portraits'.

<sup>33</sup> See Armitage, 'The Cromwellian Protectorate and the Languages of Empire'.

<sup>34</sup> Ashley, *Financial and Commercial Policy Under the Cromwellian Protectorate*, 1-2.

Two of these merchants in particular, Sir Martin Noell and Sir Thomas Vyner were of special importance as they developed a close relationship with the Lord Protector, who, relied on select individuals who indicated loyalty and common cause with the Protectorate ideology. Noell and Vyner disproportionally lent money to the Protectorate and in exchange received favourable conditions for their trade.<sup>35</sup> In reality, therefore, aspects of the Protectorate's overseas trade development have been understood as the foundations of a merchant empire.<sup>36</sup> In addition to the general idea that funding the Protectorate would benefit their financial interests, merchants throughout this period began to better understand the practicalities of economics in a wider sense and the role the strength of government would play in their financial aims and the value of shaping the political economy.<sup>37</sup> The importance of London merchants shaping the early British Empire has been well established and debated. The role of specific merchants in the development of Protectorate ideology, less so. These embedded and activist merchants have been termed the "new merchants", those not traditionally or necessarily aligned with existing trade companies such as the East India Company who sought ventures in the Atlantic relating to tobacco, sugar, and slaves and whose interests were influential in the parliamentary cause during the Civil Wars.<sup>38</sup>

With the conquest of Jamaica, there were renewed hopes for the development not only of a profitable colony, but one with the interests of the Protectorate in mind politically, religiously, and economically. Just as the example of Providence Island was never far from the Protector's mind, nor too was the example of Ireland. In Ireland, Cromwell had actively worked in the enforcement of religious and political hegemony through the brutal repression

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<sup>35</sup> Ashley, 1-2.

<sup>36</sup> See Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty & the Early Modern Foundation of the British Empire in India*; Stern, *Empire, Incorporated: The Corporations That Built British Colonialism*.

<sup>37</sup> Alonzi, 'Economy' in *European History: Words, Contexts and Change over Time*, 45.

<sup>38</sup> Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653*, 558-576.

of the native interests and the transplantation of Protestant settlers.<sup>39</sup> The Lord Protector sought the further importation of Protestants by offering land to the Piedmont Protestants in 1655. To Cromwell, the examples of these colonies, Ireland and Providence Island, provided the model for development of an ideal West Indian occupation to secure religious, political, and economic strength. While the design was initially set to capture Spanish gold from the strongholds of Hispaniola, the seizure of Jamaica led to the 1656 Council of War in Jamaica to reassign and divide the island into areas for planting and therefore areas for settlement as opposed to military encampment. Settlers came from neighbouring colonies such as Barbados, Virginia, and Nevis with expertise in tobacco and sugar cultivation and the governor encouraged protection using privateers in addition to Protectorate military forces.<sup>40</sup>

To facilitate these overseas ventures, the Council of Trade, enacted in 1650 and led by Sir Henry Vane oversaw foreign and domestic trade, merchant companies, free ports and customs, fisheries, and many other elements relating to trade and the accountancy of these areas.<sup>41</sup> Benjamin Worsley served as secretary on this commission. Worsley had been a long-time correspondent with Robert Boyle and others in the development and speculation of Ireland and in the various scientific, economic, and religious fixations of the greater Hartlib Circle—something I expand on elsewhere.<sup>42</sup> It was Worsley who both advocated for statutory control over the plantation in Virginia to reform trade with the colony in the interests of the Commonwealth and, following his travels in the Dutch Republic, an open and tolerant system of merchant trade, education reform, and missions to the native inhabitants.<sup>43</sup> This project led

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<sup>39</sup> Canny, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: A Pattern Established, 1565-1576*; Canny, *Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World, 1560-1800*; Canny, 'The Origins of Empire: An Introduction'; Swingen, *Competing Vision of Empire: Labor, Slavery, and the Origins of the British Atlantic Empire*, 34-35.

<sup>40</sup> Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640-1700*, 37-38.

<sup>41</sup> Andrews, *British Committees, Commissions, and Councils of Trade and Plantations, 1622-1675*, 24.

<sup>42</sup> Greengrass, Leslie, and Raylor, *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication*, 21-22.

<sup>43</sup> Webster, 'Benjamin Worsley: Engineering for Universal Reform from the Invisible College to the Navigation Act', 226-228.

to Worsley's involvement in the drafting of the Navigation Acts of 1651, which stemmed in part from his work *Free Ports* in which he highlighted the crucial importance of customs revenue from external sources, but the need to keep such taxes low on those English merchants operating in the growing imperial colonial venture.<sup>44</sup> In the instruction given to the council, it was deemed favourable to find methods for facilitating a scheme wherein "those plantations alone may supply the Commonwealth of England with whatsoever it necessarily wants."<sup>45</sup> This commission had at its core the primary function of profit for the Commonwealth and sought to achieve this through the plantation system developed in Ireland and refined in Virginia and eventually carried into the new colony of Jamaica.<sup>46</sup>

This initial committee morphed into a more merchant focused group as Cromwell acquiesced to the needs of those powerful voices of his council and those who helped to finance Protectorate initiatives.<sup>47</sup> Sir Martin Noell and Sir Thomas Vyner provided substantive loans to the Protectorate.<sup>48</sup> While they did so at standard interest rates, they also secured funds through alternative contracts with the government including acting as intermediaries moving money to envoys abroad, arranging for the profit stemming from naval captures including the material gains in gold. These activities were mostly well documented in Protectorate accounts, but here were occasions, where the accountancy books obscure the purpose of the moving of money.<sup>49</sup> One such occurrence illustrates that Noell was repaid 400 *l.* "at the special instance of his Highness". Additionally, it is clear that that Noell had lent 16,000 *l.* "on the security of the excise".<sup>50</sup> These figures illustrate two important points about

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<sup>44</sup> Underwood, 'Ordering Knowledge, Re-Ordering Empire: Science and State Formation in the English Atlantic World, 1650-1688' (unpublished PhD thesis), 72-73.

<sup>45</sup> "August 1650: An Act for the Advancing and Regulating of the Trade of this Commonwealth", in *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660*. Edited by C H Firth, R S Rait.

<sup>46</sup> Andrews, 25.

<sup>47</sup> Andrews, 38-39.

<sup>48</sup> Wennerlind, *Casualties of Credit: The English Financial Revolution, 1620-1720*, 94-95.

<sup>49</sup> Ashley, *Financial and Commercial Policy Under the Cromwellian Protectorate*, 100.

<sup>50</sup> Ashley, 100, n. 1. Ashley is citing the CSP, 26 January 1655.

the monetary support from financiers like Noell and Vyner, first that there were sums moving to unspecified projects or in support of things the Protector did not want accounted for as explicitly as others. Secondly, that the amounts that these financiers were willing to lend were quite high. It was the suspicion of a Venetian resident and intelligencer Francesco Giavarina that Cromwell went to his closely allied lenders to provide funds for the Protectorate when other revenue was not available or denied to him for the purposes, he desired such as the collection for the Piedmont Protestants.<sup>51</sup> The influence of these merchants was instrumental to the passing the Plantation Act of 1650 which solidified Parliament's rule over the Atlantic colonies upending the complex and varied ownership structures that had been in place previously. This imposition proved especially unpopular amongst the slave economies of the West Indies which saw their expenditures in human capital being appropriated by Parliament therefore cutting into their margins.<sup>52</sup>

Critically, the merchants Martin Noell, Thomas Povey, Francis Willoughby, and William Watts<sup>53</sup> petitioned the Commonwealth for support in the form of provisions and ships to further improve the merchant empire and English interest in the West Indies through the incorporation of the West India Company.<sup>54</sup> It was the aim of these merchants to establish an effective monopoly in West Indian trade. Watts was even recommended to run the colony as governor, an aspect that Cromwell did not capitulate to.<sup>55</sup> In fact, the clash of goals between the Protectorate and the merchants did begin to show in the poor provisioning for the Western Design that Noell and Povey provided. These men were largely against the incursion as they

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<sup>51</sup> Ashley, 100-101.; Intercepted intelligence, "Francesco Giavarina, Venetian Resident in England, to the Doge and Senate", 15 March 1658, *CSP Venetian*, Vol. 31, 148. *BHO*.

<sup>52</sup> Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes: An Atlantic History of the English Revolution*, 220-224.

<sup>53</sup> While certainly not unknown, there is less written about Capt. William Watts overall. He and Thomas Povey remained in the West Indies after the Restoration eventually rose to prominence there. See BL Egerton MS 2345, letter from Watts to Povey from St. Christopher's, 19 June 1661.

<sup>54</sup> Proposal for the West India Company, BL MS 2345, *Egerton*, ff. 108-112.

<sup>55</sup> Andrews, 55.

feared it would cause a disruption in trade and would spoil their hopes of inserting the needs of the merchants into the conceptual mission of the design, which had been their hope in pushing the passing of the Plantation Act initially. Noell also greedily profited from the expedition by undercutting it from the start due to deliberately poor provisioning including inadequate and often spoiled food supplies and outdated or poorly maintained munitions and too few at that.<sup>56</sup>

In exchange for the material support for the West India Company expeditions, the adventurers indicated that central to their goals in the Caribbean was to normalise relations with the Spanish to secure trade indicating the “design upon the coast of Florida” would ease the coastal trade from New England to Barbados. To facilitate this difficult task of securing trade rights in Spanish Florida, the merchants proposed a series of improvements their venture would secure in the region beginning with seeking an alliance, a “league and union” with local native kingdoms.<sup>57</sup> This design on the West Indies also included a revamped council of trade that would include the governors of the other plantations and was drafted around the time of the military operation set sail in 1654 and would be accountable only to the Lord Protector himself—a shift from the Parliamentary order of 1650 to Protectorate control of trade.<sup>58</sup>

These “new merchants”, influenced Protectorate ideology and the development of a merchant empire. Their involvement in the West Indies, particularly Jamaica, aimed to establish a profitable colony aligned with Protectorate interests and pathways to expand the Cromwellian influence abroad.

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<sup>56</sup> Webb, *The Governors-General: The English Army and the Definition of the Empire, 1569-1681*, 154-155.

<sup>57</sup> BL MS 2345, *Egerton*, ff. 108-112.

<sup>58</sup> Andrews, 55-56.